

British Sugar

Fast, secure connectivity across every site
with a dedicated 4G private network



Robust connectivity for all four British Sugar factory sites

The first multi-site network of its kind in the UK is part of the 'Factories of the Future' initiative for British Sugar.



The challenge

- Need for a flexible private network across multiple sites
- Network needed to be secure and multi-functional
- Requirement for future transition from 4G to 5G

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Previously we needed someone in the control room and someone who could walk around the site. Now we have one person who can walk around the site with the control room in their hands.

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Paul Hitchcock

Head of Engineering & Technology, British Sugar



The solution: fast, secure connectivity across four large sites

As part of its 'Factories of the Future' vision, British Sugar wanted to connect four huge factories across three English counties to help increase productivity and efficiency, as well as highlighting health and safety.

After an extensive multi-vendor bidding process, Virgin Media O₂ Business's suggestion of a Multi-site Private Network was accepted and we entered into a long-term partnership spanning seven years.

The four sites span Norfolk, Suffolk and Nottinghamshire, and with a total operational area of 2.17km² the Wissington site processes 20,000 tons of sugar beet per day, requiring a delivery vehicle on average every 40 seconds - busier than Heathrow airport.

The sites used to be only monitored and managed via a central control room. But our private network means staff and managers can now take the control room with them and access it via mobile devices to get real-time updates on what's happening across all four sites.

British Sugar has already seen productivity gains and received positive feedback from the workforce using the devices. There are also plans to introduce future innovations that demand increased speed and capacity, as well as machine learning to help automate knowledge capture and make sure processes are as efficient as possible. This is part of the evolution roadmap that will see an upgrade to 5G, where it benefits site operations.

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Working with Virgin Media O₂ Business was a really pleasurable experience. It was always a team effort and if we ever ran into an issue it was always dealt with as a team, and we resolved it together.

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Steve Pritchard

Senior IT Business Partner, British Sugar



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For me, the best part of the solution is that you hardly notice it, because it's just working. And the managed service means we can concentrate on doing what we do, and Virgin Media O₂ Business can manage the network on our behalf.

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Steve Pritchard | Senior IT Business Partner, British Sugar

The outcome: technical flexibility to ensure British Sugar always operates at full efficiency

- British Sugar has full control of its secure private network with data management dashboards and the ability to add or remove apps
- Increased productivity and efficiency with improved health and safety and security
- Our network is already delivering efficiencies and cost benefits
- Multi-site private network
- The initial 4G network has been deployed across all four British Sugar factories, with plans to upgrade it to 5G in the near future
- Cost savings over time
- A platform for digital transformation
- The network can handle a range of functions including mobile working, with the capacity to expand further using smart tech, including Internet of Things, robotics, automation, and even health and safety drones



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We looked at what British Sugar wanted, where they aspired to be and at what pace they were going on that journey. We're now delivering full connectivity across every square foot that they asked for, with a network that will grow with their requirements.

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Grant Shenton

Account Director for ABF, Virgin Media O₂ Business