



Press Release

Brussels, 8 February 2018

KBC to carry out major renovations and full remediation of the KBC Tower in Antwerp.

Staff and other users to be temporarily relocated to other premises.

Over the past number of months, KBC has been carrying out renovation work to the KBC Tower in Antwerp. During the works, concealed asbestos that had not previously been visible or accessible was discovered in a couple of specific areas. Further proactive investigations revealed that more remnants of asbestos from the past were present in a few other areas in the building, despite the thorough asbestos remediation work performed in the early 1990s. KBC also took the immediate decision to halt the renovation work pending further analysis.

According to independent experts, no KBC employees, other users or visitors to the building have been or are being put at any risk.

Over the past few weeks and months, KBC – in collaboration with IBEVE (an accredited, specialised external consultancy firm that continually advises KBC on this matter) – has openly informed all staff, including the social partners, of the situation by means of extensive information sessions. KBC's contractors and suppliers have likewise been kept fully informed. A preventive programme for measuring air quality enables KBC to keep close track of the situation.

KBC does not want to take any risks whatsoever and has decided to embark on a full remediation programme in order to guarantee the well-being and workplace comfort of all the employees and other users of the KBC Tower.

KBC will restart renovations on the entire KBC Tower in Antwerp as planned, render the building future-proof and also remove the concealed remnants of asbestos from the past that have been found in the building.

Consequently, the building will be gradually and totally cleared in the months ahead. This is the only way to ensure that the contractors can work safely and efficiently. The major work will start after the summer.

KBC realises that this renovation and remediation work, as well as the resultant relocation, may cause inconvenience for its employees and the other users of the KBC Tower, but stresses that it is taking these steps to guarantee the well-being and workplace comfort of all concerned.

The relocation will be phased in over the coming months.

- The ATM lobby, the cash dispensers outside the building and the vault will remain available as much as possible during the works.

- Starting from this summer and during the (entire) duration of the works, staff and 'residents' will be moved either to other KBC buildings or to premises elsewhere in the city that KBC will rent while the works are in progress.
- Omnia clients, retail clients of the KBC Bank branch, private banking clients and corporate clients on the ground floor will shortly be informed of where they can go to continue their banking business.
- The start-up businesses, which via Start it @kbc have been accommodated at no charge on various floors of the building for a number of years, will start to be moved in the summer to another free location elsewhere in the city. They will be given more details of this in due course.
- As regards the commercial businesses located at street level, KBC will examine the various options with the parties concerned.

The works are expected to last for at least two years.

A tower with an illustrious past and a history of renovation

The KBC Tower was the first skyscraper on continental Europe. Construction of the 87.5-metre-high apartment building, also known as the 'Boerentoren', was started in 1929 and completed in 1931. A new wing was added in the 1970s and the tower fully converted to an office building. It has been a listed monument since 1981.

In the post-war period right up to the end of the 1970s, asbestos was a very popular building material because of its versatility, strength and fire-resistant qualities. Accordingly, the material can be found in virtually every private home, government building, school and operating plant from that era. For instance, sprayed asbestos was commonly used in the 1970s to render high steel-structured buildings fireproof, in line with the laws and regulations in force at that time.

The KBC Tower received a first thorough remediation in the 1990s, with the work including the removal or encasement of as much of the sprayed asbestos as possible. The work carried out on the building was approved by a certified inspection agency.

The general ban on using asbestos (in Belgium) was introduced in 1998.

Close preventive inspection of concealed remnants of asbestos from the past

During the past few months, renovation work was started on the lighting system, electricity system, sanitary facilities and air conditioning to render the interior of the KBC Tower future-proof. During the works, concealed asbestos that had not previously been visible or accessible was discovered in a couple of specific areas.

Although there is no immediate danger, KBC has nevertheless decided to halt the works and to relocate the members of staff working in the affected and adjacent areas to other areas in the building or to other premises before the full renovation and remediation work starts.

KBC is being continually advised and guided by external experts, with the internal Health, Safety & Security Department playing an active role too (vis-à-vis the government, the Occupational Health & Safety Committee and employees, and vis-à-vis contractors and suppliers).

KBC also continuously measures asbestos levels in the whole building for preventative reasons using highly sensitive metering equipment to exclude any health risks and to keep a close eye on the situation. According to independent experts, members of staff and visitors to the building have not been put at any risk.

Jan Van Bouwel, asbestos specialist at IBEVE adds: *'For renovation work in the Tower, KBC – as a precaution – has always used the 'professional' standards laid down by current legislation when measuring air quality. During the works, independent experts take air samples and perform an optical fibre count to determine whether any asbestos is present in the construction site area. If there is the slightest doubt, the requisite measures are always taken to ensure that the fibres are prevented from spreading and an extensive measuring programme using highly sensitive equipment is also started up in the building outside the construction site area. In such cases, the air samples are always analysed by an independent laboratory, which uses an even more sensitive technique (electron microscopy) that can also detect very low quantities of asbestos (traces) in the air. For air quality in the building, KBC therefore uses standards which are far stricter than current legal requirements and which take account of the requirements laid down by the World Health Organisation, and other asbestos-related standards (best practice). If traces of asbestos fibres are detected in a reading, KBC takes appropriate measures and pursues a highly professional and proactive approach. That demonstrates a high sense of responsibility towards its employees, the other users of the building and the contractors carrying out the work.'*

It is from having this sense of responsibility that KBC has decided on a full renovation and remediation of the KBC Tower, even though there is no immediate danger.

KBC Group NV

Havenlaan 2 – 1080 Brussels
Viviane Huybrecht
General Manager of Corporate Communication
KBC Group Spokesperson
Tel.: + 32 2 429 85 45

Press Office
Tel.: + 32 2 429 65 01 (Stef Leunens)
Tel.: + 32 2 429 29 15 (Ilse De Muyer)

E-mail: pressofficekbc@kbc.be

Follow us on www.twitter.com/kbc_group

KBC press releases are available at www.kbc.com
or can be obtained by sending an e-mail
to pressofficekbc@kbc.be

Check this document's authenticity
at www.kbc.com/authenticity.