

Mitie unveils UK's largest fleet of autonomous cobots at Heathrow

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With a record-breaking 84 million travellers expected to pass through Heathrow this year, passengers heading off on their summer holidays will get a glimpse of the future when they next travel through the UK's international gateway – thanks to the roll-out of Mitie's fleet of automated cleaning robots. The fleet of 32 futuristic cobots is now the UK's largest and ranges in size from smaller robots -- resembling Star Wars fan favourite R2-D2 – through to large floor cleaners.

Each one uses Mitie's cutting-edge smart technology to keep the airport in pristine condition, using sensors to map the area around them and avoid obstructing the passengers who pass through the terminals. The autonomous machines can independently carry out tasks such as mopping and polishing.

After cleaning for up to three hours, they return to their docking stations to recharge, before heading back out to work again. With the machines being fully electric, they provide a green, efficient way of providing hygiene services.

Each cobot can:

Clean an area of 4,800m every day – around the size of eight football pitches

Recycle water as they clean, requiring just 18 litres of water a day

Provide up to three hours of cleaning for every charge

The cobots support Mitie's 850 cleaning and hygiene specialists at Heathrow, who will continue to deliver more specialist, deep cleaning tasks.

Heather Downes, Head of Innovation and Production Development, Mitie, said: "We're proud to welcome our latest cobots to the fleet to support smarter operations, enhancing the travel experience for millions of people passing through Heathrow. By blending cutting-edge technology with human expertise, we're creating cleaner, greener terminals and giving our teams more time to focus on the details that matter most to passengers.

"It's not just their sustainable credentials that are proving popular. The cobots have quickly established themselves as a favourite with families – with the machines providing an entertaining distraction to young travellers during the check-in process. "This is just the start of how we're harnessing technology to build brilliant places for people to work, live and commute."

Theo Baldwin-Evans, Soft Services and Hygiene Manager, Heathrow, said: "Working closely with our partners, Heathrow is proud to deliver innovative solutions to enhance passenger experience. Combining cutting-edge technology with excellent hygiene services, we are pleased to welcome the newest members of Mitie's cobot fleet, which are already very popular with passengers and colleagues alike."

Mitie has delivered cleaning services for all of Heathrow's terminals since 2022 after first being awarded cleaning contracts at the airport in 2018. As part of its technology-led approach to serving Heathrow, Mitie also has a fleet of UVD automated robots, which use ultraviolet technology to disinfect areas such as toilets. Mitie is also rolling out a number of innovative cleaning solutions at Heathrow to make the passenger experience even more seamless – including a new rubbish bin monitoring service, which will alert the airport's cleaning team when a bin is 75% full and needs emptying. Mitie has also rolled out cleaning cobots at key railway hubs, including King's Cross, Waterloo, London Bridge and Liverpool Street.