

Belcom247 laid over 75km of cable to power the exhibits in the new Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum.

Belcom247 case study
Natural History Museum
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“In my opinion belcom247 is a highly professional and reliable organisation. The team delivers what they promise and add value to our business operation. Belcom247 is particularly good at delivering projects to our tight deadlines and ensuring that any issues are dealt with quickly.”

Glyn Hughes, Director of Engineering Sysco AV.

The construction of the Darwin Centre was the most significant development to the Natural History Museum since it moved to South Kensington in 1881. The Darwin Centre was designed around an iconic, temperature controlled, eight-storey ‘Cocoon’, encased within a glass atrium.

The finished structure now houses 20 million of the museum’s 34 million plant and insect specimens as well as laboratories for up to 200 researchers.

The Challenge

For our client, deciding that the Darwin Centre ‘Cocoon’ was going to be a highly interactive experience was an easy one. However, they knew that turning this vision into reality was going to be a difficult task, only to be undertaken by experts. That’s why they approached belcom247.

For a start, the long lengths of AV cabling that handled the data and audio used by the exhibits had to withstand extremely demanding requirements if it was to be successful in delivering the high quality experience expected. Also, the cabling had to be warranted for 25 years of operation due to the heavy and repeated use that comes with a tourist hotspot.

And if that wasn’t enough, the shape of the ‘Cocoon’ structure housing the exhibits – an eight floor high poured concrete structure with curved walls – created an extremely complicated task in terms of organising data transfer, audio and lighting for the hundreds of displays.

What We Did

The specification called for over 30km of blown fibre optic cable, over 28km of CAT6a data cable and 20 plus km of audio AV cable to be run through the entire length and width of the structure to a central communication room that handled all the administration of the exhibits. The configuration of the structure meant that the system had to be carefully planned to meet all warranted manufacturer guidelines. The complexity of the build meant that we had to always work around the schedules of other fitters and manufacturers in order to deliver the cabling system on time.

The Business Result

The ‘Cocoon’ has attracted over 200,000 visitors and since its opening in October 2009, its visual displays and exhibitions have operated seven days a week with no problems. However, if a cabling or quality issue should occur, we’re there to troubleshoot and repair it promptly.