

ethnic minority business forum

the way forward

2005-2008



The Ethnic Minority Business Forum was established in 2000 by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as an independent, strategic advisory body to represent the views of ethnic minority business communities. It advises Government on policies and practices as they relate to ethnic minority business across England. The Small Business Service (SBS), an agency of the DTI, provides secretariat support to the Forum.



foreword

Firstly, I would like to record my thanks to members of the Ethnic Minority Business Forum, past and present, for the contribution they have made since the Forum was established by my predecessor, Patricia Hewitt.

The Government is committed to raising levels of enterprise among under-represented groups and the Forum has a key role in helping to achieve this. The EMBF has worked increasingly well with Government and many other important stakeholders to identify the issues that impact on ethnic minority businesses. There is much to be done, especially with regard to supporting the National Employment Panel recommendations from their 'Enterprising People, Enterprising Places' report and also in working with the Regional Development Agencies to ensure that they reflect the views and needs of ethnic minority communities in their strategies and activities. I am delighted that since her appointment as the new Chair in April 2005, Adeeba Malik and the other Forum members have been working together to identify the issues which are to be the Forum's next set of priorities. Together they have developed an Action Plan, which will drive the forum's activities during the next three years, and which is the key focus of this report. I welcome the plan and I look forward to seeing the progress made by the Forum in taking these issues forward.



The Rt Hon Alan Johnson, MP
Secretary of State for
Trade and Industry

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

introduction



Adeeba Malik MBE
Chair of DTI's Ethnic
Minority Business Forum

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adeeba Malik'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

As the Chair of the Ethnic Minority Business Forum, I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide an update on the progress made by the Forum since it was created in 2000, as well as identifying the areas that the Forum will be concentrating on during the next few years. Having been a member of the Forum since its inception, I was honoured to be appointed as Chair in April this year. This report begins with a brief overview of what the Forum has achieved so far, especially through its sub-groups, which have been operating to complement the main Forum meetings.

Following our reorganisation in the early part of this year, my first job was to get the newly reformed Forum together and look at the next set of challenges for us to tackle. While this report provides the opportunity to look back at the achievements of the Forum since its initial creation, I want to use it to re-launch the Forum's role within the small business arena, both on the national and regional agendas. Our Action Plan on page 13 is published in this report for you to see what we want to influence and achieve. This is something that we will need help to deliver; national and regional partners can help us at policy level, and there is an important role for a wide range of ethnic minority businesses and their support networks, such as business support organisations, community networks, faith networks and family supporters.

Since the reorganisation of the Forum in April 2005 we have been working on a range of issues and with some new partners, for example the National Employment Panel, and so this is a particularly good time to be reviewing what we have achieved communally and setting out our future plans. I am very grateful for the unstinting support from EMBF members past and present, and from the SBS and DTI Ministers.

This report and action plan set out the focus of the Forum's activities during the coming years and looks at how the Forum can actively engage with other networks to take forward this agenda in a positive and proactive manner. You will find information relating to the current Forum members at the end of this document, as well as details about how you can contact us. We have already begun to deliver on the plan, and I look forward to leading the Forum in meeting the challenges that lie ahead.

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why does the forum exist?

Throughout the UK more than a quarter of a million ethnic minority enterprises are contributing around £13 billion a year to the British economy.

In October 2003, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry reminded a group of business leaders that ethnic minority communities are worth “£32 billion a year. They’re keen to spend it, keener to take advantage of new technologies... twice as likely to start up businesses”.

The ethnic minority population is growing - by 48% between 1991 and 2001 – half of whom are under 25 and, by the year 2010 only 20% of the workforce will be male, white, able bodied and under 45.

Recent research into the London economy has shown that there are 66,000 ethnic minority owned businesses in the capital, as well as around 93,000 self employed people from ethnic minority communities, and that the ethnic minority business sector employs well over half a million people, with a combined sales turnover of a staggering £90 billion¹.

In the last decade there has been a significant shift away from traditional and ethnic niche markets into more mainstream and international growth sectors. There has also been a major shift in the scale, complexity and diversity of firms owned and run by

people from minority ethnic backgrounds. An increasing number of ethnic minority entrepreneurs are running successful multi million pound companies in many different sectors, for example in banking and financial services, business services, media, fashion and in computer manufacturing, to name just a few.

According to GEM UK 2004 most ethnic minority groups are far more entrepreneurial than their white counterparts. Despite so much entrepreneurial spirit and high levels of entrepreneurial activity, the reality is that there are still a great many disadvantaged people who need our help, because of their ethnicity or gender, or because they are living in deprived neighbourhoods.

One of the key barriers for ethnic minority businesses and entrepreneurs continues to be access to finance. There are signs that the financial needs of the Muslim community have been recognised by the private sector. An Islamic Bank (Islamic Bank of Britain) has been created and at least one international bank is now advertising Sharia compliant financial products. This is an excellent start, but we must continue to investigate access to finance issues and how they affect small businesses across ethnic minority business communities.

¹ Source: Redefining London's Black and Minority Ethnic-owned businesses, London Development Agency, March 2004

how we operate

We have two main functions:

- To engage with a range of Government Departments and offer strategic advice on the development of policies and practices in the broad area of ethnic minority business.
- To listen to ethnic minority business communities and take note of the issues that are important to them.

In order to carry out these main functions, we:

- Hold Board meetings at approximately 2 month intervals. Board meetings provide an opportunity for members to give an update on activity in their regions, to engage in open discussion on strategic issues of interest to our communities, or to hear a guest speaker talk on key topics such as Skills and Workforce Development, Access to Finance or Procurement. The meetings also give Forum members the opportunity to contribute to Government consultations and reviews.
- Meet Government officials regularly. This includes direct access to Ministers, either in small groups at their Private Offices or by invitation to one of our Board meetings.
- Hold open consultation events in the regions. These events provide the opportunity to engage with business support organisations as well as ethnic minority businesses and networks within the regions in order to capture the issues which are key to ethnic minority business in any given region. This enables us to take these issues into account when providing advice to Government. The meetings

generally comprise a brief overview to the audience of the functions of the EMBF, a number of short presentations or case studies from the region, followed by an open-format questions and answers session. Our regional visits have included Manchester, Preston, Telford, Liverpool, Wolverhampton and, most recently, St Albans.

In terms of our formal operation, The EMBF sub-groups underpin our operational activities, and help us to focus on key areas.

Our new sub-groups are:

- Finance
- Access to Markets
- Leadership and Workforce Development
- Business Support

Our sub-groups meet about six times a year, engage directly with Government officials and Ministers and often invite direct input from senior representatives of other government departments and key stakeholders.

Currently membership of the Forum comprises 18 people who, in the main, run their own businesses; they are selected through open competition that seeks to ensure a good balance across the EMBF of gender, region, ethnicity and business sector. Membership is refreshed regularly to maintain this balance. Typically, members will serve one or more periods of office of two years. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry approves selection and membership for the Forum.

A current membership list is included at annex 1

the journey so far

This report sets out some key achievements since the last report, and takes a view of the achievements of Government. The report also sets out what the Forum should be focusing on from 2005 - 2008 and indicates to Government some of the areas of activity where we feel it is important to continue our dialogue.

Access to Finance

The Forum has worked with the Bank of England, particularly on issues relating to awareness for ethnic minority businesses and entrepreneurs of the range of finance options available to them. This work has led to a seminar for EMBF members on non-bank finance issues for ethnic minority businesses and to engagement nationally by Forum members on issues such as non-interest loans and Muslim finance.

The DTI's Small Business Service is undertaking an ethnic minority booster survey as part of the in depth Bank of England led Big Survey. This booster survey will compare the results of five key ethnic minority groups with the experience of white owned businesses. We look forward to seeing the evidence from the booster survey to help us to better understand the issue of ethnicity in relation to raising finance.

Data Collection

Business Link Operators (BLOs) are collecting data on the ethnicity and gender of their clients. We recognise that this is an area of activity, which will require much further refinement and development. The EMBF will be pleased to continue working with the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and SBS to build on this positive development.

Business Support

All BLOs have delivery plans related to the support of ethnic minority business in England. There are some very good examples of responsive, proactive support to businesses in our communities throughout the country. The EMBF's Business Support sub-group is receiving regular overviews of BLO's performance. Although responsibility for BLOs now lies with the RDAs, it is important that the RDAs recognise the continuing need for data collection, and of the importance of sharing information about BLO successes in effectively supporting ethnic minority businesses.

Procurement

Through engagement with DTI and Office of Government Commerce (OGC), we were able to influence the SME Procurement agenda, particularly the SME Procurement Pilots recently held in the West Midlands and Haringey, London. Indeed, the Forum was represented on the Steering Board of the West Midlands pilot. These pilots, deliberately located in areas with a strong ethnic minority business presence, have now been concluded with positive results being shown in the evaluations.

The SBS and OGC are now working together to roll out these initiatives nationally. One key initiative is the provision of training to small businesses on how to source and tender for public sector opportunities. The training is being delivered through the Regional Development Agencies and at present is being particularly targeted at under-represented groups, including ethnic minority businesses. Further information on the work currently being done to help small businesses be more successful in securing work with the public sector is outlined on the website www.supplyinggovernment.gov.uk, which also provides links to the evaluation reports for both the West Midlands and Haringey SME Procurement Pilots.

ICT and E-commerce

In the North-West region a pilot project examined the reasons for a somewhat lower uptake of ICT and e-Commerce options by certain ethnic minority business communities and sectors. The pilot built on previous research by one of our own EMBF members, Professor Monder Ram and some follow-on research undertaken on our behalf by the SBS. The pilot has now been completed and a final report presented to the Forum. This report is available through the Forum and details are on the Small Business Service website www.sbs.gov.uk

Workforce Development and Skills

Workforce development is crucial in terms of business development. The Forum identified this as another key focus area for them. The Forum worked with the National Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on the Employer Training Pilots to ensure that their strategy and delivery included the ethnic minority business community, and to ensure that ethnic minority businesses were encouraged to become more involved in the pilots. The Forum has also had input to the LSC's National Equality and Diversity Strategy.

engagement with government and stakeholders

We are pleased with the level of Ministerial support the Forum have received both from former and current DTI Ministers.

Having created the Forum in 2000, Patricia Hewitt actively supported our activities during her time at DTI, and recent discussions with the current Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Alan Johnson, and with Alun Michael, Barry Gardiner and Meg Munn, have demonstrated continued commitment to our activities and reinforced our priorities for the next phase of the Forum's work.

Examples of the Forum's work since April 2005 include:

- Contributions made by members to the Women and Work Commission interim report: A fair deal for women in the workplace;
- Contributions made to the work being led by ODPM: The Consultation on Enterprise & Economic Opportunity in deprived areas, relating to proposals for a Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI);
- Supporting the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (acas) in their work to better understand the attitudes and information needs of small ethnic minority businesses with regard to employment relations issues; and
- Providing key input to the work done by the National Employment Panel and to their recent report *Enterprising People, Enterprising Places*². The report can be found at www.nationalemploymentpanel.gov.uk

² *Enterprising People, Enterprising Places: Measures to increase Ethnic Minority Employment and Business Growth. A report by the National Employment Panel working with the Ethnic Minority Business Forum- May 2005*

future plan

2005-2008



This section of our report looks to the future and outlines the areas of work which the EMBF will be focusing on in the coming year and beyond. What follows is an action plan setting out the future priority areas for the Forum's activities, and what we want to achieve.

Members of the reorganised Forum attended an awayday in April 2005, at which they agreed priority areas and a core structure for a plan of their future activity. This core information has been developed into a formal action plan, which is collectively owned by Forum members, and which will be delivered by them.

The content of the plan has since been refined in consultation with our key partners, particularly to take into account the recommendations contained in the National Employment Panel report *Enterprising People, Enterprising Places*. We look forward to continuing to work with government departments and agencies as they deliver the recommendations.



1 Cross Cutting Issues

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
a) Enable engagement between the EMBF and appropriate policy makers across Whitehall	Hold closed business meetings every 2 months in London. Future dates: 2 February 2006 6 April 2006 29 June 2006 21 September 2006 30 November 2006	SBS (Secretariat)	Ongoing - Meetings have so far been held in May, September and December 2005
	Identify appropriate policy initiatives for discussion	SBS (Secretariat, Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	Ongoing
	One meeting each year to be devoted to a review of the action plan	EMBF Chair, SBS (Secretariat)	April 2006
b) Improve the evidence base on ethnic minority businesses	Invite SBS Analysis Directorate to address a Forum meeting	SBS (Secretariat)	Completed September 2005
	Work with SBS to improve the evidence base on ethnic minority businesses	EMBF, SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	Ongoing
	Improve monitoring arrangements especially for business support	EMBF members	
c) Influence RDAs to secure interests of ethnic minority businesses in service delivery	Hold open meetings in the regions	EMBF members with links in regions to organise and invite local organisations and involve the SBS National Policy Director for their Region	First meeting held September 2005
	Develop strong links with regional groups	EMBF members (especially those on RDA boards)	Ongoing
	Raise awareness of good practice in regions	EMBF members/RDAs	Ongoing
	Members to participate in the development of RDA Regional Economic Strategies within their region	EMBF members	Ongoing

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
d) Revise sub-groups to meet existing priority areas identified at awayday	Establish new sub-groups: Finance; Access to Markets; Leadership/Workforce Development; Business Support	EMBF Chair	Completed May 2005
	Set out priority work areas in line with action plan and identify links with National Employment Panel (NEP) recommendations	EMBF members/ appropriate SBS policy team	Completed July 2005
	Support actions of the sub-groups EMBF Chair	EMBF members	Ongoing
e) To become a voice for ethnic minority businesses in government policy making	Establish an intranet for the forum to alert them to opportunities to influence policy through formal and informal consultation processes	SBS (Secretariat)	On going
	Ensure EMBF members are signed up to updates about government consultations available through Businesslink.gov	SBS (Secretariat)	Completed July 2005
f) To secure opportunities for ethnic minority businesses to participate in the policy making process	To encourage more ethnic minority businesses to register on the Small Business Service Consultation Database	EMBF members, SBS (all Policy teams)	Ongoing
	To modify registration forms to enable identification of ethnic minority businesses to measure progress	SBS (Regulation Policy)	December 2005
g) To increase the profile of the Forum with stakeholders, ethnic minority organisations and across Whitehall	Re-launch the EMBF website as vehicle to share ideas and good practice in order to promote ethnic minority enterprise	EMBF, SBS (Secretariat)	December 2005
	Explore scope to produce document (and launch it) to publicise the work of EMBF and its Business (Action Plan)	SBS (Secretariat and Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	Completed December 2005
h) To engage stakeholders and Whitehall departments in ethnic minority enterprise and drive forward the enterprise recommendations in the NEP report	Hold a conference for key players EMBF members,	EMBF members, SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	March 2006

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
i) To engage in actions to promote enterprise to black and minority ethnic women	Forum members to engage in opportunities to promote enterprise to black and minority ethnic women within their region: Yvonne Field to work with SBS Women's enterprise team; Mei Sim Lai to work with the Women's Enterprise Panel Access to finance sub-group	EMBF Members	Ongoing
j) To engage in actions to support enterprise for young people in black and minority ethnic communities	Forum members to identify and engage in opportunities to promote enterprise to young people in black and ethnic minority communities within their region	EMBF Members	Ongoing (Review at national and regional meetings)

2 Finance

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
a) Build a strong and robust evidence base on the availability of finance for EMBs to inform future policy	Ethnic Minority Business Booster Survey as part of the 'Big Survey'	EMBF members SBS (Access to Finance, Analytical Unit)	Results due Spring 2006
b) Support the Small Business Service in working with banks and financial intermediaries to review the availability and accessibility of finance in designated urban areas (NEP recommendation)	Representative from the Small Business Investment Taskforce to address EMBF finance group and seek views	SBS (Finance Policy) EMBF Finance sub-group	SBS to report back to HM Treasury January 2006
c) Ensure finance initiatives to support small businesses reflect the needs of existing ethnic minority businesses and potential entrepreneurs	Build links with Small Business Investment Taskforce, Small Business Council sub-group on finance and Women's Enterprise Panel to ensure cohesive approach	EMBF Finance sub-group Yvonne Field and Mei Sim Lai SBS (Access to Finance Policy)	Ongoing
d) Identify gaps in funding arrangements to meet specific needs	Influence RDAs to meet gaps in provision by financial institutions	EMBF Finance sub-group, EMBF members, RDAs	March 2006
e) Address issue of lack of data to inform debate about financial barriers in the private sector	Seek to influence banks and financial institutions to collect and review data	EMBF Finance sub-group, EMBF members	Ongoing

3 Access to Markets

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
a) Ensure the Supplier Route to Government web portal meets the needs of ethnic minority businesses	SBS to seek EMBF comment on web development	SBS (Businesslink.gov) EMBF Access to Markets sub-group	Ongoing
b) Ensure roll out of training for small businesses on how to tender effectively for public sector contracts meets the needs of ethnic minority businesses	EMBF members to contribute to the ongoing review of training on how to tender effectively for public service contracts	SBS (Procurement Policy) EMBF Access to Markets sub-group	March 2006
c) Expand opportunities for ethnic minority businesses to participate in international trade	SBS to develop links with UKTI and identify opportunities for EMBF members to influence UKTI policy on inward and outward investment (e.g. comment on UKTI initiative for Asian businesses)	SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise) EMBF Access to Markets sub-group	Ongoing
d) Identify local projects which facilitate access to markets	Showcase good practice through EMBF website, sub-group to identify good practice Organise update of EMBF website	EMBF Access to Markets SBS (Secretariat)	Ongoing January 2006
e) Achieve improved monitoring of contribution of ethnic minority businesses to government procurement	Work with OGC to secure guidance on monitoring is embedded in procurement rules	Access to Markets sub-group SBS (Procurement Policy)	March 2006
f) Explore ways in which the government can apply leverage to procurement in the private sector	Work with NEP Commission of Business Leaders to increase the employment of ethnic minorities and faith groups in the private sector	EMBF Access to Markets sub-group SBS (Procurement Policy)	Ongoing
g) Explore scope to build on the NEP recommendations about procurement so policy development includes access to markets for ethnic minority businesses	Work with NEP	EMBF Access to Markets sub-group SBS (Procurement Policy)	Ongoing

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
a) Ensure government policy on skills reflects the needs of ethnic minority businesses	Map out various Government departments and agencies to identify opportunities to influence Government policies on leadership and skills	SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise, Skills)	Ongoing
	Finalise the responsibility of each sub-group member to and allocate follow up actions for specific Government departments/agencies and regions	Leadership & Workforce sub-group members	Completed November 2005
	Keep in touch with the Small Business Council Skills sub-group and the Leadership Management and Skills Unit within the DTI	Sub-group Chair	Ongoing
b) Ensure the two proposed Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in Entrepreneurship (to be located in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford/Leeds or Leicester) meet the needs of potential ethnic minority entrepreneurs	Help to develop partnerships to support the centres once locations identified	Leadership & Workforce sub-group members	To be agreed following Secretariat feed back on current state of play on CoVEs
c) Develop enterprise awareness and skills in young people	Identify ways to influence Young Enterprise agenda for young people of ethnic origin e.g. Enterprise Week	EMBF, SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	November 2005
	Presentation to Forum by Enterprise Insight	EMBF	Completed September 2005
d) Promote equality of opportunity in the workplace	Ensure appropriate portal links between Businesslink.gov the EMBF website and the proposed acas "one stop shop" for race equality advice to business	SBS (Businesslink.gov)	Spring 2006
e) Promote the concept of an integrated regional skills and employment system led by employers	Work in partnership with NEP to implement its recommendations from the May 2005 report	EMBF sub-group members	Ongoing
		SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise/Skills)	

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contd.

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
f) Promote equality of opportunity for appropriate representation of ethnic minority businesses to the Boards of various government agencies	Explore ways to increase representation, and ensure a good gender and ethnic mix, of ethnic minority businesses with Cabinet Office officials responsible for guidance on appointments	SBS and DTI EMBF sub-group members	Ongoing

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Business Support

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
a) Ensure access to business support for all	Identify issues around language and accessibility and seek to develop solutions	Business support sub-group members	April 2006
	Seek to influence the core offer to start ups being delivered by Business Links under the National Framework to ensure it meets the needs of ethnic minority businesses	Business support - group members SBS	April 2006
	Seek to influence monitoring and data collection within the regions	Business support sub-group members	April 2006
	Consider application of acas customer segmentation	Business support sub-group members	April 2006
	Build upon experiences of members	Business support sub-group members	April 2006
	Identify gaps in research into this topic	Business support sub-group members April 2006	April 2006
b) To establish wider recognition of the importance of ethnic minority enterprise in advancing neighbourhood renewal and regeneration and ensure ethnic minority enterprise is part of cross-Whitehall initiatives to secure race equality	Engage with policy makers on the Local Enterprise Growth initiative	Business support sub-group members	Completed May 2005
	Develop links with Home Office (Race Equality and Community Cohesion) and National Employment Panel	SBS (Ethnic minority Enterprise)	Ongoing

Issue	Action	Responsibility	Timing
c) Ensure New Deal and other mainstream labour market and enterprise support meets the needs of ethnic minority clients	Work with SBS and National Employment Panel to report on measures to encourage employment, self-employment and growth of small business for ethnic minority and faith groups	Business support sub-group members, SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	Ongoing
	Develop links with the NEP Minority Ethnic Group	SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise)	Ongoing
d) Influence the development of Regional Economic Strategies so they reflect the needs of ethnic minority businesses and potential entrepreneurs	Engage in consultations about the Regional Economic Strategies	Business support members, SBS (Ethnic Minority Enterprise and Secretariat)	Ongoing

summary

The level of engagement with Ministers and senior officials has increased over the past year. This provides the EMBF with a solid base from which we can operate in influencing the development of policy.

We have successes to report in each of our key interest areas. The strong caveat EMBF has is that this represents a beginning, but that much more work will need to be done to ensure that progress is maintained and developed in more detail and depth. This is particularly important because of devolution to the regions; it is vital that RDAs, as well as central Government, recognise and act on the need to engage with and support ethnic minority business.

Forum members are now more involved in their regions and we are using their contacts and networks to reach out into other communities. RDAs and Government Offices in all nine regions have been contacted to encourage them to work with the Forum members based in their regions, and members are planning to hold open meetings in each region. The first open meeting since the restructuring was held in St Albans in September 2005. This was organised by one of the members in association with Business Link Hertfordshire and provided the opportunity to engage with the RDA and ethnic minority businesses within the region. Plans are now being made for a programme of open meetings.

A major step forward in terms of regional engagement was the launch of the Ethnic Minority Business Forum North West in September 2005. This new regional forum, with the support of the North West Development Agency, will focus on developing and building sustainable ethnic minority businesses in that region.

Through the EMBF sub-groups we will be building links with the Small Business Council and other key bodies.

We now also have a women's enterprise representative, Yvonne Field, and she is working with the SBS women's enterprise team to develop a strategic framework for ethnic minority women's enterprise.

There are some other key areas of work that we also hope to look at as we move forward, for example:

We will continue to engage with Government on a much wider front to ensure that policy clearly recognises the nature and needs of ethnic minority business. We have already engaged with a number of Government departments, for example the Department for Work and Pensions and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to ensure that policy development does take account of the issues affecting ethnic minority businesses, and we will continue to find opportunities to do this.

In conclusion, we look forward to next year and beyond with continued excitement, commitment and enthusiasm. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those in Government and outside, and all current and past EMBF members for their help in achieving the progress we have made so far.

annex 1 :

EMBF Current Members

CHAIR: Ms Adeeba Malik MBE

A member of the Forum since 2000 where she chaired the Business Support sub-group, Adeeba is the Deputy Chief Executive of QED-UK, a Bradford based national economic development agency, which aims to improve the economic, social and educational position of South Asian communities. She has extensive experience in the field of enterprise, education, employment and community development. She has won numerous awards for her work and holds a number of ministerially approved appointments including membership of the Women and Work Commission. Her previous activities have included being a Board Member of Yorkshire Forward, a non-executive director of both the National Clinical Assessment Authority and British Waterways, and Chair of Yorkshire Young People's Enterprise Forum.

Mr Afzal Akram

Afzal is the Managing Director of the Deltaclub Group which is a training provider based in London. Deltaclub Group specialises in holding business networking events for companies across London, recruiting and signposting businesses to workforce development and business support programmes. Deltaclub also runs a Learndirect branded ICT Training Centre. Having provided workforce development training and support, Deltaclub Group has recently started to train unemployed people in order to get them into sustainable employment. Afzal holds a number of senior posts and board memberships including Chairman of Business Link for London.

Mr Numan Azmi

Numan is the Director of Azmi Associates Limited, a Stockport based consultancy specialising in support, regeneration, research and skills development issues

within the textiles and ethnic businesses and communities. He has very strong links within the textiles and ethnic business networks throughout the country and speaks on issues related to textiles and ethnic businesses in local, regional and national seminars and conferences. He is a Member of Manchester Chamber's Employment & Skills Committee and a number of regional bodies in this sector.

Ms Gweneth Balson

Gweneth is Managing Director of Digitalife Ltd, a Business and Technology Consulting & Training organisation based in the Yorkshire & Humberside Region. Her company aims to link training, technology and diversity in the workplace and markets to strategic business drivers. She has also established and run a successful multicultural book service. Gweneth is currently involved on a part-time basis with Bradford University.

Ms Sandra Croasdale

Sandra is the Managing Director of MBG Ltd, a manufacturing business based in Wolverhampton. Sandra is also chair and founder of the African Caribbean Business Federation.

Ms Tina Fahm

Tina is a Director of Tina Fahm Training Ltd, established in 1998 to support organisations in the effective implementation of social policy through senior management development and process reconfiguration. Tina is a member of the Legal Services Commission where she chairs the Regional Legal Services Committee for the Eastern Region. She also serves as the Home Secretary's representative on selection panels for Hertfordshire Police Authority and is a Justice of the Peace on the Supplemental List.

Mr Leslie Fairclough

Leslie Fairclough is a serial entrepreneur with a world class background in sports. With 20 years experience in the care industry, Leslie is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Higher Level Ltd, a national care provider, and Managing Director of Stitch and Print, a corporate imagery company. Vice Chair of the African Caribbean Business Federation (ACBF) and co-founder of the 21st Century Business Club, he is also the Director and co-founder of Mindstyle Ltd, a human development training organisation. For decades he has consistently provided a unique insight into new and innovative approaches of delivering effective and long lasting positive change programmes.

Ms Yvonne Field

Yvonne is Managing Director of Yvonne Field Associates Ltd, a management consultancy and training organisation based in London. Her company promotes social inclusion, partnership working and diversity, which has included developing a London based network of black women in business. In addition she is currently a member of the African Caribbean Business Network, an advisory board member of European Federation of Black Women in Business and also an advisory board member of PROWESS. Yvonne is also involved with various organisations both nationally and in the London Region.

Ms Peaches Golding

Peaches is the Owner Manager of Peaches Golding Marketing and Communications, a marketing and market research consultancy based in the South West Region. Her company has strong links with ethnic minority communities and businesses which has led to a number of contracts to assist Government departments. Peaches was a founder member of Business in the Community's Race for Opportunity programme and she is also a Regional Director for Business in the Community. She is a non-executive director of both ITV West of England and Wales, and GWR (West) Ltd, a non-executive director of North Bristol NHS Trust and a Home Office representative on Avon and Somerset Police Authority.

Mr Nasir Ilyas

Nasir is a partner at Wolstenholmes Solicitors, a medium sized law firm based in Cheshire, where he specialises in the commercial property department. He is the founder member and Chair of the Chai Centre which is a non-profit making Health Centre based in Burnley. He chairs the Danes House Economic Development Trust which was set up to revive the deprived local economy. He is the Managing Director of Premiere Properties Ltd, a property owning and developing company. He was a member of the Government Task Force set up to look into the disturbances that occurred in Burnley in 2001.

Dr Haider Imam

Syed Imam, after a successful career in academia, founded Durham Organics Ltd, which specialises in research and development of fine chemicals, particularly synthesis of fluorinated aromatic compounds for use in the pharmaceutical and polymer industry. He is a member of the Federation of Small Businesses.

Mr Mohamed Isap

Mohamed is Director of MPG Limited. Established in 1993 and with headquarters in Manchester City Centre, the company has developed into one of the North West's leading providers of reprographic, document management and exhibition graphics services. In 2002 the company was listed in the Financial Times top 100 fastest growing Inner City Companies. Mohamed has been a member of the Forum since 2002, and as Chair of the Forum's ICT sub group he recently lead a successful pilot running in the North West looking at increasing the uptake in ICT amongst ethnic minority businesses. He is also a Director of Business Link Operator for Greater Manchester, the largest outside London. Mohamed chaired the process that led to the establishment of the EMBF North West where he is currently a board member.

Miss Mei Sim Lai OBE

Of Malaysian Chinese origin, Mei Sim has lived in the UK since 1970. In 1979 she became the first female and Chinese Partner of the leading firm of Chartered Accountants Pridie Brewster, based in London. She has considerable expertise and experience in looking after SMEs and helping them to grow and succeed. She holds a number of other positions including non-executive director of Westminster Forum and Trustee of the Attlee Foundation. She is also a member of DTI's London and South East Regional Industrial Development Board, MOD's Diversity Panel, and the Senior Salaries Review Body.

Professor Monder Ram OBE

Monder is Professor of Small Business at De Montfort University (DMU), and Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship at DMU Business School. He has extensive experience of working in, researching, and acting as a consultant to ethnic minority businesses. He is a leading authority on ethnic minority entrepreneurship, and has published widely on the subject. Monder is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a member of the Small Business Committee of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, and a director of the Institute of Small Business Affairs. Monder is currently a member of the Small Business Council, as well as the Ethnic Minority Business Forum.

Ms Claudine Reid

Claudine is Director of Operations and Administration for a thriving community based business 'Home Shopping for the Elderly' operated via Social Services. She also runs a Home Care agency that provides services for older people, especially ethnic minorities, enabling them to enjoy domestic independence for longer. With a fleet of vehicles covering South London, Home Shopping is offered to the elderly, frail and housebound people. Claudine is a Trustee for A.C.E Youth & Community Centre, a charity set up to enhance the development of Young people in the Community through music and the arts.

Mr Askar Shebani

Askar is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Comtek Group. Comtek is an international group of data communications and networking solution providers with its headquarters in Reading and with its operations in North Wales, mainland Europe and North America. Comtek recently expanded into data comms equipment manufacture through the acquisition of Case Technology. Mr Shebani is Chair of Thames Valley Area of Raglan Housing Association and is involved with a wide variety of community, voluntary and charitable activities.

Mr Rashid Teladia

Mr Rashid Teladia is the Owner of ARTS Property Services and Newbridge Consulting Ltd, an independent Business Management Consultant specialising in Urban Regeneration work and advice and training to Small Medium Enterprises and Social Enterprises with focuses on BME led groups. ARTS Property Services is a Lettings and Management organisation. Both businesses are based in London Borough of Waltham Forest, East London. Rashid Teladia is also a Business Franchise Operator for the Pitman Training Group and run a Pitman Training Centre in North East London. The centre provides a wide range of professional courses for both employed and unemployed people. In addition he is a non-executive director of Whipps Cross University Hospital NHS Trust and the Newlon Housing Group.

Mr Brian Wong

Brian was born in China and came to Liverpool in 1962. He graduated from Manchester University, with a MA in Economics (honours). Brian has been Finance Director of Hondo Trading Company since 1980; He is also founder and Managing Director of Foho Finance Investment Co. Ltd, since 1997. Appointed by many cities in China as their overseas investment advisor, in 1989 Brian set up the Liverpool Chinatown Business Association to support local Chinese businesses. He extended this to the North West region by setting up the North West Chinese Council in 2001. He has been a Justice of the Peace since 1994 and became Deputy Lieutenant of Merseyside in 2002. Brian has become Board Trustee Member of the National Museum of Liverpool in 2004.



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