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The G8 summit in Gleneagles is proving profitable for investors in a nearby leisure estate

By **Catherine Moya**

When Andy and Gill Hudson bought one of the 50 lodges on the Duchally Country Estate in Perthshire, they expected to see more red deer than world leaders. But the G8 summit has changed that. Duchally is only two miles from Gleneagles and the whole estate is being taken over to house the 70 plus Russian delegation and more than 60 Foreign Office officials.

With its trickling streams, heather dotted hills and eagles soaring over valleys, it's hard to conceive of a prettier setting for addressing the challenges of African poverty and climate change. One of the main attractions of buying here for the Hudsons would appeal to many G8 delegates, not least Gordon Brown: financial prudence.

Although the Hudsons' four children, Daniel, 15, Victoria, 13, Jake, six, and Ella, four, love Duchally for mountain-biking and exploring woodlands, what captured Andy and Gill's imaginations was the leaseback deal offered by Club La Costa Private Homes on the two- and three-bedroom lodges.

Faced with the uncertainties of the property market in southern England and of Andy's job in financial services in the City, last year the couple, both 44, sold the family home in Kent and moved into rented accommodation. The profits from the sale of their house were put into a high-interest bank account while they pondered their position.

Then Andy heard about the Duchally development, under which CLC Private Homes is selling two-bedroom, fully furnished lodges for £250,000 and three-bedroom versions for £330,000 freehold, but with a leaseback option.

Under this the homeowner leases their property back to CLC Private Homes for ten years and receives a guaranteed rental return equal to seven per cent of purchase price. Over the ten years, CLC uses the property for people who have bought timeshares. For the Hudsons, it was a highly attractive arrangement.

“Even in a high-interest account, we were only earning five per cent, so the leaseback scheme at Duchally offers a much better return,” says Andy, who bought a three-bedroom lodge on the 27-acre estate. The scheme means that although you own your property outright, CLC Private Homes will, in effect, take over the running of it for ten years. As part of the package, your home will be run and maintained for an all-in cost of £1,670 per year.

When considering a pension in bricks and mortar, commentators usually look at the relative performance and risks of investing in stocks and shares for comparison. With the Duchally deal, a better comparison might be made with putting money into the local building society because various extra features increase the security. CLC will buy back homes at the going rate, should owners wish to sell, and renewing the leaseback deal when the ten years is up is also an option. Buyers are required to put down a minimum £70,000 deposit, but the monthly return at seven per cent on a £330,000 home is £1,925 paid into your account. That is enough to cover almost any mortgage.

Most importantly, buyers benefit from the appreciation in the value of the property. In Perthshire, Scotland’s biggest tourist destination and its richest county, property prices showed growth in the past year of about 12 per cent.

Under the leaseback scheme, owners also have two weeks a year to use the lodge as a holiday home. Even if you do not use these, they can be sold on. At peak periods, a week in one of the three-bedroom houses can fetch £3,000.

“We’re looking forward to exploring the beautiful countryside and taking advantage of all the local amenities,” says Andy. “There’s a leisure club at Duchally with a heated indoor pool, sauna, Jacuzzi and well-equipped gym. Plus, there’s fishing, shooting and, of course, golf all on the doorstep.”

The lodges on the estate encircle the four-star Duchally Hotel and have been sensitively worked into the landscape. None are overlooked by their neighbours and the spectacular views of the mountains are preserved.

Lodges are build on an 'upside down' plan, so that the living rooms and kitchens are on the first floor and have the best views. All are open-plan and kitted out with richly textured furnishings and have decked areas outside.

A Duchally lodge also has the advantage of someone going in to put the heating on and fill the fridge with goodies before you arrive. The maid service also means that you turn up for your allocated week or weeks to find a clean, well-maintained home.

There is also the Duchally Hotel for second-homers who want a drink or meal somewhere other than their lodge. The diplomats may sample the whiskies stocked in the bar after each day's negotiating. And perhaps some of them may be tempted to buy a property.

- Duchally Country Estate, 01764 663071,
www.duchallyhomes.com



SUMMIT VIEWS: The estate lodges have been sensitively worked into the landscape

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HIGHLAND FLING: Andy and Gill Hudson, right with daughter Victoria, are delighted with their investment in pretty Duchally estate and life