



The Protection of a Heritage Site

BACKGROUND

Sue Ryder is a national charity providing incredible hospice and neurological care for people facing a frightening, life-changing diagnosis.

VACANT PROPERTY CHALLENGE

Hickleton Hall is an impressive Grade II listed Georgian country house with 64 bedrooms, constructed in 1748 with slate roofs, a seven-bay frontage and flanking pavilions. The challenge for VPS was to preserve grounds, the building and its associated fabric so that the progress and value of the sale of the Hall would not be hindered.

Hickleton Hall posed a number of challenges that are often specific to heritage sites.

- They may have valuable materials in their structure such as lead roofs, decorative iron railings and stone ornaments
- The interiors may contain (or are thought to contain) items of value, such as art, antiques, fireplaces, wood panelling, copper piping, decorative ironworks and plasterwork
- Heritage sites may have many access points that are less robust than modern buildings; Hickleton Hall has over 150 window frames for example
- Locations can often be remote and therefore more vulnerable not only to attempted thefts and malicious vandalism, but also to trespassers who are simply curious

OVERVIEW

SECTOR	Charity Heritage Site
CUSTOMER	Sue Ryder
CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuable material contained on site • High awareness of being vacant • Many access points on site • Remote site with increased vulnerability
SOLUTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VPS SmartAlarm Gold with Verifeye Visual Sensors • VPS Inspections Services • VPS Smart Tower® CCTV • VPS Security Screens • VPS Security Doors • Perimeter Protection

“Best practice for managing vacant property requires at first a detailed assessment. From there the recommendations that follow should be able to combine a range of adaptable, accredited options to meet any challenge to the site.”





Sue Ryder

Any measures taken to protect the site, along with maintenance when necessary, will not only manage the risks to the property from theft and vandalism, but also from weather or damage from utility leakages. Preventing a property from becoming derelict or falling into heavy disrepair will minimise the public relations impact of the empty site as well as help it to sell sooner. Importantly, a managed vacant property reduces the risks of public liability damages if people enter the site and suffer injury or worse, whatever the purpose or authority of their presence.

Hickleton Hall's assessment by VPS was the key start for protecting the site – a thorough visit and the attention to detail of an experienced assessor is fundamental to tailoring the most appropriate security requirements for a specific location. At Hickleton Hall, the assessor researched into the risks of the local area. He noted in particular the highly visible and exposed grounds, the number of former staff that had been working at the site and the publicity of its closure, so that the risk assessment determined there was a 'high awareness of being vacant'. This adds to the vulnerability of the premises. In addition, a noticeable increase in trespassers and a suspicious phone call had been reported. Also included were a summary of local crime reports.

Finally, the assessment offered a recommended range of solutions, and compared those in terms of coverage and cost with alternatives. VPS recommended 'best-fit' measures combining the use of physical and electronic security equipment together with manned guarding services:

- SmartAlarm Gold alarm system with visual verification sensors, providing 24/7 remote monitoring
- Perimeter Protection including steel security screens
- Daily inspections/mobile patrols to add to the visible deterrence and to allow for rapid reporting on any changes on site
- Risks to the building infrastructure were further minimised through a utility drain down and clearance of combustible items from site

“We and our insurers are very happy with the security measures VPS put in place to secure Hickleton Hall and its grounds. We believe that their work has significantly reduced the likelihood of any theft or vandalism.”

Sue Ryder Property Manager





Sue Ryder

SmartAlarm Gold detected any approach made to the building, regardless of intent, and sounded a deterrent warning. It triggered an external monitoring source and response if the warning went ignored. An entirely self-contained system, it does not need hard wiring or an external power source, telephone line, or internet connection. It is therefore ideal for vacant properties. The unit is housed in a weather proof dome and linked to outdoor PIR sensors with integrated cameras. On activation the cameras captured the scene, even in low light, then fed still pictures and a video capture to an external monitoring station. The images were used to 'visually verify' the activation source as a real or a false alarm. Activations thought to be malicious were escalated to a security response team. The systems also incorporate a 120dB siren as an additional deterrent. Steel security screens deter would-be trouble makers. These prevent unauthorised access and potential theft from internal areas of the building, vandalism, arson and/or public liability claims due to injury. The screens are perforated to allow light to enter for the purpose of a viewing, and to allow air to circulate so as to prevent dampness within the property. The screens, unlike timber do not deteriorate over time.

The provision of a manned security presence at the site on a daily basis also allowed for a 'real time' inspection of Hickleton Hall, ensuring any noticeable changes that occurred to be reported. Inspection reports were uploaded, reviewed for any 'exceptions' or major changes, and the client informed. If the daily inspection report didn't uncover any changes to the site, it was uploaded to the VPS Navigator secure online portal for client access, insurance compliance, and auditing purposes.

These recommendations were provided in a plan that included the costs, and placed alongside other options, such as a predominantly guardsbased solution, for comparison. The client accepted the VPS recommendations and these were implemented immediately.

POST-IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING - ADAPTING TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

On a weekly basis, VPS reviewed the measures to ensure they were meeting the security requirements of the site. As the property remained vacant over a period of time, the number of alerts and alarm activations increased. It was agreed with the client that the threat level to the site had increased, and further recommendations were made including the addition of a new system, developed and manufactured by VPS' in-house innovations centre, the Smart Tower[®] CCTV.

Deploying a Smart Tower[®] CCTV at Hickleton Hall meant that potential intruders could be seen from a greater distance and it could monitor more of the site's access points at any one time. Because the Smart Tower[®] itself was more visible, it also acted as a greater deterrent. Automatic verbal alerts, visual white light floodlights and siren warnings, also added to the deterrent values.

“We're proud to have helped protect this 18th Century building. It's part of Britain's heritage. The guards that were employed before VPS reviewed the security were expensive. Our approach was to find the right mix of human and technological solutions that provided protection at lower costs but without comprising on the security required.”

VPS Risk Assessor

Free site surveys
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