



6th October 2018

Our Mosques Our Future Manchester

Speech – Harun Khan, MCB Secretary General

Asalaamu Alaykum, Peace be with you.

Ladies and gentlemen, respected friends, colleagues, supporters and delegates.

It's great to be here in Manchester for the second national Our Mosques Our Future conference. On behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain, I'd like to warmly welcome you all here today, where we are seeking to explore the concept of '**People Not Buildings**', which is the theme for today's event. And we encourage you to use the hashtag **#PeopleNotBuildings** throughout today on social media.

As a concept, it seems pretty self-explanatory. People Not Buildings. What it suggests, is that our mosques in Britain today, **rely heavily on the people to run them**. Whether it be the **Imam** who leads prayers, and acts as a source of advice for the congregation, to the **volunteers** who help to run the events, to the **trustees** who ensure the mosque remains financially stable, to the administrative team who do all manner of things to keep our mosques operational on a day to day basis, these are the people we are talking about today. If you think that in Britain today, there are an estimated 1,700 mosques, we estimate that there are at least **50,000 of these mosque leaders and volunteers**, if not more, running our mosques today.

- It's these people whose **capacities** we must develop.
- It's these people who we must invest in **quality training** to ensure they are trained to perform their jobs well
- It's these people who we must **support** to develop their visions, passion and enthusiasm, for how we organise our mosques in 21st century Britain.

And it is these people who we must think about - **first and fore-mostly** - when we think of the mosque, before we think of the geometric patterns, the domes or the minarets.

Today's event comes after **7 months** of planning, in which carefully thought out speakers and workshops have been organised for us to benefit from. I would like to thank our **speakers and workshop facilitators** for coming today to share their knowledge and experience with us. As like yourselves, they have come from all over the UK too, including Newcastle, York, Leeds, Liverpool, Lancashire, Nottingham, Cambridge, London, and of course from here in Manchester.

Thank you also to the volunteers who are here to help today's event run smoothly. If you have any questions or don't know where to go at any point today, please do ask one of the volunteers.

I'd also like to thank Nasar Mahmood, Shabir Mohammed and the whole of the **team at the British Muslim Heritage Centre** for allowing us use of this grand venue today, and for being a massive supporter of the work of the Muslim Council of Britain. When the MCB held the first national Our Mosques Our Future conference in London in January earlier this year, we were given **feedback** that we should hold more events like this in the North, which we have listened to and taken on board.

The BMHC team have been instrumental in supporting us to make this happen and bringing the event here to the city of Manchester.

Our **Presenting Partner** today is Wahed Invest, a halal investment platform that has recently launched in the UK, and our **Supporting Partner** is the Al-Khair Foundation, an international development charity which is initiating a number of projects here at home and abroad for the betterment of all. Thank you to both Wahed Invest and the Al-Khair Foundation for supporting today's event, as well as our wide range of exhibitors present here today. I urge you to visit their stalls during the breaks.

We are also fortunate to be joined by representatives of **12 mosque projects**, who have been shortlisted for an award from **BIMA, the British Institutes and Mosques Awards**. You can visit the projects at the **Smart Masjid Showcase** at the back, and you will hear more about the BIMA Awards later today.

And lastly, thank you to **you**, the person in the audience who I hope will benefit the most from today's proceedings. You are one of an expected 400 delegates here today, who are the **unsung heroes behind our mosques across Britain today**.

And many of you are here because you recognise that in order to develop your mosques to the next level and achieve their true potential, we must share our knowledge, expertise and network with other mosques leaders and gain insights into best practice.

I hope and pray that you achieve all of these things as the day goes on. I hope you are able to take away practical and tangible tips, and methods and techniques which you can implement in your mosque from tomorrow.

Allah (SwT) says in the Quran, Chapter 9, Verse 18: ***'The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.'***

I pray that today and all days, God makes us of the rightly guided, of those who can maintain and develop our mosques by **developing the people who run them**, and ensure that the work we do and the roots we lay, live on for generations to come.

I urge you to think of **#PeopleNotBuildings** - throughout today and beyond today – as we look to take our mosques to the next level insha'Allah (God Willing).

Thank you.