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PROPERTY MAGAZINE

NAMAN PATHAK

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Jonathan Fashanu explains why
it's more than just 'going green'

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TROPOLIS.[™]

FROM AN UGLY DUCKLING (WITH POTENTIAL) TO A WHITE STONE SWAN IN 3.5 MONTHS



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Or the transformation of a 500 m² French 18th century Manoir into a 5-star holiday rental residence in record time.

We all know that refurbishment and transformation of old character buildings can be full of surprises that can cause delays, so what are the essential ingredients to meet a tight completion deadline whilst aiming for high standards? The transformation of Manoir Les Gaillardoux in South West France gives us a few clues.

This is the story of one of our French projects that achieved a happy outcome – a 500,000-euro transformation project started on 5 January and completed just before 21 April of the same year.

When we first saw the Manoir with a local estate agent, it took some imagination to visualise its potential, as the property had been standing in “its juice”, as we say in France, for over 50 years.

Originally built in 1765, it had randomly developed over time into 8 bedrooms, 2 basic washrooms, 2 randomly located toilets and



a 50s kitchen. It also had a spacious living room and a south-facing dining room with a view over the hilly countryside, and some handsome features: big oak beams, lovely high windows and ceilings in many rooms, venerable terracotta tiled floors which had seen history and a majestic central stone staircase. It also had an attractive stone pillared coach house, a traditional stone barn and a rare example of a round Quercy pigeon tower standing by what looked more like a frog pool than a swimming pool. All surrounded by a nature park.

Having decided to buy the Manoir, we used the two and a half months between

the Compromis de Vente and the Acte Authentique completing the purchase to recruit an inspirational local Project Manager, decide on a new internal configuration of the house and have plans drawn for the works to come. The Project Manager meanwhile carefully recruited and selected her team of local artisans who would carry out the refurbishment and transformation work.

Part of the plan was to rewire the whole property, install a modern drainage system, redesign the pool, remodel and reroof the North wing, create 6 comfortable bedrooms, each with en-suite shower room, double washbasins and toilets (1 with a spa bath), ➡





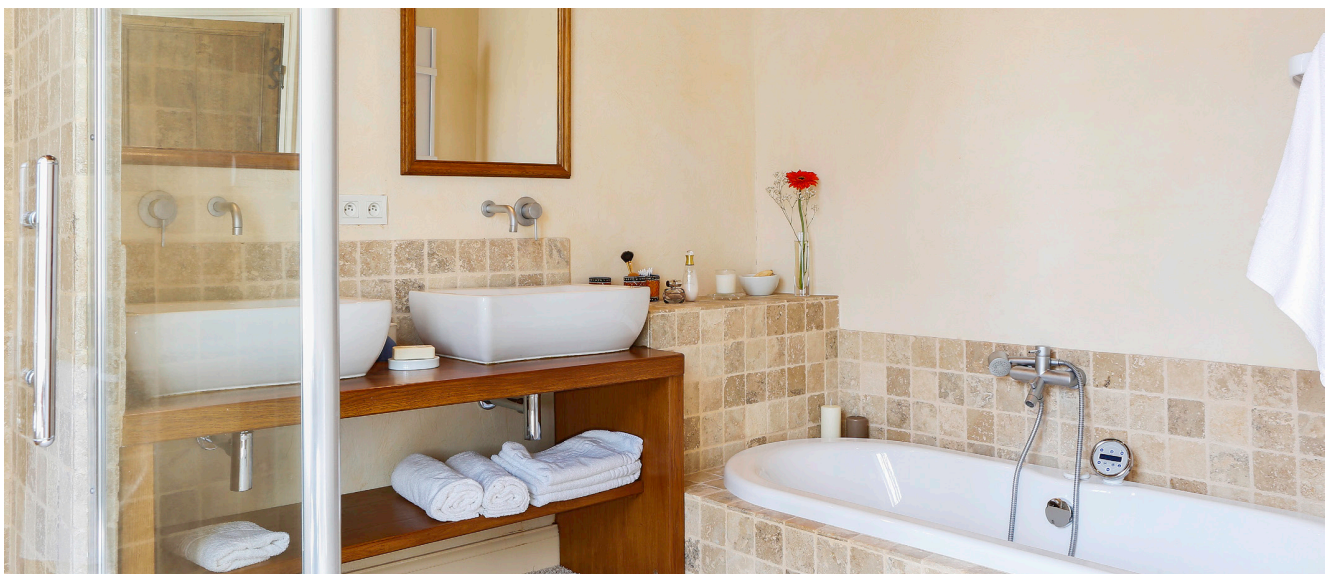
1 extra shower room for the swimming pool, a further 2 toilets and washbasins (8 in total), fully equipped kitchen and separate laundry, 4 spacious reception rooms and a glass veranda, 14 new windows, new concertina patio doors, and full redecoration.

The project required 15 different trades and specialists and their teams. The target date for completion was set at April and the commencing date on 5 January. To maintain productivity, the artisans were asked to work as one team under the leadership of the Project Manager, and contracts were allocated subject to committing to our timing and

requirements, a tall order for independent-minded artisans who had never worked that way before.

But we had two major assets:

- A highly motivated and experienced Project Manager, fully conscious of the need for inspirational leadership and a hand of steel in a velvet glove. We all wanted these men and women to succeed. They felt it and everyone gave their best. Her daily emailed reports and any requests for clarification kept us tuned in from the UK. ➡➡







- Towards the end of January, when the team spirit was developing, we announced that we planned to celebrate project completion on 21 April, with champagne and dinner to honour everyone who had

contributed to the success of the project, with their spouses or companions, and all the dignitaries of the area – the best personal recognition and publicity the artisans could receive. Everyone would have a chance to shine... or hide in shame.

They all shone and took great pride guiding visitors through the Manor and showing their work. We were 85 at dinner and made local history.

The result was the birth of a 5-star holiday rental residence, fit for an international market, and which subsequently won the top 5 star-rating from the French Tourism Ministry. The beginning of another adventure. **Q.**

