

## Amazon Warehouse Tour. 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019.

In the spring of 2017, Amazon opened the brand new fulfilment centre (dubbed 'LCY2' after its closest airport, London City) in Tilbury, Essex, creating 3,500 new permanent jobs in the local area. At 2 million sq ft, the warehouse equates to 28 football pitches, making it one of the biggest warehouses in the UK.

Amazon Tilbury became the third fulfilment centre in the UK to use the pioneering robotics technology produced by its subsidiary Amazon Robotics. This advanced robotics technology aids operations by speeding up processing time, reducing walking time for employees, and allowing for 50 per cent more items to be stowed away per square foot.

Robots in a caged off area slide under towers of shelves where products are stocked, lift them and move them through the centre to the worker selecting items for delivery, and not the other way round, making the process quicker.

We received a warm welcome from our tour guide Paul in the reception area. After a safety talk we received an audio headset so we could hear Paul during the tour along with a Hi-Viz jacket and a bottle of water.

We started our tour where the items are stored after arriving from manufacturers or private sellers. The items have already been weighed and measured and their barcodes entered into the computer system. This warehouse only stocks items up to 18 inches in length. The mixed items arrive in black 'tote' crates, the barcode on the crate is scanned and robots will bring suitable storage racks to the person storing the items. One item at a time is selected, scanned and put into a location on the storage rack which is also scanned. The item is now available for sale, all items are stored randomly throughout the storage racks to avoid congestion when picking.

We next moved on to a picking location, robots deliver racks to a picker and the computer system will show what to pick and which tote to put it into. The totes then make their way to the packing area via conveyer belts and helter-skelters for going between floors.

Stopping briefly at a bank of screens where all the processes are monitored and any problems highlighted to be dealt with, we moved on to the packing area. Here the system will tell the packer what size box is required and then measure out the correct length of special pre-gummed parcel tape for the package.

After a taking few Amazon selfies, we came to where the package has its address label put on after being weighed again. If the weight is not what is expected the package is diverted for a human to open and find out what is wrong.

Finally we arrived at the despatch area. Here the packages come off the conveyer belts and are put on pallets to be loaded onto lorries destined for distribution centres.

We were given hands on experience at storing, picking and packing during our tour and finished with a welcome cuppa and an Amazon drinking bottle as a free gift.

