

British town to offer free wi-fi to all residents

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A woman watches a YouTube clip of Scottish charity worker Susan Boyle singing at her audition for "Britain's Got Talent". Swindon has become the first place in Britain to offer free wireless Internet access to all its 186,000 residents, in what is thought to be the first such a scheme, officials have said.

Swindon has become the first place in Britain to offer free wireless Internet access to all its 186,000 residents, in what is thought to be the first such scheme, officials said on Tuesday.

Local authorities will set up 1,400 secure access points around town to create a "[wi-fi](#) mesh" offering residents the Internet without having to pay line rental or connection charge.

The one-million-pound project will be funded by a mixture of public and

private money, but the council hopes it will eventually turn a profit.

Residents will be limited in their usage of the free service but will be able to sign up to 20Mb upgrades for "significantly less per month" than major broadband competitors, while visitors can use a pay-as-you-go service.

Digital City UK Ltd, which is running the project, is 35-percent owned by the council and hopes to roll out similar wi-fi schemes in other towns.

"This is a truly ground-breaking partnership which will have real benefits for everyone living in Swindon," said Rod Bluh, leader of Swindon Borough Council.

The first phase will be switched on in early December, and the council hopes to complete the whole network by April.

In addition to access to normal websites, residents will also be able to use the wi-fi network -- which will be protected by [anti-virus software](#) -- to access council services.

There are also plans to deliver real-time information on home electricity usage and local air quality.

Mustafa Arif, director of aQovia, the council's partner in Digital City UK Ltd, said the scheme was an innovative way to provide revenue and services.

"Digital City's business model is built around subsidising free access with revenues from business and community services that are delivered over our wireless network," he said.

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