

Green Prize for Spain Builders

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WELSH developers building environmentally friendly homes in Spain have won an international award for their EUR 45m project.

The Harrial Group, which is headed by husband and wife partners Linda and Andrew Jones from Abergavenny, believes inland Spain is about to experience a property boom.

Their development in the south-eastern city of Murcia has won in the Best Architecture category in the 2005 Bentley International Property Awards.

They have begun their most ambitious project, Las Torrentas, a 150-home development in the Spanish countryside town of Calasparra.

Property prices are about 15 to 20% less than on the Costa Blanca.

Mrs Jones, "It is a well-kept secret; some areas have remained undiscovered and underdeveloped for years, and therefore relatively unaffected by mass tourism.

In some areas there is a well developed infrastructure of top-class hotels, designer shops, retail and leisure, particularly so in cities like Murcia.

"With the new Murcia International airport destined to bring in 1,500 passengers an hour, such an influx of visitors is likely to mean an increase in property prices."

The couple have been building relationships with leading figures in the communities in the area.

The Mayor of Calasparra, Jesus Navarro Jimenez, has visited Wales as their guest, and talks have been held about twinning Spanish and Welsh towns.

The Spanish authorities are adamant that further development of the tourist industry will be sensitive to the local residents and their heritage.

Mrs Jones said, "(Directives) recently out in place protect the over-development of any town, creating good quality living balance, which is why we have been attracted to the region."

The Mayor travelled to London to be present at the award ceremony.

Mrs Jones said, "It was a fantastic honour to have our scheme named for its architectural standard, of which we are extremely proud. It was also an honour for us to have the Mayor of Calasparra with us, who has been a great supporter of our efforts."

"His meetings in Abergavenny went extremely well and we hope will help forge a new relationship between these two very beautiful communities."