

New Meridian broadcast centre set to open



UK regional commercial TV broadcaster ITV Meridian is carrying out dry-runs at its new studio centre prior to the start of full transmissions later this month, writes Kevin Hilton. The studios, which feature a Calrec Omega audio console and Trilogy Communications intercom, will be used for local news and magazine programmes.

Meridian is part of the ITV network in England and covers a large region including Kent, Sussex, Dorset, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and parts of the Thames Valley. The broadcaster's main production centre has been based on the Solent Business Park, near Whiteley, Hampshire, since 2004 but the lease on that building has now come to an end.

The new studios are only 500 metres away from the existing facilities. Systems integrator TSL has built two studios, although only one will be used to begin with. The gallery area comprises a production control room (PCR) divided into a front desk for the director, vision engineer, producer and PA, with a rear position for a second producer.

At the back of this is a separate sound control room (SCR, pictured with technical operator Alice Laing at the desk). This houses a 24-fader Calrec Omega console, while an eight-fader remote panel for audio-follow-video work has been installed in the front desk of the PCR next to the vision mixer. ITV operates a full redundancy policy so a Yamaha 01V has been installed for back-up.

Either of the two studio systems can be connected to Meridian's satellite news gathering vans on location. The system has been designed to intelligently assign the relevant mix minus feeds and production talkback as they come into the centre. The main communications system is a distributed Trilogy Gemini intercom comprising of three small matrices woven together in a ring. In normal operation the three units can share up to 256 channels of programme quality audio. In the case of a failure in the ring, the matrix will revert to routing audio over IP.

The SCR additionally features a Yamaha SPX2000 processor and a CTP Systems DRM36 dual VCA remote mixer system for the presenters' in-ear monitors (IEM). TSL systems engineer Rob Milchem explains that this allows the IEM levels to be controlled either from the sound desk or by the presenter in the studio. A DK-Technologies 700 Series Waveform monitor with custom software is used for general video checking but also provides loudness monitoring. The main loudspeakers are PMCs, with Fostex for pre-fade listening.

The studio is due to go live with its first programme on 23rd October.