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From Multi to Omni

Major UK retailer John Lewis has invested further in its National Distribution Centre with the addition of a second facility featuring automated handling systems.

Part of the company's £250m investment in its logistics network to ensure efficiency in store replenishment and fulfilment of online orders from a single pool of stock, the new warehouse went live in stages. With 48 stores and a thriving online business supporting sales in excess of £4 billion, John Lewis is the UK's largest department store group, stocking more than 350,000 lines across fashion, home and technology.

Working in partnership with KNAPP, John Lewis has added Magna Park 2 (MP2) to the site, connected to Magna Park 1 (MP1) by a 96m-long link bridge. The automated systems supplied by KNAPP in MP1 back in 2009 helped the retailer to implement a 'sell one, pick one' replenishment strategy for its stores in order to minimise stock. The warehouse automation has since been developed to support John Lewis as its multi-channel distribution evolved into an omni-channel operation. With the addition of MP2, the Magna Park Campus can now process hanging garments for the first time.

Consolidation is crucial

Automated handling systems from Dürkopp Fördertechnik, a member of the KNAPP Group, allow the processing of clothing on hangers in MP2 and enable the consolidation of hanging garments with other goods for both store replenishment and online orders.



"The ability to consolidate goods in this way is crucial for the business," explains John Munnely, Head of Operations at the Magna Park Campus, "because some 40% of fashion orders include what we call 'binnable' items – those stored in totes – such as shoes and accessories." The consolidation of orders between MP1 and MP2 is reducing the total number of orders, which results in a significant saving in transport costs.

Capacity for 1.6m garments

With a footprint of 675,000 sq ft and a further 1.1 million sq ft of space on its mezzanine floors, MP2 has capacity for 1.6m garments. The hanging garment storage area has six levels, divided into static and dynamic sections. In the garment sortation area, a 3-stage sequence sorter ensures that batch-picked product is delivered in a store-friendly manner to the John Lewis branches, whilst e-commerce items are transported to the packing stations in the exact sequence required.

Extra storage capacity

Tote storage in MP2 is handled by KNAPP's YLOG-Shuttle system, which enables shuttles to travel in both directions through the use of swivelling wheels and an innovative power supply system. With 72 shuttles serving over 71,000 locations, the YLOG store feeds totes containing flat-packed fashion items to three ergonomically designed pick-to-light stations. MP2 also features

a high-bay pallet store for pre-toted buffer stock, served by five automatic stacker cranes that operate to a height of 19.4m in aisles that are 130m long.

Resident service team

At peak, Magna Park replenishes some 3 million units of stock to stores each week, as well as delivering approximately 60% of the online business, either directly to the customer or via Click and Collect. This means that any unplanned downtime can have a catastrophic impact on John Lewis' supply chain. To avoid this, both MP1 and MP2 are supported by KNAPP's resident Customer Service team, which ensures maximum performance capacity and availability for the handling systems.

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KNAPP is a leading global supplier of warehouse automation solutions, with over 1700 active systems worldwide. The group's advanced conveying, storage and fulfilment technologies are combined in solutions that feature seamless integration and intelligent software. Successful projects in the UK recently include systems for John Lewis, Boots, M&S, Staples, Clarks, British Gas and Well.

KNAPP UK Ltd
Unit 60, Monument Business Park
Wingrove Lane, Chalgrove
Oxfordshire OX44 7RW
Tel. 01655 965 000 | sales.uk@knapp.com
www.knapp.com

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