INTRODUCTORY GUIDING PRINCIPLES: Spring 2008

1) NAME OF GROUP

LINE: 'The London Islamic Network for the Environment'.

2) PRINCIPLES & VALUES

A) Relationship with Islam/Faith

i. We strive for an approach that is centred in the *essence* and *unifying principles* of Islam, allowing us to extend outwardly with inclusiveness to those of other faiths and beliefs.
ii. We do not represent *all* Muslims, nor *the* Islamic perspective (nor do we represent all environmentalists), and we do not have a monopoly on religion. Instead we represent a range of viewpoints, which will converge in some areas, to then be held with lesser or greater firmness.
iii. We are not a sect of Islam and are open to people of all faiths, sects and beliefs who are able to engage within our ethos.
iv. Our approach is *non-prescriptive*. We recognise that each individual has choice, and is on a life path of which we do not have full knowledge.

B) Transformational Activism (Individual, Group, & Societal)

a) Decision-making & Dialogue

i. We view *Deep Dialogue* and *Reflection/Contemplation (Tafakkur)* as important processes that inform our activism, and we recognise the value in allowing insights to emerge through them.
ii. We recognise the importance of creating space, both psychological and in time, to share and understand perspectives. This encourages a deeper dialogue through which the appreciation of others is enhanced, a *prescriptive* approach becomes less likely, and *transformation* becomes possible.
iii. Whilst technology has value, in an increasingly technology-driven age, we are mindful that *face-to-face* dialogue offers a quality and presence that can be missing through remote means.
iv. We aim to be *transparent* whilst allowing space for growth.

b) Development & Transformation

i. We look *within* as well as outside of the group, understanding that our personal and collective transformation is a crucial contribution to societal transformation ~ developing ourselves such that the consciousness and processes within the group mirror that of the world we wish to live in.
ii. We recognise the importance of *spirituality/inner work*, and our personal spiritual/inner development.
iii. We reflect on the natural world (which includes the human), and our place in it.
iv. We take opportunities to develop skills that will help the group to develop, for example skills in *facilitating dialogue*, *conflict resolution* and developing *mindfulness*.
v. We recognise that our *means* is a fundamental contribution to the *end* we seek.

c) Egoism & Image

i. We recognise the existence of *egoism* and take precautions to ensure that ego serves higher values, rather than attempts to push with a constricted world-view.
ii. Whilst through a collective identity we believe in the possibility of better fulfilling a higher purpose, we consider our *purpose* to ultimately be of greater value than our *identity*.
iii. We focus on *substance* in our work, which we value more than an image or impression that may or may not arise. We are also conscious of the importance of the truth being asserted.
iv. We value *quality* over *quantity*.

3) PURPOSE & METHODS

A) Our group purpose is to facilitate: the transformation of society to live justly in harmony with the diverse natural world, of which we are a part, thus honouring the principle of Oneness *(Tawhid)*. Integral to this is the process of community building and nurturing the social ecology.

B) In order to achieve this purpose we utilise the following methods:

a) Development of Knowledge

i. In recognising the interconnectedness of the world, we strive to develop our own understanding of human and societal spheres of knowledge, as well as the 'environmental'. We recognise that economics, peace, conflict, human ecology and social movements are realities that are interwoven with the struggle for environmental justice. We also aim to develop our understanding of Islamic perspectives on these areas, as well as perspectives from other traditions that may not be labelled 'Islamic' (where doing so supports the purpose of the group). Simultaneously, we allow space for our own insights to form.
ii. We also assume the role of a catalyst in order to stimulate questioning, reflection, dialogue and understanding of the above within wider society.

The vehicles that we might use include talks, workshops, the arts and various forms of media, as appropriate.

b) Connecting with Nature

We consider sensing, connecting with, and reflecting on the natural world as a potential vehicle for spiritual development, as well as a means to develop a deeper understanding of ecology. Hence outings in which we explore or work in nature form a component of our activism. We may also encourage such activities to be initiated in communities, where this is appropriate.

c) Deep Dialogue

Whilst communication enables us to understand one another, other factors are relevant to its *quality*: the *state* we are in, the quality of *facilitation* (which we regard as a collective responsibility) and the *setting*, can fundamentally affect the extent to which both the process and eventual outcome are infused with *wholeness*. Hence we aim to create conditions inwardly and outwardly that are conducive to such dialogue. Integral to this process is *listening with compassion,* as well as *reflection* and taking precaution against the influence of *egoism*.

d) Networking

We network with a diverse range of groups and individuals (both inside and outside Muslim communities), whilst also recognising that the quality of relationship is more important than quantity of contacts.

e) Campaigning/Outward Activism

In asserting justice, there are likely to be times when we exert direct pressure outwardly. Our work may include taking campaigns, where appropriate, to businesses, political structures and other institutions, for example. In so doing, we are simultaneously mindful of our principles and values, in particular recognising that the *means* we use is a fundamental contribution to the *end* we seek (see Transformational Activism earlier).