



Blackpool Council

UK Town Secures Its Network with Fortinet

Situation

A major town of nearly 150,000 people, Blackpool is a well-known UK holiday resort and third largest settlement in North West England, after Manchester and Liverpool.

[Blackpool Council](#) provides network services for all the state schools and public libraries in the area, as well as for a multitude of its own office and logistics sites. Broadband connectivity speeds for the sites have been increasing exponentially, particularly for the 40 schools in Blackpool that each run at between 10Mbps and 100Mbps. With various rich-media educational services due to drive future speeds to 200Mbps and above, Blackpool Council found that its core network infrastructure struggled to keep pace.

"We aggregate all traffic onto our core network at very high speed, where we apply various security policies in order to mitigate malicious threats and block any inappropriate content," explained Tony Doyle, Head of ICT at Blackpool Council. "The throughput we needed was placing enormous pressure on our security infrastructure, which at that time was a complex array of separate hardware devices. We needed to simplify and accelerate our network security, but for the time being were just trying to manage with what we had."

Change was coming however, as Blackpool's incumbent Web content filtering solution became discontinued and the product vendor offered only an inflexible and prohibitively expensive alternative. As it transpired, Blackpool would be doing more than simply replacing their content filtering capability, but also firewalls, and in the future possibly more – all unified within a high-performance security platform.

Solution

The Council's approved network solutions partner, [Synetrix](#), was engaged to call upon its extensive experience of designing and deploying Web content filtering solutions, and provide Blackpool with its recommendation.

Fortinet was identified as the preferred choice based upon feature support, ease of deployment, cost effectiveness and future capabilities. A highly resilient solution was designed based on the deployment of two [FortiGate®-1240B](#) hardware accelerated security appliances, supported with real-time updates from the FortiGuard® threat research and response centre. As well as school students, Doyle also envisaged the Fortinet solution to provide Web content filtering for council staff, and ensure secure Internet access for wireless LAN users and public access users in libraries and council premises.

"As soon as we made the decision to adopt Fortinet, we saw the opportunity to consolidate other security functions into the same appliance," said Doyle. "The performance is outstanding, and it made aggregating other security functions like firewall a bit of a no-brainer. It wasn't just to save money. We've simplified our network, accelerated traffic throughput and made it ready for the long term; it just so happens we've reduced our security costs into the bargain."

Blackpool had been routing schools traffic on its core network through a Cisco Pix firewall, with a SurfControl/Websense content filtering system situated in-line. In addition, the majority of schools were running server-based Microsoft ISA Servers onsite. In a separate network and datacentre, traffic for the libraries and other sites had passed through a Checkpoint firewall prior to web content filtering.

Challenges

- Implement unified security solution which would address needs of high-speed network infrastructure

Objectives

- Secure Internet access for wireless LAN and public access users
- Simplify and accelerate network security
- Streamline security management and improve control

Deployment

FortiGate-1240B
FortiGate-50B

Industry

Local Government

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– Tony Doyle
Head of ICT

Blackpool Council

"We always found it a real challenge to keep pace with connectivity demands, particularly as they increased over time. Since unifying the content filtering and firewall functions with single instances of the Fortinet appliance, the feedback from users has been that they've never seen the Internet go so fast! We've also got much more control now, and can easily manipulate distinct firewall and Web content filtering policies for each connection."

The FortiGate-1240B appliance raises the bar in network security devices by delivering security throughput at switching speeds (firewall throughput up to 40Gbps). Thirty-eight hardware accelerated ports, of the 40 total on the system, allow networks to enforce firewall policy between network segmentation points for layered security with switch-like performance. Fortinet's high performance FortiASIC™ network and content processors ensure that the security device will not become a bottleneck by utilising intelligent digital engines to accelerate compute-intensive security services.

As all Fortinet appliances are built on a common source code, Doyle chose to procure a number of additional SOHO-sized FortiGate-50s to use as 'trainings and pits' among members of his technical team. "It isn't practical to play around with the FortiGate-1240Bs and try new things out, because they are installed. The FortiGate-50s use the same interface, and other than the difference in scale and connectivity, are based on the same technology. Some people from my staff have taken them away as homework."

Success

Rather than being an opportunistic investment, Doyle believes that Fortinet has delivered a number of strategic advantages including streamlined management, greater network visibility and future security deployment flexibility. Crucially, Fortinet has also enabled Blackpool to meet difficult compliance challenges such as GovConnect CoCo, and PCI DSS.

"Like many large organisations, we share a lot of management responsibility for the network with a trusted partner – in our case Synetrix. Fortinet gives us maximum visibility in order to achieve seamless working between our two teams, and speed up the resolution of issues and troubleshooting."

"FortiGate's flexibility is supporting our long-term security strategy, while also solving a few tactical opportunities. We are seriously considering adding IPS and email filtering at some stage, as our tests indicate that any performance impact would be minimal."

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