

CHANGED TIMES



Changed times

Dr Chris Young, Chief Executive of the Welsh Electronics Forum and Vice Chair of the UK Electronics Alliance.

When faced with some of the toughest trading conditions since the 1920s, the ability to respond quickly and gain support from an existing technology community in Wales is vital.

Over the last six months, the Information, Communications, Technology and Telecoms (ICT&T) sector in Wales has risen to the economic challenge like never before.

Buzzing with opportunities, world-class R&D and some really clever, agile businesses, the sector is now not only stronger, but offers one of the most cost-competitive ICT&T environments in the UK today.

In part, we have the fierce competition from fast improving emerging economy enterprises in India and China, changing EU legislation and the widespread effects of outsourcing in recent decades to thank.

Although deeply painful at times, these pressures have resulted in a dramatically transformed and rejuvenated sector, where smaller companies are increasingly visible and businesses collaborate better for mutual benefit.

In Wales, for example, the ICT&T industry currently contributes more than 2% to Welsh Gross Value Add (GVA) with around 1.1% of the Welsh workforce employed in software, IT, electronics and semiconductor industries alone.

What's more, over six thousand people are employed in software companies according to government classifications, but this is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg.

It's hardly surprising then that Information, Communications, Technology and Telecoms is acknowledged as one of a handful of sectors playing a key role in the economy of Wales, and its place at the core of the Welsh Assembly Government's economic strategy.

In my view, the right level of business support at the right time is essential. So too is a coordinated government-industry response.

In Wales, companies have benefited from the timely intervention by the Welsh Assembly Government in the form of a proactive lifeline to tide otherwise viable businesses over this difficult period. I'm encouraged by this increasingly powerful public - private symbiosis. I am also pleased by the number of companies in Wales collaborating via the Welsh Electronics Forum.

However, we must ensure that the ICT&T sector and wider technology industry across the UK remain vibrant, confident and progressive if it is to have a sustainable future.

Current events are placing a renewed and timely focus on the need for continuous innovation and the importance of putting key skills back into the workplace.

As such I would like to see ICT&T firms across Wales continue to evolve and adapt in order to find, train and retain the necessary skills which will help them keep pace with the industry globally.

This should also include a strengthening of our technology community, reaching out to people and companies across the globe to build an even stronger network of business partners.

In doing this we will not only be able to make clear decisions about the industry's direction, but will go a long way in ensuring that any future is a positive and sustainable one – both technologically and economically.

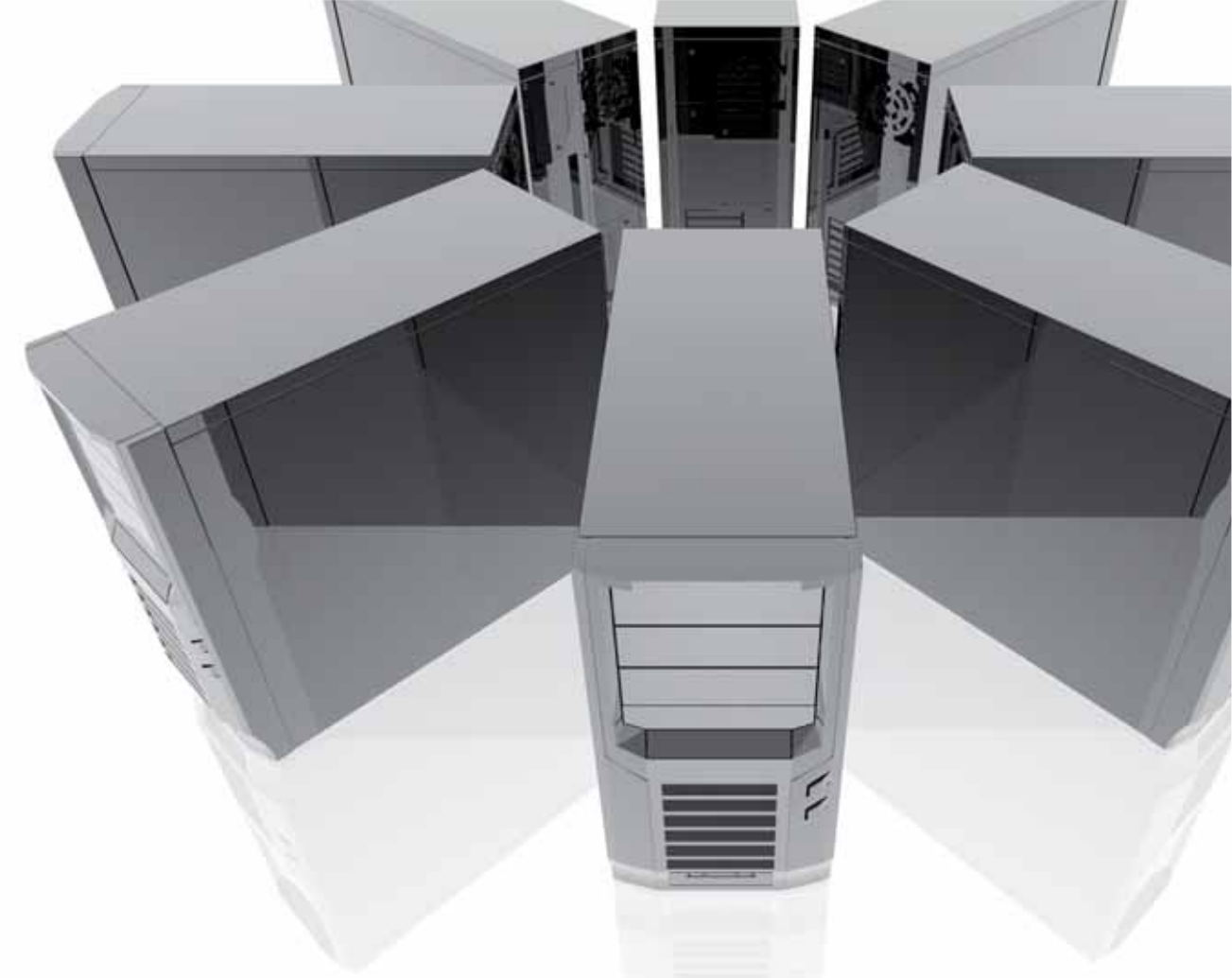
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A highly secure facility constructed to military standards

Europe's number 1 the changing face of data storage

Stewart McRobert

Data storage is changing and Next Generation Data's massive new data centre, NGD Europe 1 near Newport in South Wales, is helping lead developments as one of Europe's biggest, most advanced and secure sites.



With world-class infrastructure and support, the thoroughly modern centre allows Next Generation Data (NGD) to deliver availability, flexibility and scalability that have been beyond reach before now. What's more, it helps reinforce the company's reputation for innovation and forward thinking.

Nick Razey, CEO at NGD explained: "Our industry is changing fast. Originally, much of it grew up around London's Docklands since fibre connectivity was extremely expensive

and engineers were keen to be close to their servers."

However, in recent years, he pointed out, fibre prices have plummeted and remote diagnostics are now so good that most monitoring and control is done remotely.

Other factors reduce London's attractiveness and make locations outside the south east a more sensible choice. In security terms both 7/7 and the IRA's Docklands bomb of 1996 showed that parts of the UK capital are key terrorist targets.

With real estate in London still eye-wateringly expensive despite the

economic downturn, the cost-effectiveness of warehousing computers there is open to question.

Perhaps most important, is the issue of power. As far as data storage is concerned, ten years ago most racks drew no more than 1 kW of power. Now, 4 kW is common and 20 kW requirements are appearing. However, in London power supplies are limited, particularly around Docklands where the intense activity in preparation for the 2012 Olympics consumes huge amounts of capacity.

"In the light of all these factors," said Nick, "many companies are revising

["Our focus is always on quality of service, flexibility, scalability and cost effectiveness," said Nick. "With 75,000sq metres over three floors, NGD Europe 1 is one of the biggest and best equipped centres anywhere, and can securely house over 17,000 racks. It has connectivity from several of the major carriers and we can connect to the USA through transatlantic links. But we also have high capacity, low latency links direct into Docklands so we can offer the best of both worlds as a Disaster Recovery site which is connected to and yet independent of London."]



their thinking about data storage. When there's no technological need to locate in London, and being there presents all kind of headaches, why not look elsewhere."

In particular, NGD Europe 1 is increasingly emerging as one of the most important data storage centres for the UK and Europe.

Originally developed by the Welsh government and LG as a potential semiconductor site, it is benefiting from a £200 million investment by NGD and has advantages few others match. It is one of the most advanced centres of its type incorporating leading edge technology.

Among other features, it draws power from a local substation that connects directly to Britain's national grid (the 'supergrid'). The substation can deliver up to 90 megavolt amperes (MVA) in 45 MVA blocks. The amount of power is massive: 90 MVA is enough for a city.

There is first class road access and the site was pre-selected to be safe from flooding, subsidence, and away from traditional flight paths. The data centre is 'carrier neutral' with fibre Internet connections available from multiple carriers including BT, NTL and Cable and Wireless.

Nick added: "Thanks to low-cost real estate and high-value human resources available in Wales, we are able to provide a secure data centre with abundant space and power that simply can't be matched in London."

The range of services on offer at NGD

Europe 1 is extensive, from large-scale space-only contracts to hosting and managed service options for SMEs.

"Our focus is always on quality of service, flexibility, scalability and cost effectiveness," said Nick. "With 75,000sq metres over three floors, NGD Europe 1 is one of the biggest and best equipped centres anywhere, and can securely house over 17,000 racks. It has connectivity from several of the major carriers and we can connect to the USA through transatlantic links. But we also have high capacity, low latency links direct into Docklands so we can offer the best of both worlds as a Disaster Recovery site which is connected to and yet independent of London.

"We also provide a sophisticated office space for technical support and administration, with meeting rooms and conference suites available 24 hours a day."

The facility is divided into 18 individual Data Halls with separate and independent mechanical and electrical services to each hall, offering effectively 18 Data Centres under one roof.

"We recognise that businesses constantly evolve, and that's why our solutions build in flexibility and scalability," emphasised Nick. "And, while we maintain the physical environment, our clients control their data and equipment, giving them the freedom to operate in a way that suits them best."

Designed to be shudder-proof, the centre has been fortified to make it

highly secure. A 12-foot, military-grade fence extending into the ground rings the facility and there's an infrared system to detect intruders. There are thousands of closed-circuit television cameras, air-lock gates, retina-scan biometric entry systems and bullet-proof and bomb-proof reinforcements.

The on-site guard force, which will be on duty 24 hours a day, is made up of qualified ex-military personnel.

The double-skin walls will resist fire for up to two hours. In the event of a power failure fuel stored on site can keep the centre running for 36 hours and local suppliers are contracted to refuel on an eight hour lead time.

The centre houses thousands of server racks and, following its opening in 2009, it is expected that the number of users will expand rapidly driven by the inexorable increase in data storage demands and particularly by the emergence of "cloud computing".

Dedicated Data Halls start at 50 racks. For large enterprises, the facility has 10,000-sq ft and 20,000 sq ft halls. As standard NGD provides 1.5 kilowatts per square meter or 4 kilowatts per rack but up to 60 kW per rack is possible using water cooling.

Being there at the start of a fundamental change in the way data storage operates in the UK is allowing NGD Europe 1 to offer a future proof service that meets companies' changing needs. "I think we got our timing right on this," Nick concluded. "For data storage NGD Europe 1 is set to become number 1 in Europe."

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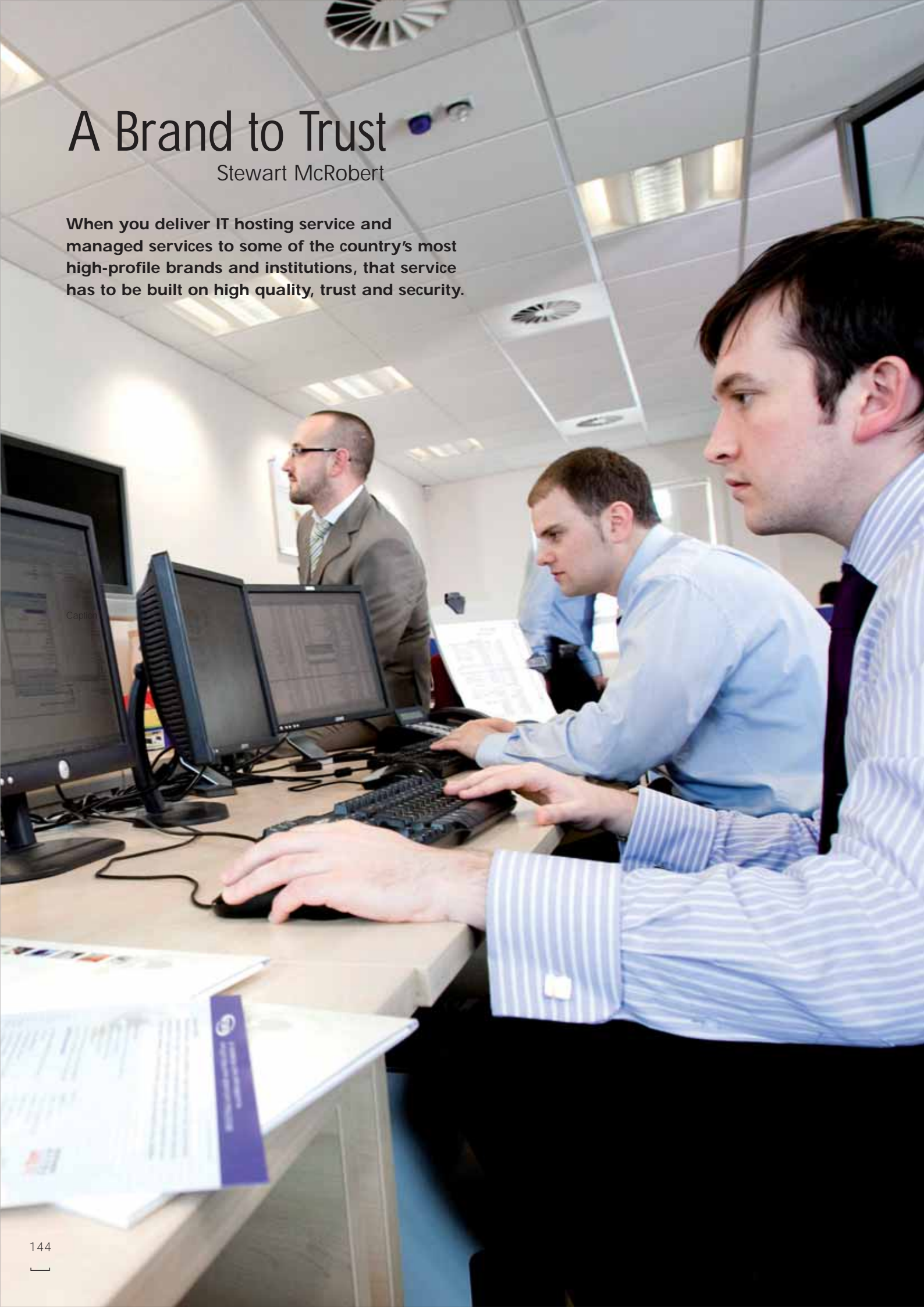


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A Brand to Trust

Stewart McRobert

When you deliver IT hosting service and managed services to some of the country's most high-profile brands and institutions, that service has to be built on high quality, trust and security.



Cardiff based eLINIA realised that from day one. And adhering to these principles has helped them create a thriving operation with further bases in London and Slough, and clients that include Honda UK, the National Trust and the Welsh Assembly.

eLINIA CEO, John Jones explains: "From the outset, our ethos has been to talk to a customer first and work back to build the solution that is right for them. It's a common mistake among managed services providers to build a business around fixed set products which can be packaged up and sold as widely as possible.

"The central problem with this approach is the assumption that there is an 'average' customer. The reality is that every organisation has unique issues and goals requiring a more tailored approach."

Bottom-line benefits in the economic downturn

A recent report by Forrester Research identified outsourcing as a key trend for 2009 with 43% of firms already increasing their use of infrastructure outsourcing as a result of the downturn.

Operations director, Justin Lewis explains why businesses are turning to outsourcing: "Monitoring an IT infrastructure is a 24/7 job, and there aren't many organisations out there who can afford to pay skilled employees to do often mundane work on the off-chance something will go wrong and need fixing.

"We can manage IT infrastructure cheaper and more proficiently than most businesses are able to do in-house, enabling organisations to trim costs where needed and deploy existing IT staff more efficiently."

Peace of mind for security conscious organisations

Data security is something no business can afford to overlook, but trying to manage compliance and ensure data integrity in-house is highly complex and can quickly become expensive.

Through economies of scale eLINIA helps organisations achieve a level of security that is right for them, and without it costing them the earth.

eLINIA has experience in managing the core IT infrastructure of some of the largest and most security conscious organisations in the world. All engineers and technicians



are accredited at the highest security levels, including ISO9001, ISO27001 and PCIDSS, with data held in tier-3 data centres in Cardiff, Slough, or London.

Carbon-neutral hosting

In 2007, eLINIA became one of the first managed service providers to offer carbon neutral hosting through its green datacentre in Slough, helping businesses reduce the carbon footprint of their IT infrastructure.

Justin Lewis comments: "The economic downturn has pushed climate change down the priority list in many people's eyes, but we're keen to show that businesses can save money and reduce their carbon footprint at the same time. By moving the National Trust to a virtualised infrastructure, we are helping the National Trust reduce its energy consumption by 70%."

By staying true to the highest standards and working with customers rather than baffling them with jargon and different service packages eLINIA has established itself as a brand to trust for businesses across the UK.



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