
WARRINGTON, UK, AUGUST 24, 2004

ABB drives cut noise problem at Bristol science centre

ABB drives have solved a tricky noise problem for one of Bristol's major visitor attractions, reducing the sound levels of the air conditioning.

At-Bristol, a science centre and Millennium Project based at Bristol harbourside, was experiencing excessive noise from the air conditioning units in two of its rooms, a conference room with capacity for 90 people and a video projection auditorium with seats for 80 people.

A solution was provided by ABB Drives Alliance partner APDS. Four ABB 2.2 kW variable speed drives were installed, one for the incoming and one for the outgoing airflow in each room. Controlled by a simple potentiometer installed on the wall of the room, the drives can be adjusted to speeds ranging from 30 to 50 Hz.

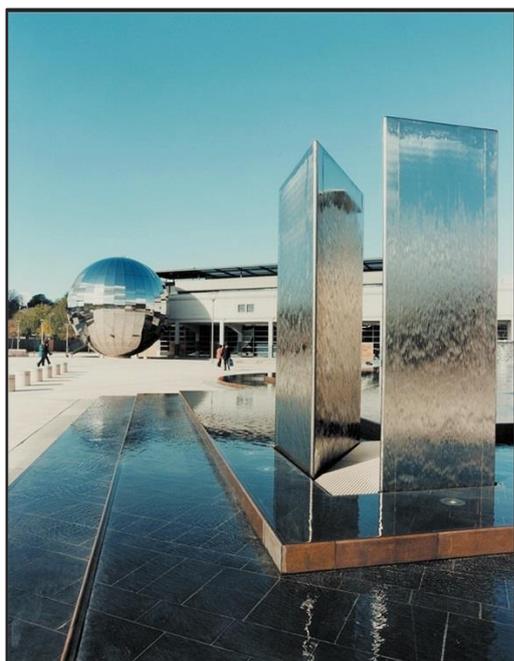
Mike Rippon, Technical Services Director for At-Bristol, says: "People using the rooms were constantly complaining of the noise from the air conditioning fans. It was sometimes so bad in the conference room that people could not hear what speakers were saying."

Turning the air conditioning off would solve the noise problem, but the air quality rapidly deteriorated. This was affecting the letting of the rooms as clients were unwilling to give the centre repeat business until the problem was resolved. Rippon investigated a number of options but most of them involved extensive duct work that would have been prohibitively expensive.

Says Rippon: "The speed control makes all the difference. People using the rooms can adjust it to their own requirements - at half speed we can hardly hear the air conditioning yet it still provides plenty of fresh air. Our clients are now very happy and we are getting repeat business for the rooms. The ABB drives were a very elegant solution to our problem."

At-Bristol includes major interactive exhibitions on science and nature as well an IMAX cinema screen.

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Caption: The noise of the air conditioning has been radically reduced for the At-Bristol science centre, since installing variable speed drives from ABB.

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