

a home by the sea

When Waterfront Edinburgh's regeneration is complete, 12,000 lucky residents will call the new landmark community home. "We're selling a way of life, not just quality of life," says chief executive Stephen Izatt of the 5,000-plus homes planned for the scheme. The lifestyle he refers to will be shaped by an estate management company established to satisfy the every whim of Waterfront Edinburgh inhabitants. Well perhaps not every whim, but its concierge service certainly aims to remove the hassles of everyday life.

"If your washing machine breaks down we'll arrange to have it fixed. When your car needs servicing we'll take care of it," explains Izatt. "This concept is already fairly common in the United States. In the UK, developments such as Chelsea Harbour in London offer a similar lifestyle but this is a first for Scotland." But exactly who does Izatt see living at Waterfront Edinburgh? "Successful communities are diverse," he says. "I envisage all types of people living here, from young singles to families, to the over-50s generation. Everyone will be able to find quality accommodation suited to their needs, and the first class community, leisure, retail and entertainment facilities will turn Waterfront Edinburgh into one of the city's most desirable locations."

As Edinburgh prepares for the expected population growth in the coming decade, the 5,000-plus residential units will provide more than top class waterfront living – they will also help to fill the city's predicted housing shortfall. "We are going to need 70,000 new homes over the next 15 years," says Andrew Holmes, director of city development at Edinburgh Council. He observes that Edinburgh can be tough for housebuilders. There isn't much land on offer so brownfield sites such as Granton represent a great opportunity.

And it would seem that many agree. Barratt, George Wimpey, Places for People, EDI and the Burrell Company are all pursuing predominantly residential schemes at Waterfront Edinburgh. A diverse range of properties is on offer with affordable housing accounting for at least 15 per cent of all homes constructed.

Barratt has lodged planning permission for 167 flats and eight townhouses; George Wimpey expects to begin construction this summer on 82 apartments and 20 townhouses; Buredi – a joint venture between the Burrell Company and EDI – plans to produce a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroomed homes and to convert the listed Madelvic Car Factory into live/work units and new apartments. Burrell is also linking with Places for People to construct 500 homes in the Upper Strand area of the development. Construction of the initial £20 million phase of Upper Strand began in January 2005 and includes 104 one-, two- and three-bedroomed apartments for sale alongside 26 affordable units.



Waterfront Edinburgh will offer a range of accommodation to suit all styles and situations.

Before the waterfront regeneration, this level of investment in North Edinburgh would have been unthinkable. "If we were building in isolation then this area might be considered a risk, but this project is creating its own environment," says Stuart Dow, projects manager at George Wimpey. John Forbes, development director at the Burrell Company, agrees that a small scale residential build might inspire nervousness, but says that his company looked at the objectives of the entire project. He points to Burrell's involvement in the first phase of regeneration in Glasgow's Merchant City during the early 1980s. Then a rundown, uninhabited area, it is now one of the city's funkier residential and leisure locations. >

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As Mansoor Ali, land manager at Barratt, observes: “Most development in Edinburgh is happening on brownfield sites anyway, although a masterplan on the scale of Waterfront Edinburgh is rare.”

Despite house price stagnation in some regions of the UK, Edinburgh’s housing market remains solid. The average house price more than doubled from £73,968 in 2000 to £168,000 by 2004. Although some way below the heights of 2002, when annual price increases peaked at 21.3 per cent, Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre (ESPC) marketing director Simon Fairclough predicts further house price rises this year, albeit in single figures.

He believes that Waterfront Edinburgh will have a role in absorbing Edinburgh’s increased housing demand. But what of the mantra “location, location, location”? In his opinion, the Scottish capital needs new areas to satisfy the housing demands of a growing population and a changing demographic. “At the moment, Granton isn’t the most sought after area. It can take time for perceptions to change, but they do.” He notes that there are always “first movers” to any new area who can see the medium to long term opportunities. Places for People director Colin Rae believes that Granton’s close proximity to the city centre and Waterfront Edinburgh’s commitment to infrastructure improvement and community building, will attract would-be residents.

The top class housing and waterfront views won’t do any harm either. >



Homes for sale

Upper Strand Developments

Responsible for the largest of Waterfront Edinburgh's residential projects to date, Upper Strand Developments – a partnership between the Burrell Company and Places for People – is building around 500 homes overlooking the Firth of Forth. Construction of the initial £20 million phase began in January 2005 and includes 104 one-, two- and three-bedroomed apartments for sale, alongside 26 affordable units. First sales will be released this year. John Forbes, development director of the Burrell Company, describes the primarily two-bedroomed apartments as contemporary and spacious. A further five phases will be developed over the next five years and first residents should be in situ by the end of the year. Places for People director Colin Rae says the timing of the scheme should ensure a constant stream of properties released to the market. Architects Reiach & Hall and Elder & Cannon are designing the early phases.

Buredi

Buredi, a partnership between the Burrell Company and EDI, will shortly begin construction to transform the former Madelvic Car Factory into homes, affordable housing and live/work units. The original factory – a listed building – dates from 1899 and will be converted into 12 live/work units and four apartments. Alongside, 65 new one-, two- and three-bedroomed homes will be built above six commercial units on Waterfront Avenue. Buredi is working with Outlook Housing to develop 12 homes for rent by older people to help meet the citywide shortage of affordable accommodation. Andy Burrell, chief executive of Buredi, says the live/work units are the first of their kind in Edinburgh. "We expect they'll be snapped up by professional people, particularly those in the creative industries."

Barratt

Barratt plans to build 167 flats and maisonettes plus eight townhouses adjoining Saltire Square. Designs include a feature tower – a first for Barratt in East Scotland – and a selection of four- to eight-storey blocks. According to land manager Mansoor Ali the guiding principles of the scheme are the aforementioned tower, the inclusion of 24 affordable units, underground parking, the provision of public space and the inclusion of family housing.

George Wimpey

Occupying the adjoining site to Barratt's on Waterfront Avenue, George Wimpey is planning 82 flats and 20 townhouses/duplex apartments. Projects manager Stuart Dow expects work to begin onsite this summer with all units complete and occupied sometime in 2007. The emphasis is on choice: "Given the volume of properties on offer we have to be flexible," he says. "Our designs allow customers to influence and customise their own homes through our extensive range of options." Sporting a modern look with low profile roofing, the designs include glass and steel, and an environmentally friendly underground waste system.

