

BESI UK investment bank readies recruitment drive

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By: Matt Turner

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The investment banking arm of Novo Banco, the 'good bank' created from collapsed Portuguese lender Banco Espírito Santo, is planning a hiring drive in London amid its pending sale to a Chinese buyer.

BESI employs around 1,000 staff globally, with the UK unit based in the London Stock Exchange building on Paternoster Square.

Senior figures at the unit invited recruiters in recent weeks to discuss the potential to hire a significant number of staff across equity research, sales and trading, according to people familiar with the situation. At least one of those search firms has landed a retained role.

The London operation was most recently in the news earlier this month when the UK's Financial Conduct Authority fined it £231,000 for violating UK Listing Authority rules in 2013.

Nick Wilson, promoted to head of research earlier this month, confirmed the appointment of headhunters but said the strategy was still under discussion. He said: "I think it would be fair to say that we are potentially entering a very exciting time for the bank which has been through a fairly mixed time of late, and hopefully we will have a pretty positive message to say going forward."

He added that the unit would continue to have a presence covering both small and mid-cap and large-cap stocks: "I think we will be reasonably ambitious on both fronts."

Banco Espírito Santo was bailed out last summer with its investment banking arm shifted into Novo Banco, a so-called 'good bank' created from the remains of the parent's businesses.

Staff departures gathered pace throughout the second half of last year with over 20 employees exiting. These included Dipesh Patel, the head of European equities; Erik Anderson, corporate broking head; and Danielle Poulain, head of corporate access. More recently, Paddy Mayhew, who co-led European equities for a period, and Will Draper, Wilson's predecessor as head of research, have also left.

In December, Novo Banco announced it had agreed a €379 million deal to sell its investment banking arm to Haitong Securities, with that deal expected to close later this year.

The hiring will initially focus on replacing those who have left the firm, with a second round of recruitment potentially taking place once the deal with Haitong has closed.

Wilson said: "We see this as a development phase and that our growth will come through in different stages.

"There is a first stage that can be delivered without a requirement for deal closure or change in parent company, and then potentially, stage two would very much be driven in partnership with Haitong Securities."

Haitong Securities could not be reached for comment.