



Free 5G Wireless solution helps Social Bite in the movement to end homelessness

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In 2012 Josh Littlejohn MBE and Dr Alice Thompson opened Social Bite as a social business coffee shop in Edinburgh.

Since then, it's been committed to tackling homelessness through programmes offering homes, jobs and food with wrap-around support after a young homeless man asked for a job and was welcomed into the team. With a chain of coffee shops in Scotland and one in London, offering employment and free food to people experiencing homelessness, it has attracted considerable support from the Princess of Wales and a host of celebrities, including George Clooney, Leonardo DiCaprio and Sir Chris Hoy.

As well as providing support and employment opportunities in its coffee shops, Social Bite has been behind a range of groundbreaking projects, including the Social Bite Village, providing safe accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, Housing First Scotland, a pathfinder programme providing mainstream housing to rough sleepers, and its free food programme distributing more than 180,000 items of food and hot drinks to the country's most vulnerable people every year.

Key Facts



The Challenge

Social Bite opened a new London coffee shop in 2022, incorporating their innovative 'pay-it-forward' scheme enabling customers to make a donation that buys food for homeless people. Social Bite recognised that providing free customer WiFi would encourage more people to visit and spend time in the coffee shop and engage more actively with both the local community and its charitable programmes.

Initially, they looked at installing a fixed-line Internet connection. However, the wayleave charge of more than £15,000, an installation lead time of 12 months and the ongoing cost of an Internet Service Provider (ISP) contract meant it wasn't a viable option for a charity with limited funds available. Social Bite reached out to Softcat to investigate if we could help source an alternative, more cost-effective method of delivering the secure wireless internet access provision they needed to make the project a success.

Critical Success Factors



The Solution

Softcat's Chief Technologist for Networking and Connectivity, Thomas Rowley, carried out initial discovery calls with the Social Bite team to understand the scope of what was required. Working collaboratively, Thomas and the Social Bite team quantified the potential number of users, device types, floor plans and wireless use cases.

connectivity for three years.

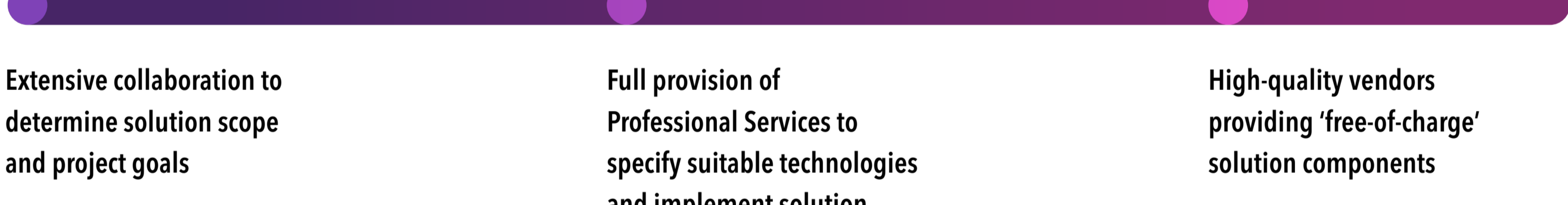
Cisco Meraki agreed to provide the Wireless Access Points, Cradlepoint would deliver the Cellular Router and Firewall and the 5G Data SIM would be offered through Jola. And when it came to project implementation, Softcat's Professional Services team attended on site to install and configure the solution in a single day.

Thomas then reached out to Softcat's Professional Services consultants to carry out a remote wireless network assessment to determine where wireless access points could be located to ensure the best possible coverage. The Architecture Services team at Softcat then helped define a future state solution capable of meeting the project's goals, including required access points, cellular 5G Router and Firewall, and a 5G Data SIM.

"Learning about the remarkable work that Social Bite accomplishes daily, I felt a strong motivation to contribute to its mission," said Thomas Rowley. "By harnessing the combined power of our technology, skills, people, and vendor relationships at Softcat, we aimed to make a tangible impact and support Social Bite's success. Witnessing the enthusiasm between Softcat Services and multiple vendors as they collaborated to ensure the solution met all defined requirements was both humbling and heartwarming. It's truly remarkable that our industry can create real change in homelessness and vulnerable communities by leveraging modern technology. I eagerly anticipate working on more projects in the future."

Trusted providers were then contacted to learn if they could deliver on the proposed architecture. Softcat was keen to ensure that the chosen providers were in support of supplying the solution free of charge whilst ensuring all requirements were met. Three independent vendors stepped up to the plate and agreed to come on board and to jointly provide a wireless network with secure internet

Solution Highlights



The Benefits

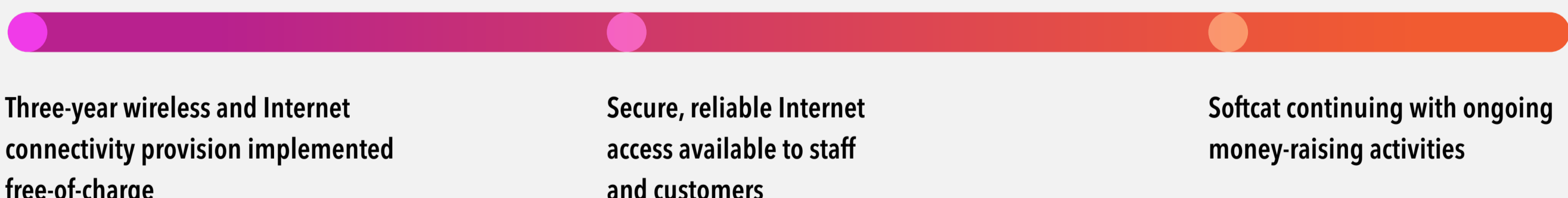
The Social Bite coffee shop is now up and running with secure, reliable Internet access freely available for all staff and customers. It will help ensure that customers are encouraged to choose the coffee shop over others in the area, drive footfall, and underpin the charity's 'pay-it-forward' strategy which aims to provide increasing support for those experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness.

accessible online, it will go a long way to ensuring those most in need of support can more easily access the help that's available to them.

Softcat is also committed to continuing its support for the charity. During May's Big Cyber Summit, held at London's King's Place, visitors to the Softcat and Cradlepoint stands could get a card stamped to help support the charity. Every completed card ensured that a donation would be sent to Social Bite to provide free meals for vulnerable people. The event was a runaway success, with more than £4,000 raised.

Social Bite has benefitted from Softcat's longstanding, robust relationships with leading technology providers, to secure a free-of-charge solution capable of making a real difference to both the charity and the people it supports. And with many of today's support and benefits only

Benefits at a Glance



Why Softcat?

Sara Rees, Social Bite director of partnerships and fundraising, said, "We've been very grateful for Softcat's invaluable support over the last few years, which has included entering top fundraising teams in our sleep out and cycling events, company donations, bringing gifts for homeless and vulnerable people during our Christmas appeal, and volunteering at our services and campaigns.

more people break the cycle of homelessness. Thomas and the Softcat team were a dream to work with and we are hugely grateful for what they've made possible. Thank you so much."

"When we approached Softcat about getting WiFi in our coffee shop in London, we'd been struggling to resolve the issues on our own, with no solution in sight. We were hoping for Softcat's help but we didn't anticipate the outstanding level of support they provided to deliver a result beyond our expectations. They leveraged their expertise and mobilised their supplier networks to find ways around numerous obstacles and sourced the answers and technology required.

Harry Singh, Partner Director at Jola said, "It was a pleasure to work with Softcat, Cradlepoint and Cisco Meraki on a very worthwhile cause in Social Bite. Our combined offering directly addresses the need for internet access for that, and also facilities further donations in store. We hope that, by enabling people to pay it forward in store we can help to reduce homelessness as per the Social Bite mission."

Sarah Ralston-Good, Enterprise Channel Sales at Cradlepoint, part of Ericsson, stated "We're honoured to be a trusted provider for Softcat in this endeavour with Social Bite and their movement to end homelessness. By providing a wireless network with secure internet connectivity to Social Bite, we're making a real difference to both the charity and the people it supports by keeping their staff and customers connected and helping create a greater experience for all."

"Along the way, they skillfully influenced multiple stakeholders to prevent delays and remain resourceful and solutions focused. Softcat took us from no WiFi at all to live, free customer WiFi, saving vital funds and facilitating a better guest experience, which in turn will support increased awareness and donations and help