

New skyscraper apartments on the market from £435,000

By Suzanne McGonagle

EIGHT apartments in Belfast's newest skyscraper are due to go on sale - with prices starting at £435,000.

Located at Custom House Square with sweeping views of the River Lagan, Belfast Lough and the city centre, the 14-storey building is aptly named 'The Boat'.

Complete with glass frontages and distinctive roof-top 'sail', it comprises eight floors of office space and eight luxury apartments.

Its promoters say it is the first building in the city to offer occupants the chance to live, socialise and work all under one roof.

While prices start from £435,000, the top range of the price scale will not be disclosed until early next month. But with two of the apartments boasting roof gardens which provide views of the Mourne Mountains on a clear day, it is thought that they will be significantly more expensive.

For the entry-level price, investors will receive a fully furnished two-bedroom apartment of just under 1,000 sq ft.

The properties have floor-to-ceiling double-glazing to allow owners to enjoy the magnificent views.

A mood-lighting control system, spacious balconies and underground car parking are also among the apartments' features.

The Boat will be joined by the record-breaking Obel Tower on the banks of the River Lagan when it is completed later this year.

The unique obelisk-shaped structure will stand at around 88 metres high and will feature 282 apartments and 41,000 sq ft of office space along with eateries and shops on the ground floor when it is finished. When complete, the Obel will be the tallest building in Ireland.

Beth Robinson of Templeton Robinson, estate agents for The Boat, said the apartments had "already been attracting intense interest".

"Everyone seems intrigued by the concept and definitely the design," she said.

"The apartments are certainly leading-edge when it comes to looks and also practically spacious, with the two uppermost units boasting double-height ceilings and mezzanine decked areas, affording the most amazing views of the Belfast cityscape.

"When standing in the kitchen there is an exhilarating feeling of actually being in a boat and hovering over the water because of all the glass and the way the wall juts out, overhanging the water below.

"There can't be many luxury apartments where you can stand in the kitchen and think



■ PANORAMIC: A view from one of the penthouse apartments in The Boat, a 14-storey skyscraper located beside Custom House Square in central Belfast

HIGH-RISE, HIGH PRICE - BUT HIGH LEVEL OF INTEREST EXPECTED TOO



AS HOUSE prices continue to fall, this new development is attempting to reach new heights. Although property values in Northern Ireland have slumped for the past 29 months, a leading economist last night said he expected The Boat apartments to command much attention from prospective buyers. Mike Smyth, head of the University of Ulster's school of economics, said that although the luxury properties carried a hefty starting price tag at £435,000, buyers would be considering the apartments' "uniqueness".

"They are not making riverfront properties any more so there is a limited number available," he said. "For such a small number of

properties to be on the market, this will perhaps increase the interest in them.

"The way the market works is that signals go out from the sellers to the buyers. "If there is a lack of interest then this goes back to the vendors and the price is adjusted accordingly.

"There will be an adjustment if it is thought the interest is there." Mr Smyth said that although recent surveys showed the effects of the slump were still being felt, he believed these apartments would be looked upon favourably as an investment.

"There is enough liquidity around and it is such a prime location that you can be sure these will be of major interest," he said.

Suzanne McGonagle

you're cruising down the river.

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Beth Robinson

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