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WHEN RANSOMWARE HITS BEFORE ENROLMENT: RECOVERY FOR UNIVERSITIES

How the University of the West of Scotland rebuilt its core systems in 90 days, ensuring they were secure, resilient, and operational before the intake deadlines

About RDB Concepts

RDB Concepts is a UK-based managed services and cyber resilience provider specialising in the secure operation of business-critical platforms. For more than two decades, we have supported organisations where downtime is not an inconvenience but a risk to services, revenue, or public trust.

Our approach combines private cloud infrastructure, proactive monitoring through Custodian*24, and integrated detection and response services to create environments that are secure, observable, and fully supported around the clock. We don't simply host systems - we take full operational responsibility for keeping them running safely.

Custodian*24 is RDB Concepts' intelligent observability platform providing 24 × 7 × 365 monitoring and

alerting across infrastructure, networks, operating systems, databases, and applications. Built on Nagios, Elastic, and ScienceLogic, it unifies threshold alerting, log analytics, and AI-driven event correlation into a single managed service. The platform enables early detection of anomalies, rapid root-cause analysis, and informed capacity planning, while delivering measurable reductions in downtime and operational costs.

RDB Concepts leadership

RDB Concepts is led by co-founder and CEO Phill Evans, who built the organisation around a simple principle: when something breaks, clients don't face it alone, they feel supported and have a structured, accountable and trusted team behind them. Known for hands-on leadership and deep technical expertise, he has spent over 20 years

designing and running resilient platforms for complex estates. His focus on proactive service, accountability, and long-term partnership shapes every engagement RDB undertakes.

"If you cut Phill open, he'd bleed service. He'd miss his own wedding to deal with a customer issue. And that attitude is natural throughout the team he's built. They're experts and they care. They'll never let a problem develop into a disaster - they'll just calmly fix it and make sure it never happens again. It's impossible to buy that in the corporate world." - Matthew Rea (SSP Group, 2018).

The challenge

When the University of the West of Scotland experienced a significant cyber incident, a number of critical systems were taken offline as part of

containment and recovery measures. Among them was Ellucian's Banner, the University's core student information and enrolment platform.

Banner underpins:

- Student registration.
- Course management.
- Admissions and intake.
- Academic administration.
- Staff operations.

Without it, the University could not safely proceed with new student onboarding.

The timing created a hard deadline. The next intake window was approaching quickly, and every day without the system increased operational risk. This wasn't just an IT issue – it was institutional continuity.

The University needed a trusted partner who could move immediately, rebuild securely, and guarantee stability.

“During an extremely challenging and disruptive period, RDB provided exceptional support in restoring our systems and ensuring operations could resume safely. Their team implemented a comprehensive security framework that significantly reduced the likelihood of any similar incident occurring in the future. Throughout the engagement, the standard of service was consistently excellent – highly responsive, professional, and delivered with a strong understanding of the complexity of our environment. This level of expertise and reliability is exactly what we look for in a partner.”

– David Johnston, Head of IT at UWS.

The response

RDB was engaged to rebuild the entire Banner environment from the ground up onto its private cloud platform.

Working alongside the University's internal teams, RDB delivered a complete recovery programme within a 90-day window, including:

- New private cloud infrastructure.
- Secure network segmentation and hardened configurations.
- Operating system and database rebuild.
- Application migration and validation.
- Continuous monitoring via Custodian*24.
- Integrated detection and response tooling.
- Backup, disaster recovery, and resilience testing.
- Full operational handover and ongoing managed service.

To ensure the University could focus entirely on recovery, RDB provided the 90 days of consultancy at no charge.

The environment was live, tested, and stable ahead of enrolment – allowing the University to proceed without disruption.

“During our darkest hours, after a massive cyber-attack, RDB were simply outstanding. From a standing start RDB provided an instant, professional, and expert-led response enabling us to quickly migrate our main business critical system into their data centre, securing it from any further harm. Then systematically rebuilt it, upgrade it, securely wrapped it and rebuild all the connectors, services, integrations

and modules to return it to operational functionality in time for our student intake. Their partnership approach to working with our team brought out the best in everyone and the outcome was a much more secure, more flexible, more stable and more maintainable solution. Going above and beyond is a sure-fire way to build strong, lasting relationships and this is exactly what RDB achieved.” – Alan Rowley, Director of Information Services at UWS (Apr 2023 - Nov 2025).

The outcome

Three years later, the Banner platform continues to run on RDB's private cloud with:

- Zero unplanned outages.
- Continuous 24x7 monitoring and AI augmented Observability.
- Proactive incident detection.
- No significant cyber incidents.

What began as an emergency rebuild has become a long-term partnership centred on resilience, stability, and trust.



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