

UK'S FIRST FRIENDLY WIFI CITY: HOW YORK SET THE AGENDA FOR SUPER CONNECTED, SAFE ONLINE SPACES



York is often referred to as an 'outdoor museum', such is the incredible heritage and history that adorns its winding streets.

But with seven million tourists visiting those same streets every year, it was important to City of York Council, the guardians of much of these treasures, that people also chose to visit because of its innovative outlook.

Part of this strategy was to become a 'Super Connected City' https://www.york.gov.uk/press/article/1227/scheme_to_connect_york_sme_s_with_superfast_broadband_extended and by 2015 this programme was live. It included access throughout the city centre and parks, on buses, in older people's homes, libraries and in community hubs.

Soon after the WiFi was installed, it became obvious to Roy Grant, City of York Council's head of ICT, Super Connected Cities & Digital Innovation, that ensuring people knew the WiFi was safe and secure had to be a key priority.

He said: **"It's hard to imagine actually how much has moved on since 2015, but with our provider Pinacl, we were on the front line leading the charge for free WiFi in urban spaces."**



"Now, it's something people take for granted – but it also goes further than that. People make decisions based on whether there is free WiFi on offer. This is especially true for overseas visitors as costs of communicating home remain generally expensive."

"However, conversely, when we set out there was kick-back to the idea of having public WiFi at all – to the point I even had people tell me they would never visit York again!"

"We knew that the filters were already in place to make our access safe, but we realised our residents and visitors were in the dark. That's when Pinacl introduced us to Friendly WiFi and we knew immediately we found the answer."

"In fact, pretty much as soon as we started to put the signage up saying that the public WiFi was certified child friendly, the programme was universally accepted and we've never looked back."

The move saw York gain national newspaper headlines <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/porn-free-york-becomes-worlds-6254901> for becoming the UK's first Friendly WiFi city and since then all communication around the WiFi provision, whether it is in bus stops, marketing information or overseas travel advertising, has the Friendly WiFi logo.

Mark Lowe, Strategic Director of Pinacl, said, **"Being the public WiFi provider for the first City to be accredited with Friendly WiFi was a huge accolade for us and we are proud to be a supplier recognised for taking online safety so seriously."**

Bev Smith, Director of Friendly WiFi, said: "The team at City of York Council set the tone for the UK in terms of driving the online safety agenda through its digital programme."

"They were a pleasure to work with from the start and as our first City we still enjoy a close working relationship with Roy and his team. They are extremely passionate about Friendly WiFi and protecting kids and young adults on line."

"They have always given priority to ensuring that Friendly WiFi plays a visible and tangible part in York's digital programme - both in UK and overseas. They are a testament to a city embracing new standards in this digital age."

You can watch all about the success of York's public WiFi here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4DVZXTAssc>