

<https://www.churchofengland.org/connectivity/why/bluntisham>

## **Case study: St Mary's, Bluntisham-cum-Earith**

### **An interview with Andrew Edney, Churchwarden**



*St Mary's Church dates back to the 13th Century, and serves the villages of Bluntisham and Earith in Ely diocese. The impressive building stands in a large churchyard among mature trees on the edge of Bluntisham, overlooking Bury Fen.*

The church is also served by a spacious Victorian Church Hall, which is used by church members for formal and informal meetings, and celebrations; and it's rented out for art classes, parent-and-toddler groups, parties, and other community events.

The decision to bring connectivity to the church was, unfortunately, made for them; as a result of the church being targeted repeatedly by criminal gangs:

***"Having suffered lead thefts a number of years ago, we then suffered a second round of lead thefts during the work to replace the roofing material from the first round of lead thefts."***



Insurance requirements meant that an alarm system would have to be fitted to prevent such a tragedy striking the church again. The PCC decided

to look into CCTV camera systems to ensure that nobody had to be present to confront the gangs if such a thing were to happen again.



Andrew Edney has been Churchwarden in Bluntisham for over three years, having found himself drawn to St Mary's by the Holy Spirit:

***"When an opportunity came up for a Churchwarden***

***position, it felt like the right thing for me to do. I felt I needed to put something back into the church, which I'd been getting spiritual benefit from, to help maintain it for future generations."***

Tasked with finding a technical solution to the problem of church security, Andrew initially looked into fixed-line broadband. But it was decided that the costs were prohibitive, and that a limited-data solution might also rack up heavy costs if data was being used constantly whenever the security cameras were switched on.

They arrived at a pay-as-you-go mobile-data system, meaning that data would only be used when someone logged in to look at what was being triggered by the light-beam sensors on the roof-mounted cameras. With day and night vision, the cameras can pick up any disturbances, triggering an alarm which alerts a call-centre, resulting in a phonecall to Andrew or the Rector, allowing them to view the camera feed and – if necessary – to alert the authorities.

The mobile internet has also been put to use on a bluetooth card-reader, served by a mobile-phone app, and thus able to be operated simply and effectively by church staff.



***"Because it's a cashless society these days, people often don't have cash. So especially if you've got something like a baptism or a wedding, people who are not normal church-goers will turn up and they won't necessarily have cash for a collection – but they will have a payment card with them."***



Andrew has noted that irregular church-goers are often keen to donate to the church, but need the facility to do so.

The revenue from contactless donations, and the peace of mind provided by the security devices, is now allowing the church to proceed with other projects; such as the reordering of the inside, and the removal of unused pews to make a more flexible space.

So while the procurement of connectivity for St Mary's has involved spending money in the short-term, it's sure to save money – and indeed make money – in the long-term.

***"As a church, our aim is to serve our community. And providing WiFi both for people in our church congregation and others who use our building; we see that as a way of serving our community in the 21st Century."***

