

**News Release**

**10 March 2015**

## **BBC Panorama spotlight on new ‘custom-build’ Lancaster waterside homes**

BBC’s Panorama team shone a spotlight on H2O Urban’s innovative ‘custom-build’ development in Lancaster last night when the programme examined potential solutions to Britain’s critical housing shortage.



The programme, presented by Mariella Frostrup, was broadcast on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March at 10.45pm. The half hour documentary was devoted to housing and is one of four programmes examining the state of the nation in the run up to the general election.

Producers contacted H2O property developer Richard Thomas because they were interested in featuring the revolutionary approach alongside more conventional house building options like self-build.

Richard, along with custom-build purchaser Jim Combe, were interviewed on H2O's trail blazing development at Aldcliffe Yard in Lancaster – a collection of 14 family homes under construction at a canalside heritage site close to the city centre.

H<sup>2</sup>O Urban, a partnership between property development company *bloc* and the Canal & River Trust, believes custom-build is a win-win for house buyers. It allows people flexibility over the interior layout of their new home without the risk and responsibility of a traditional self-build.

H2O Urban gains planning permission for the development's external design and then purchasers buy a plot outright, design their own layouts and hand over the build project management back to H2O specialists. This is effectively a half-way house between self-build and buying off-plan, and also offers the potential to earn significant savings on the final purchase price.



Richard said: “We were delighted to show the Panorama film team around the construction site of our first custom-build development. This new approach is proving increasingly popular as more and more people discover how the process works.”

Jim Combe was interviewed on the plot of his new home which is due for completion this summer. He told producer Judith Ahern how he and his wife had enjoyed the chance to put their own unique stamp on the property by moving ground floor walls and re-designing their bathrooms to create extra light and space. Their lounge, dining room, master bedroom and guest bedroom will all overlook the canal.

Jim explained earlier: “We looked at self-build and barn conversions but I think it would be too daunting just to have an empty plot of land. Custom-build takes away some of the risk. Someone else project manages the build. We might have the time but I don’t think we would have the skills and the patience to take on a self-build project. This is the perfect compromise and a safer option.”

Aldcliffe Yard, next to the picturesque Lancaster Canal, has been lying dormant for several years but will be given a new lease of life by the scheme. The development includes a mixture of brand new three and four bedroom houses as well as refurbished homes created out of listed, stone canal buildings.

The homes were designed by PRP Architects and the gated development is being constructed by building contractors CPUK. Just over half the homes have been sold as custom-build and the remainder are now being offered off- plan in the conventional way, with prices starting at £295,000.

H2O is a unique developer, as more than half the profits from H<sub>2</sub>O developments are being re-invested in Britain’s waterways for the benefit of all canal users.

For more information about the Aldcliffe Yard development, contact estate agent Paul Lowe at Fisher Wrathall, email [paul@fisherwrathall.co.uk](mailto:paul@fisherwrathall.co.uk). Tel 01524 68822.

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***On behalf of H<sup>2</sup>O***