

# Amazon accused of using ‘union-busting’ tactics at Midlands warehouses

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The GMB has accused Amazon of resorting to “union-busting” tactics at its warehouses in the Midlands, with workplace message boards telling staff: “We want to speak with you. A union wants to speak for you.” The claim comes as the union prepares to take three days of strike action next week at Amazon’s Coventry warehouse, known as BHX4, as part of an industrial dispute that has been going on for more than a year. Staff are demanding a pay increase to £15 an hour and the right to negotiate with the company over pay and conditions. The Guardian has seen photographs of information boards and company newsletters the GMB said were displayed inside BHX4 and other Amazon warehouses in the region. These show messages including: “The union wants you to pay £14.37 every month for them to speak for you. We believe having a voice shouldn’t cost you anything,” and: “You don’t have to join a union to have your voice heard. We’ve got you.” Another says: “Before you vote or join a union, we encourage you to seek out the facts for yourself. The best relationships are the direct ones.” Gary Smith, the GMB’s general secretary, said: “Let’s call this what it is: one of the world’s wealthiest companies engaged in union-busting right here in the UK.” GMB members in Coventry “are refusing to be beaten by Amazon’s union-busting and they will win the pay and recognition they deserve”, he added. Kate Bell, assistant general secretary of the TUC, who visited the picket line in Coventry last year, said: “Instead of treating its workforce with the respect it deserves, Amazon is using every trick in the book to stop workers from organising for better pay and conditions.” The GMB’s latest criticism of Amazon comes as it gears up for a fresh battle to achieve formal recognition in Coventry. The union withdrew an application to the independent Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) last year, accusing Amazon of drafting in at least 1,000 additional workers to ensure the GMB could not show it represented a clear majority of staff at the site. The company denied that allegation, saying any new staff were brought in as a result of normal business requirements. With a concerted union recruitment drive continuing at the site, the GMB said it anticipated making a new application to the CAC this spring. An Amazon spokesperson said: “We respect our employees’ rights to join, or not to join, a union.”