

Speech by the Secretary General of The Muslim Council of Great Britain on the occasion of HRH Prince Charles's visit to the Groundwork Trust Centre in Oldham

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and distinguished guests. I am very happy to be participating in the visit to the Groundwork Trust by HRH, The Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness has encouraged and officiated at many centres and projects at which I have been present. His enthusiasm in promoting a multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain is now well known. From promoting dialogue and understanding between cultures and faiths, to enthusiastic participation in numerous events and functions, His Royal Highness has shown a single-minded dedication to the task of encouraging the greatest good from a pluralistic Britain. In addition, as shown by his present visit to the Groundwork Trust, His Royal Highness has been very keen to work with the young and the disadvantaged. This offers hope and opportunities to many people who have fallen upon unfortunate circumstances early in their lives.

Naturally, as the second largest faith community and one with a high proportion of young people amongst them, the British Muslim community has also had many opportunities to benefit from His Royal Highness's support. I would like His Royal Highness to know that these tireless efforts are much appreciated.

The Muslim Council of Britain when approached by the Prince's Trust was very happy to work with them to develop a common framework which would enable Muslims to avail themselves of the Trust's Business loans. Given the predominance of young people victim to disadvantage and social exclusion amongst many Muslim communities in the UK, the MCB felt that the Trust's programme will offer a chance for some of the young people to find a meaningful way forward. With this in mind, the MCB's Business and Economics Affairs Committee has worked with the law firm of Lovells and a number of Muslim scholars both in the UK and overseas to reach agreement on the ways in which Muslims can participate in the scheme. The basic ruling approving the framework was given by Shaykh Nizam Yacoubi of Bahrain. Shaykh Nizam Yacoubi is a respected scholar well versed in Islamic Law (the Shari'a). He is also a member of the Shari'a Supervisory Board of a number of financial institutions in Bahrain and overseas. The ruling was then discussed with a number of experts well versed in Islamic banking and finance to ensure that it would command broad acceptance amongst British Muslims.

The agreement on this framework is therefore, very welcome and the Muslim Council of Britain hopes that many more Muslims can avail of the facilities offered by the Prince's Trust Business loans. The MCB's Business and Economics Committee has also indicated its willingness to assist with mentoring some of the candidates and to participate in any future reviews of The Prince's Trust Business Programme. It is hoped that these further collaboration will make the scheme even more accessible to potential Muslim applicants.

The co-operation between the MCB and the Trust has gone further. The chairs of the Media and the Business & Economic Affairs committees of the MCB are also participating in an advisory group seeking to widen access to the full range of the Trust's activities and facilities to the Muslim community. The advisory group has had one meeting and is in the process of drawing up its work programme for the next year.

The MCB views this agreement on the Business Loans scheme as the beginning of a long and fruitful partnership. I welcome His Royal Highness's commitment and dedication to the cause of promoting a multi-faith and multi-cultural Britain and his emphasis on helping the young people. I am sure that such efforts will allow British Muslims to play their full part in contributing to the well-being and prosperity of our country.