

COGNATUM NEWS

Editorial

The year began with the stock market at record levels and the pound recovering on the back of expectations of a 'soft' Brexit. Soft, however, also unfortunately describes the current property market. The Government's efforts to resolve the housing crisis, stimulating affordability with incentives for new developments, have had the unintentional effect of pushing up prices and profits (along with some eye-watering executive bonuses!). Similar issues are affecting the NHS, and many seem to have the idea that more money alone will alleviate the pressure. In both cases, it's clear that some serious national debate about the future of our country is required.

Cognatum too is looking to the future amidst a time of transition. A fresh website, some updates to our branding and a change of chairman are all heralding the start of a new era.



'Extras' on the bench

Following the recent research by Warwick Business School into the Cognatum brand and how we should promote ourselves, design agency MCC, who have a long association with Cognatum, began working with us on a new website. One of our main aims was to have an online presence that truly reflected the vibrant life of our estates, making it clear that people rather than properties are at the heart of Cognatum.

To this end a photo shoot was organised in Marlborough and Hungerford at the end of last summer, involving both professional models and some of our homeowners as extras, to keep things grounded in reality. Non-executive director Guy Mossop and our Communications Manager Rachel Pollard worked closely with MCC to plan the day, with Guy even making an appearance as an extra in some of the shots. Everyone involved found it an enjoyable day, including the professional models who, despite

having just come from a splendid shoot with the National Trust, were very complimentary about the appearance of the estates as well as the friendliness of our 'extras'.

The new website launched in the autumn and offers much more of a focus on the unique character of each of our 60 estates, spread across some of the most beautiful counties in central and southern England. They all have their own page with icons depicting the key features and nearby attractions highlighted. We very much hope that this will help to bring alive the opportunities that come with the Cognatum lifestyle; such as spacious properties, flexible and adaptable to changing tastes and fashion, in prime locations with beautifully-designed buildings and gardens and services that are sensible and affordable.

The new website also provided an opportunity to refresh our branding, with the familiar trefoil,



which represents the merging of companies with common ethos and values, evolving into a crisp and contemporary new emblem. These marketing developments have been paid for by Cognatum Property, using funds from resale agency income, as part of the commitment to ensure that our estates retain their reputation and value.



Chairman steps down

The chairman of Cognatum Estates has announced that he will be stepping down in April. Henry Thornton has been chairman for nearly ten years and was instrumental in the creation of Cognatum Estates, formed through the merger of The Beechcroft Trust and The English Courtyard Association. Previously he had been joint founder and chief executive of Beechcroft Developments.

Reflecting on his decision, Henry said,

"I think that after ten years it is the right time for a change. I have enjoyed my term as chairman and am pleased to be able to leave with such confidence that there is a strong and forward-looking management team in place. As a not-for-profit company without shareholders, Cognatum is such a worthwhile enterprise, with a clear purpose and dedicated people. I know it will continue to provide the excellent quality of lifestyle people have come to expect from us."

The board will elect a new chairman at their meeting in April.

News in brief

Wine on the English Riviera – The Vinery at Torquay is living up to its name, thanks to the enterprise of estate managers Mike and Dee Moore and some expert help from our Garden Adviser Charles Gilchrist. The first harvest of grapes grown in the rooftop conservatory and on the sunny garden terrace produced 10 bottles of a dry rosé, enjoyed by many of the owners at a small gathering just before the dawn of the New Year. Next year's vintage is keenly awaited!



Blue Cedar – In December Cognatum Estates acquired Blue Cedar Homes Management (BCHM), the not-for-profit company managing Blue Cedar Homes' developments. A relatively new company, they currently have 16 estates in the southwest but are rapidly expanding with their retirement-living model of small, gated communities of detached houses with a visiting estate manager, who also maintains the gardens. BCHM will be operated as an entirely separate business from Cognatum Estates, but will share some head office functions and costs.

A new addition to the Cognatum Property board – We are pleased to announce that James Greenwood has joined the board of Cognatum Property, the valuation and resale agency exclusive to Cognatum buyers and sellers, as a non-executive director. We look forward to benefitting from the extensive market experience James brings with him as managing director of Stacks Property Search and Acquisition, an established buying agents covering the same areas in central and southern England as Cognatum Estates.

Residents Advisory Panel updates – At their November meeting the RAP discussed if there might be better ways to procure contracts for major works, such as external redecorations, than the traditional competitive tendering route. John Lavin, chairing the meeting, suggested that partnering with a few key contractors and creating longer-term relationships could improve standards of workmanship and result in cost savings, as it would generate loyalty and greater familiarity with the estates. The RAP supported further development of this strategy and recommended seeking the views of owners.

Another subject discussed was the merit of providing a letting service. There is steady interest in renting rather than buying Cognatum properties, and a small number of our houses are already sublet through local agents on contracts of at least six months, and usually for much longer. It was agreed that a bespoke letting and management service could have many advantages and be an attractive proposition to owners wishing to sublet but unsure how best to go about it.

COGNATUM PROPERTY

RETIRE IN STYLE



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Whilst most areas saw a slowing housing market with some price growth in 2017, in London prices fell. Continuing economic uncertainty means that the outlook at the start of the New Year is subdued, with stamp duty also acting like a cork in the bottle, holding down pent-up demand.

Cognatum Property sales in 2017 kept pace with the national trends, with prices marginally ahead of the previous year and a similar number of properties coming onto the market. Our Property Sales

Director, Peter Walton, has reported that two-thirds of all sales went through Cognatum Property, which provides a tailor-made sales and valuation service to owners. The four main attractions for buyers of Cognatum properties, according to our research, are the design of the houses, the grounds, the presence of an estate manager and the ability to lock up and leave.

For more information about properties for sale please see www.cognatum.co.uk or get in touch with us directly on 01491 821170 or property@cognatum.co.uk.



£499,950

17 Home Farm, Iwerne Minster, Dorset

A large elegantly-modernised three-bedroom cottage, converted from farm buildings, with a spacious open-plan reception area and lovely garden, just a short walk from the centre of the village.



NEW

£685,000 – £695,000

Stuart Court, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire

A new development of stylish properties in this charming Cotswold village will be completed in the spring; a show house will be ready for viewing in February.



£225,000

16 Fullands Court, Taunton, Somerset

With triple aspects over courtyard gardens, this two-bedroom ground-floor apartment is surrounded by beautiful lawns and planted beds.



£430,000

1 Mytchett Heath, Mytchett, Surrey

In four acres of exceptional landscaped grounds, this two-bedroom cottage with a conservatory overlooks the Basingstoke and Deane Canal.



£450,000

11 Bearwater, Hungerford, Berkshire

A lakeside two-bedroom cottage, set in a well-established garden square and five acres of grounds on the banks of the River Dun.



£460,000

1 West Allcourt, Lechlade-on-Thames, Gloucestershire

In a corner position surrounded by lawn and hedges, this three-bedroom cottage with a sun room is at the highest navigable point on the Thames.



£465,000

10 Bemerton Farm, near Salisbury, Wiltshire

Converted from stone farm buildings this unusual three-bedroom cottage is in a prime position next to a golf course, and enjoys a walled riverside garden.



£420,000

1 Turnpike Court, Ardingly, West Sussex

A light and airy apartment with a south-facing sunroom and small garden terrace, this two-bedroom ground-floor property is close to shops and two golf clubs.



£449,500

18 Seymour Place, Odiham, Hampshire

With dormer windows set over an archway, this three-bedroom corner cottage has both a conservatory and a generous garden and benefits from a nearby swimming pavilion.



£375,000

7 Dunchurch Hall, Dunchurch, Warwickshire

Set in 10 acres of landscaped grounds, this two-bedroom cottage has lovely open views and is within easy walking distance of the village centre.