THE SCOTSMAN

THURSDAY 30 OCTOBER 2008 | SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER | 70p | WWW.SCOTSMAN.COM

SHAKEN AND STIRRED ON THE RED CARPET

STARS (AND PRINCES) OUT FOR QUANTUM OF SOLACE PREMIERE PAGE 3

+ DANIEL CRAIG TALKS TO THE SCOTSMAN'S FILM CRITIC PAGES 42&43

Brand caves in and quits BBC over abuse calls

But Jonathan Ross stays in job and issues new apology after director-general finally acts and takes pair off air

BY TIM CORNWELL

CONAGHAN Russell Brand resigned from the BBC radio show yesterday hours after the corporation suspended him and fellow presenter Jonathan Ross over their obscene phone calls to actor Andrew Sachs.

Brand said he took "complete responsibility" for the abusive messages the pair left about Mr Sachs's dating with the 38-year-old actor's granddaughter, Lois. Broadcast on his pre-recorded Radio 2 show.

Ross, paid a reported £6 million salary by the BBC, showed no contrition yesterday when he issued a grovelling apology, saying "I am deeply sorry and greatly regret the upset and distress that my juvenile and thoughtless remarks caused."

Eleven days after the phone messages were broadcast, Mark Thompson, the BBC's director-general, also finally apologised yesterday as he announced the two men's suspensions. He said he was not in a position for them to continue broadcasting on the BBC and he would decide on further action "within days".

"This gross lapse of taste by the performers and the production team has angered licence payers. I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

News 3-21

Global danger or computer nerd?

MPs press Home Secretary to fight extradition of Scot who hacked into Pentagon and Nasa systems amid fears he could face decades in US jail. Page 7

Property Pull-outs

BEST FOR HOMES

40 pages of the best property on the market in two great pull-out sections

Debate 22-28

How the Chancellor changed his tune

"Darling seemed to be singing from a different hymn sheet – with no chance of a return to hardline Keynesian economics." George Reeves, Page 24

Sport 58-72

DIEGO MANIA

Boost for Hampden as Argentina name coach

Page 72

Weather 51, Television and Radio 48-49, Announcements 50, Crosswords 50 and 51, Sudoku 50, Letters 26-27

OVERSEAS

Out from the chateau

An inspired partnership between a developer and owner has given one crumbling French estate a new lease of life. Laura Henderson pays a visit

For 18th-century royalty, a spot of entertaining à la campagne was a welcome distraction from the pressing affairs of state at Versailles. The wealthy Provençal Languedoc, with its flamboyant interiors and crumbling exterior decorations, was also a fitting location, where the mainstays were and courtly gossip flowed.

Nestling in the heart of the Minervois countryside, Château de la Bastide is one such property that hadlived hard by the tide. Manuscripts dating back to 1790 record extravagant soirées, evenings and recitals, including those hosted by the Baronne Bragnone de Gorgot, great-grandmother of Laurence Dominique Alaverdis, the current owner.

"The château has been back to the 18th century," explains the countess, "and was one of the region's finest estates by the 19th century. The most striking was conserved and dated to 1800, with the last major renovation taking place around 1860."

Two centuries on, however, and time and the elements have taken their toll. The château now languishes in unkempt grounds, as once stunning interiors succumb to "Mediterranean a property of this size" [illegible] "Maintaining a property of this size [illegible] an uphill battle," the countess. "Commercial selling the property has been [illegible] years but it was only when I met [illegible] leaving a cherished home that has been in our family for seven generations. Since then, we have worked hard to bring it back to life."

Now it seems the countess's prayers have been answered. Detailed negotiations with Miguel Espada, president of luxury property group Groupe Bastide and a longstanding friend of the family, have led to an eventual investment deal being brokered. The company, renowned for its bespoke approach to restoration of luxury buildings and sites across the Midi, has agreed to take on the renovation of the château, transforming one of the Languedoc's grand 18th-century mansions into a luxury self-contained estate, while allowing the countess to retain possession and continue living in the château.

"I've worked on many projects," explains Georgine Gaillard, sales and marketing director Marc Achard, "but none we have given the project a contract with such popularity. The first four units will be delivery timeline is our main priority, being the complete restoration of the interior plasterwork, including both the original, [illegible] and the extra. The château's exterior, for example, will remain the same, as will many of the interior features including the marble and cast-iron staircases, timber ceilings and [illegible] flooring. The grounds we plan to partially landscape with a mix of formal lawns, ornamental gardens and trimmed areas for outside dining."

With developers gearing up to start work and completion scheduled for summer 2010, buyers from the UK, Ireland and Belgium have already started putting down deposits. Twenty-two apartments will be built in total, four penthouses gracing the top floors of the château with two additional wings of 8 apartments in the grounds, designed by local architect Roland Cadet in a style [illegible] of the original outbuildings. These areas extend to 93 square metres, with well-proportioned ensuite bedrooms, open-plan salons and glazing to enjoy fantastic broad pine-view windows, which leads to private gardens and terraces.

"Styling preferences from buyers such as the Minervois bistro style will inform the individual room interiors," explains the countess. "Each room is intended to bring a lower French elegance but with modern twist, using traditional materials such as wood, gilt and ironwork, with lime washes and heavy duty linen and lace quite [illegible] industry fabrics."

Residents and guests will not be short of entertainment, with a spa, [illegible] of amenities including a fine dining restaurant, cinema suite, games room, library and café de digestation for private wine tastings. The resort's plans do not stop there, however, as a Mediterranean spa, designed in a listed hotel by Joseph Ghadiri, the son of Michel Ghadiri, owner General Matthieu, the well-being and luxury will boast state-of-the-art and outdoor hydrotherapy pools, a hammam and sauna.

"Our approach will be a holistic one," says spa consultant and beauty expert Cécile Vennet, "with the emphasis on treatments and therapies for mind, body and soul.

"We also plan to introduce a bespoke range of skincare products. These will be made from [illegible] grown plants and herbs such as rosemary, lavender and eucalyptus grown in the château's kitchen garden."

Expressions expect a shelf-life upwards of £350,000 for a one bedroom Aloupin apartment (including hot tubs, ensuite and balcony), while two-bedroom Pinaple residences with Bloqot terraces start from £500,000. All properties come with a five-year construction bond and will be sold through Carrington's leaseback scheme, which makes use of French government investment incentives such as VAT exemption (currently 19.6 per cent) on both the property purchase and rental returns. Rental income is also guaranteed for 20 years and Bloqot ensures professional owners do not use the property. On days visiting, guests take a vacation rental and stay up to six months per year, or hire apartments to any of the other Carrington-branded resorts located around the Languedoc region. These include Le Grand d'Hyères, a converted 17th-century convent, which is now a stunning boutique hotel, and Les Jardins de Saint Benoît vineyard estate in neighbouring Corbières.

The château's exterior will remain the same, as will interior features such as the cast-iron staircases

Sue Iolar Branch, sales agent for the project, "The beauty of the development is that buyers get an authentic Provence home with the century facilities and convenience, but without the hassle of the management company, taking care of that and, of course, guaranteed rental returns. Access is also easy, with UK flights from regional airports into Carcassonne, Perpignan, Béziers, Toulouse and Montpellier.

"Travelling by train is a viable alternative. The nearest station, Narbonne, is 10 minutes from the château, and the pretty village [illegible] and a half hours from Paris. There are also some high-speed links from London's St Pancras."

Sarah Frances, MD of French agency Villas, is a long-standing fan of the region. "Prices in the Languedoc rose by an average of 4 per cent last year. The place is a luxury trip for Londoners seeking sun, scenery and plenty of culture, but it doesn't have the same pressure as it is in neighbouring Provence, which gets very busy in the summer season."