

# THE NEC

STADIUM | BIRMINGHAM | THENEC.CO.UK

## PROFILE

One of Europe's leading exhibition and event centres, the NEC offers flexible space for any of your events, including ready-made layouts and blank canvases which spark innovation and creativity.

Indoors - over 182,000 square metres of indoor space, 20 interconnecting halls, 34 specialist conference and meetings suites and the 15,643 capacity LG Arena on site.

Outdoors - over 392 acres of hard-standing and 75 acres of woodland to take the shows and the action into the open air too!

## GOAL

Aware of the growing need for connectivity, especially for mobile devices, The NEC embarked on a selection process to source a robust and high performance WiFi network, capable of supporting connectivity needs for the coming years. The worlds most capable WiFi vendors were invited to tender for the contract. WiFi SPARK being chosen by two of the major infrastructure providers.

## RESULT

Visitors to the NEC can connect to free WiFi across the venue, enabling them to stay connected to their homes, offices and social media networks while they're attending an event, all for free! This can be accessed using a WiFi compatible device, such as mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

The network is centrally manage through one dashboard for easy administration access.

"In today's digital world, NEC visitors want to stay connected with their social and business lives at all times, leading to an increased demand for wireless capacity. Our objective is to hold onto our position as the best venue in the UK and to do so we need to provide cutting edge facilities. Our customers told us that Wi-Fi was a priority if we wanted to make the NEC an even better place to visit."

Kathryn James,  
Managing Director at the NEC

## CUSTOMER PROFILE

The NEC is one of the country's leading exhibition centres, located in the heart of the UK with excellent road rail and air links. Opened by Elizabeth II in February 1976, the first event to be staged at the venue was International Spring Fair, which has returned every year since. Growing annually, the event now occupies all of the NEC's 20 halls and the LG Arena.

The NEC hosts more than 140 trade shows and events each year and over two million visitors come through its doors every year.

## GOAL

- To provide free to use WiFi access
- To cater for thousands of visitors
- Centrally managed network
- Multi-device capability
- Responsive User Experience Portal
- WebAdmin access to administer network changes
- Reporting and Analytics

## SOLUTION

After shortlisting to two suppliers and eventually choosing infrastructure from Xirrus with a WiFi SPARK managed service platform, The NEC launched its free visitor Wi-Fi service at Spring Fair International, the UK's largest trade show, from 3 – 7 February 2013. This event saw more than 68,000 visitors – and saw more than 19,000 devices connected to the network, half of which were Smartphones.

The NEC chose the WiFi SPARK Platform as it is best suited to support the requirement. The feature rich and robust product has been a proven success with previous Event WiFi solutions implemented for the NEC which made the selection process an easy one. Event WiFi and its engagement of clients, data collection and immediate ROI are now considered a critical application. WiFi SPARK's ability to provide a high availability system for the NEC to protect their business and brand was essential.

The Xirrus Access Points chosen for the installation, provide four times the coverage and up to eight times the bandwidth and capacity of traditional access points. When a user connects to an Access Point, they are redirected to the User Experience Portal where they can log in to the WiFi and surf the net. In combination, few other solutions come close for performance and reliability.

### The NEC's key features:

- Full WiFi compliance
- Branded User Experience
- Content filtering
- User and device analytics
- Optional marketing opportunities
- Quality hardware
- Lawful intercept capability
- Free to use access