

Keep on running...

After years of planning and much heartache in the realisation, your new multimedia visitor centre opens with a flourish of media interest. Your work is done.

...or is it? Your ICT equipment will require maintenance and it will break down from time to time. It needs to be fixed as soon as it goes wrong, unless you want to have complaining visitors and reduced entry fees on your hands.

The National Trust for Scotland has interpretive audio-visual and multimedia equipment at a third of its properties. A significant budget is allocated each year to maintaining this equipment. Here are some lessons we have learned:

- When preparing your initial budget, remember to factor in year on year expenditure on maintenance and repair. Work out what you expect to spend, then double it!
- Check the warranty terms with the supplier. Most equipment comes with a one year warranty, (providing it hasn't been tampered with), which can be extended at a cost.
- Arrange a service agreement for all equipment, including a number of call outs for emergencies during a year, and a help-line for simple problems. Some providers will cover both AV and multi-media, but it can be cheaper to arrange separate cover for the latter.
- If you only have a few pieces of equipment, a service agreement can be item by item with the original supplier. Alternatively, organisations with many interpretive centres may prefer an inclusive agreement for all sites. This needs to be with a tried and trusted provider so no hidden costs are sprung on you, and you can be sure repairs will be dealt with efficiently.
- Site managers need to know who to contact in case of a breakdown – decide if it will be you or the maintenance company.
- Always keep a supply of spare parts, e.g. bulbs for projectors.

A little planning and forethought like this will keep your equipment running and your visitors happy.

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