

Active Ants opens its 5th fulfilment centre in the UK

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Active Ants, a subsidiary of the bpost group, will open its 5th fulfilment centre in September 2022. The newest facility is located in Northampton, England and is owned by M&G Real Estate, the property investment arm of M&G plc.

Best fulfilment company in Europe

After operating 2 successful sites in the Netherlands, Active Ants has expanded into Belgium and Germany in recent years. "Active Ants wants to be the best fulfilment company in Europe", says Co-founder and Managing Partner Jeroen Dekker. "We are delighted that our arrival in the UK will further increase our presence in Europe and we believe we are moving into one of the most exciting online markets. With our strong focus on innovation and automation we offer tailor made business to consumer (B2C) logistics for (SME) web shops. We are convinced that this will create superior value for our customers'.

About Active Ants

Active Ants was founded in 2010 with the idea of making e-fulfilment more accurate and efficient through innovation, automation and working with robots. Active Ants has since grown into one of the larger players in the Netherlands with over 250 customers and more than 5 million orders per year.

Sustainability and location central to choosing Northampton

Northampton is situated in the heart of England. The Brackmills Industrial Estate is the centre of e-commerce logistics in the United Kingdom. Jeroen: "This combination makes it the perfect location for our e-fulfilment activities. We will be close to our customers and have good connections with last-mile distributors".

"In our search for the right location and the right building, it was important for us to find a building that fulfilled our mission and values. The 'outstanding' BREEAM certification of the Brackmills Estate means that the building performs at the highest environmental level, which fits perfectly with our sustainable - and highly automated - way of working. Active Ants is committed to sustainable relationships with all its stakeholders: customers, employees and the community".

Michael Wood, Portfolio Director at M&G Real Estate, comments: "With this scheme, M&G is delivering on its commitment to providing high quality, ESG-led schemes which meet the exacting requirements of modern occupiers, and we are delighted to be welcoming an innovative international operator with this significant pre-let."

Efficient cooperation between man and robot

"Storage, order picking, packaging and sorting are also fully automated in this brand new fulfilment centre", tells Jeroen. "For order picking, employees work efficiently together with robots. The receipt of goods and the return flow remain manual processes. This mechanisation ensures efficiency, high quality and a pleasant working environment for our employees. The set-up is unique in the world."

Warehouse with AutoStore

The basis of our warehouse is the Autostore, a unique system where goods are stored very compactly in bins. On top of the AutoStore is

a framework of rails, on which robots ride. By means of intelligent software, a robot knows exactly which bin to take to the employees at the picking stations. Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs) bring empty boxes to the employee who fills them with goods delivered by the storage robots. Thanks to the innovative AutoStore solution, we take up 6 times less space than in a traditional warehouse.

This good-to-man system has a very low footprint. The system stores up to six times more stock per square metre, and the robots reuse their own energy, so electrical consumption is minimal.

Carrier robots

The carrier robots then drive to various packing machines which select the ideal size boxes and close them to size - weighing them and providing a shipping label, so that no

padding material is needed. As a result, Active Ants transports on average 40% less air to the customer. This also allows us to transport more packages in a truck and reduce our CO2 emissions even further. Once filled, closed and printed, the carrier robots pick up the parcels and sort them out to their respective carriers.

Custom printed box

Also in Northampton, Active Ants' specially developed box closing machines with built-in printer is used. Jeroen: "This allows every customer to get their own custom printed box. Through this unique functionality, we enable large, but now also smaller webshops, to offer customised packaging. Keeping pre-printed boxes in stock is no longer necessary. This saves our customers costs and also reduces their footprint".

Source: [bpost](#)