DIMPLEX DELIVERS DINING COMFORT AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

When an Oxford University college needed to improve comfort levels in a hard-to-heat dining hall, Dimplex's commercial heating experts came up with an efficient solution to keep students warm year-round.

By combining a fast warm-up from powerful fan heaters with an air curtain to minimise heat loss from the doorways, the Dimplex solution quickly raises room temperature to comfortable levels and easily retains the warmth for the duration of the hall's use.

The dining hall at St Antony's College was built in the late Sixties with large single-glazed windows, low levels of insulation and a high ceiling. The hall is used daily for lunch and dinner, and also frequently in the evening for a variety of other functions. It's a large facility in the middle of the site, and an important focus in the students' daily life, so it's vital that it remains in commission.

The original heating was a heat recovery system incorporating vents and low level radiators, innovative when the hall was built, but it had been unable to provide adequate warmth for some time. There was a degree of solar gain through south-facing windows, but instant, powerful heat was what was needed. St Antony's had been using portable gas turbine heaters to meet the immediate requirement, but it wasn't a long-term solution.

The college consulted Oxford-based contractor RT Harris and Son with the aim of finding a more permanent and effective system. David Sexton explains: "Reliability was a priority in this installation, due to the frequent usage of this hall and high volumes of people depending on it. We use Dimplex products all the time, we know they won't give any problems, so the manufacturer was our first choice.

"After looking at the size of the space to be heated, we specified a couple of high output heaters, two freestanding units from the Dimplex Electricaire range. But when we spoke to Dimplex, they took a real interest in the installation rather than just taking my order. The

commercial heating team there suggested a different approach which they felt would be more effective at heating the space."

David continues: "Two of the Dimplex team came out with me to the customer's site to assess it, and we ended up specifying a system consisting of six CFH industrial fan heaters linked in two groups of three with separate controls and CAB 1.5m air curtains to create a 'barrier' across the doorways to stop warm air escaping. We planned the solution jointly - I hadn't expected that level of involvement from Dimplex. It was a real bonus, and it really impressed me."

The electronic CFH fan heaters offer a fast airflow of 900m^3/h, with a throw of 10m and air-off temperatures from 30 to 60 degrees Celsius, plus a cool blow facility for air circulation and comfort year-round. The multi-directional wall mounting brackets minimise cold spots, while the sturdy design and powerful centrifugal fans will give years of trouble-free use.

The Dimplex CAB air curtain improves comfort levels within the hall while minimising energy costs by preventing draughts and escaping heat through the constantly used doorway. They effectively maintain two different temperature zones and keep warm or cooled air in and fumes, chills, heat and dust out.

Peter Robinson, domestic bursar at St Antony's, says: "We used to get a lot of complaints about the temperature in the hall in the winter months. With no real heating system in place for the last few years, we'd been using industrial gas turbine heaters to warm the room up before an event, but emissions and ventilation were a worry, as was the fuel storage issue.

"The Dimplex system is very effective at heating this large space. We use the heaters for about an hour to an hour and a quarter before the room's used, and it stays warm quite easily once the room is occupied - the air curtains to stop cold air coming in is certainly a very good idea. The hall now offers a much more comfortable environment altogether for the students."

With powerful heating available at the flick of a switch, and an energy-saving air curtain to keep the heat in, even this challenging refectory can be warm and comfortable for diners year-round.

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