

# The Welsh social housing entrepreneur who began his property career aged just 16

Social housing and commercial property developer Dorian Payne, who started his entrepreneurship journey aged 16 while studying accountancy at college, has secured consent for his latest scheme – with a pipeline of developments valued at more than £100m.

His current business venture, Swansea-based Castell Group, has secured consent for a social housing and commercial scheme in Port Talbot. This will see the demolition of Eagle House, on Talbot Road, and the construction 18 social homes and four commercial units.

Work on the scheme is expected to start in January and take 18 months to complete.

Castell Group has agreed to sell the properties to a yet to be disclosed housing association who will then manage the properties. They will be EPC (energy performance certificate) A rated apartments for social housing and potentially supported living for those individuals requiring care assistance.

Originally from Newport Dorian Payne, 27, began his business career when he set up a property lettings and management business while studying accountancy at Coleg Gwent in Newport,

After selling his lettings business, Mr Payne set up Swansea-based Castell in 2019 with its first land acquisition site for development struck a year later. The business, which has secured several millions of pounds in funding from private family office Clive Hill, is currently in discussions with institutional funds to support further scale-up.

The business currently has 130 homes under construction with a development pipeline of nearly 450 across South Wales – with a combined project value of more than £100m.

The pipeline will be delivered over the next 2-3 years, with Castell Group on track to achieve its target of consistently delivering over 300 affordable homes per annum in South Wales.

All properties in the pipeline have been forward sold to registered social landlords. Castell is delivering social homes to the required standards of the Welsh Government and housing associations. The commercial elements of schemes, like in Port Talbot, will be held in the ownership of Castell.



How Castell Group's social housing led development in Port Talbot will look.

On approval for Castell's latest scheme in Port Talbot – having recently also secured approval for a similar scheme in Newport – Mr Payne said: “We are very pleased to have received planning permission for this much needed development site in Port Talbot. There are over 1,200 homes like this (in Port Talbot) required and after 18 months in the planning system, we can finally start to deliver 18 new homes towards that deficit.”

On his property career to date Mr Payne said: “I have always had a passion for the property industry and wanted to make a significance difference. I have been working with social housing tenants since my letting agency was established and scaled by cold-calling landlords while in college studying accountancy.

“I still remember having to take landlord and tenant calls in between college lectures. I would turn up to meetings on my moped with L-plates and a camera strapped around my shoulder ready to take photos and market the properties to potential tenants. Age discrimination is always something I've had to deal with, but ultimately it has helped develop my resistance, determination and business skills.

“I'm very lucky to be surrounded by an incredible team who are aligned with the company mission and are dedicated to providing high quality homes for those truly in need.”

Mr Payne has a 80% equity stake in Castell with the rest held by Clive Hill.

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