



Press Release

Brussels, 13 November 2019

3.3 hectares of new forest in Flanders thanks to cooperation between Natuurpunt and KBC

KBC "Team Blue challenge" yields 24 000 trees

On Sunday 17 November, Johan Thijs, CEO of KBC Group, and Lieven De Schamphelaere, chairman of Natuurpunt, will give the first shovel for planting 3.3 hectares of new forest in Flanders in Halle (near Brussels), which corresponds to 7 football pitches. This initiative is part of the fifth KBC "Team Blue Challenge", contributing in this way to the Natuurpunt campaign "Bos voor Iedereen".

In Wallonia, KBC, in collaboration with Natagora, the Walloon sister association of Natuurpunt, will plant a 1250-metre hedge at an organic farmer in Antheit (municipality of Wanze).

Johan Thijs, CEO of KBC Group explains: 'Climate change is a real challenge for the financial sector and is undeniably an important theme in the risk management of a financial institution. With our "Team Blue goes Green" challenge we wanted to create more awareness together and positively increase our impact on the climate. Our employees have launched numerous initiatives and clean-up operations and have demonstrated their commitment to the environment and climate. Although each employee could 'earn' only one tree, we noticed that many of them participated in several activities. I would like to thank them once again and I am happy that we can do our bit in Belgium by planting 12,000 trees and shrubs together with Natuurpunt in Flanders and with Natagora in Wallonia. In our other core markets (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Ireland), another 12 000 trees will be planted'.

Lieven De Schamphelaere, chairman of Natuurpunt is pleased with the commitment of KBC: "There is a real shortage of forest in Flanders, while forest is so important for people and animals. We are therefore pleased that KBC is committed to help realising more forest in Flanders. Thanks to KBC's support for the "Forest for All" campaign, we can plant new forests at 3 locations. In Halle, Geetbets and Aalst a total of 3.3 ha of new forest will be added. In Halle, beech, oak and other native trees will form a new forest that fits within the 'Plan pine marten'. The aim of this plan is to connect the fragmented nature reserves in and around Halle and thus create a large connected habitat for the rare pine marten."

“Team Blue goes green”

"Team Blue goes green" was the challenge Johan Thijs, CEO of KBC Group, posed to Team Blue, a group-wide initiative within KBC to strengthen the ties and promote cooperation among all of KBC's staff in the various countries where KBC is active.

KBC employees were challenged to work together to set up as many actions as possible that have a positive impact on the environment and climate. In return, KBC would plant a tree for each individual employee who participated in an activity. The ultimate goal was to involve all 42,000 KBC employees in the initiative so that in the autumn 42,000 trees could be planted in the various core countries where KBC is active. A total of 24,000 colleagues have earned a tree. For Belgium, this resulted in 12,000 trees and shrubs that will be planted by Natuurpunt and Natagora.

About Natuurpunt:

Natuurpunt is an independent voluntary association with more than 110,000 members. Natuurpunt manages and protects more than 25,000 hectares of Flemish nature in 500 different nature reserves. With many hundreds of footpaths, benches and play forests, Natuurpunt gives everyone the chance to enjoy nature. Departments and working groups are active in every Flemish municipality. Natuurpunt brings people together. Every year, Natuurpunt organises thousands of activities: guided walks, management works, courses and workshops.

www.natuurpunt.be

‘Bos voor Iedereen’ will start its ninth edition this year. Since the first edition, 55 hectares or 110 football pitches have been planted with new forest in Kampenhout, Kontich, Lier, Loppem, Maasmechelen, Ninove, Sint-Katelijne-Waver, Zedelgem and Zottegem.

More info about the different planting locations:

www.bosvooriiedereen.be

About Natagora:

Natagora is the Walloon sister association of Natuurpunt, active in Wallonia and Brussels and working in a similar way to that of Natuurpunt. Hundreds of volunteers, nature lovers and ornithologists take care of it together:

- monitoring of the species,
- restoration of rare environments, more than 4200 hectares of exceptional nature reserves,
- discovery tours along the natural heritage,
- and activities for children etc.

The association is the result of the merger of AVES (Society for Ornithological Studies), specialised in the study and protection of birds, and RNOB (Réserves Naturelles et Ornithologiques de Belgique), especially known for its many nature reserves.

www.natagora.be

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