

# BT trials drone and AI technology at Southampton port

BT has successfully completed an automated drone trial at the Port of Southampton in partnership with Associated British Ports (ABP) and RoboK.

---

The trial saw a drone flying over the port's vehicle inventory lot to capture images that were then fed into an artificial intelligence (AI) powered system to track and analyse vehicle occupancy levels.

The trial forms part of ABP's ambitions to use the latest technologies to improve operational efficiency, accuracy and safety for its ports and customers. Implementing drone automation with AI could provide a breadth of opportunities to exploit data and provide accurate management of its sites, asset control and enhanced security.

Through the partnership, BT has used drone technology to trial a fully automated process to identify, track and analyse the number of vehicles across the port at any given time. This is key for ABP's business to allow for accurate billing, better management of operational costs and insight-led decision making for the port's management team.

As part of the trial, BT partnered with RoboK, a Cambridge based startup specialising in efficient 3D computer vision. RoboK's use of AI technology was able to detect, track and count vehicles in real time, captured from the drone footage.

The trial will help the companies understand the potential use cases for “drone-in-a-box” (DIAB) solutions in port environments. Unlike *traditional drones*, DIAB systems deploy autonomously from a box that also functions as a landing pad and charging base. After carrying out their instructions, these drones return to their “base” to charge and upload information.

Dave Pankhurst, head of drones solutions, *BT’s Enterprise* unit, said: “Drone technology can deliver vastly improved services to businesses and the public and even more so when dovetailed with automation capability.

“Our trial demonstrates how drone technology – underpinned by BT’s network – can lead to meaningful innovation to transform business operations. For ABP, it can fast track new levels of digital transformation across its UK ports – saving costs, boosting efficiency and improving safety.”

---

Article by MADDYNESS UK