

Green Spaces Project of the Month - July 2002 - The Kafel Centre, Swansea

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It is now clear that the majority of Swansea and its surrounding area's growing black and ethnic minority community are a permanent feature of the multi-cultural society that is the UK.

Kafel is a voluntary charity organisation working with Swansea's Muslim ethnic minority community, taking its name from an Arabic word meaning 'to nurture'. This community is made up of people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and includes Pakistanis, Arabs, Turks, Malaysians, Mauritian Indians, Africans and many others, as well as Swansea's largest and most disadvantaged community - the Bangladeshi community. Together the Muslim community makes up around 70% of the ethnic minority population of Swansea.

It is Kafel's intention that the Centre should benefit, in particular, the most vulnerable and neglected sections of this community, namely, women, the youth, the elderly and the disabled. With this in mind, it is proposed that in the evening, the Centre would provide sporting activities and during the day, it would become a day centre for the elderly. It would also have a whole floor set aside for women with crèche facilities available, as provisions for Muslim mothers and their children are currently non-existent in the community. On weekends, at present, there is nowhere for the community to gather for social activities, such a centre would provide this and cater for functions such as parties and weddings.

While it is Kafel's primary intention to provide services and facilities for those ethnic minority Muslim communities, whose social needs are currently not being met, we are happy to open the Centre to others. The organisation wishes to make the Centre and its facilities available for hire to the wider Welsh community, so that as many people as possible can benefit from what we hope will become a shared resource.

The Kafel Centre aims to provide the following:

- Cultural Awareness Seminars
- Conference and Lecture Rooms

- Play Groups and Crèche Facilities
- Fully equipped Sports Hall
- Gymnasium and Health Club
- Weekend/Saturday Schools and Homework Clubs
- Mother Tongue classes
- Anti-Drug Addiction and Anti-Crime Programmes
- Social Activities for the Elderly
- Landscaped Community Garden
- Translation and Advice Service
- Complete Access for the Disabled
- Community Organisations Resource Room
- Arts Centre (with exhibition and workshop)

Many of the above will be carried out in partnership with local governmental, statutory and voluntary bodies.

How The Garden Project Came About

Kafel were invited, by the Minority Ethnic Women's Network (Swansea), to a meeting where the Black Environment Network was making a presentation of work they had carried out with various ethnic minority community groups throughout England and Wales, to help them establish community gardens in their local area. Among the projects featured in the slide-show presentation were those by other Muslim communities around the country, and which reflected Muslim art and culture. BEN's Development Worker was approached after the meeting and invited to visit the Kafel Centre to view the courtyard area that the Muslim community in Swansea was keen to develop.

It has been known for some time that there is a demonstrable need for such a community garden for those ethnic minorities who live in Swansea's city centre, in particular the Bangladeshi community. The majority of those who will be using the Kafel Centre, live locally in high density housing and have limited access to gardens or communal areas due to lack of private transport or affordable public transport.

The Kafel Centre is ideally suited to meet this need, being situated in the Castle Ward which has a high percentage of Bangladeshi and other minority communities, and having a sizeable but unused area at the front of the building. The Kafel Centre aims to cater for Swansea's Muslim ethnic minority community by providing a range of activities and services particularly aimed at women, young people, the elderly and those with disabilities. The Multi-Cultural Community Garden will provide a safe, attractive environment within walking distance of their homes.

The transformation of the garden will also enhance the Kafel Centre's presence in the local community, and send out a positive message by creating an amenity that can benefit the wide community. At

present there are very few green spaces in the city centre and the Kafel Centre provides an ideal location for creating such a space.

After the meeting with BEN, the Kafel representative, who had been present at the meeting, fed back information about BEN's presentation to the Kafel Centre's committee. The committee was inspired, as they finally felt that a fantastic opportunity had presented itself to make the most of the unused land at the front and to the sides of the building.

Following BEN's visit to the Centre, to which Prince's Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Community Design Service were also invited to come and offer their suggestions, CDS carried out a preliminary site survey and reported their findings to the Kafel Centre committee. A meeting was then arranged with the above parties to discuss the best way to move forward. At this meeting, the committee was advised to provide documentation demonstrating community interest in and support of the garden project, and to ensure that the community was involved at all stages of the project's development.

The Kafel Centre Garden Consultation

On Sunday 30th January 2000, a consultation took place to gain the views and ideas of the local community about the proposed Multi-Cultural Garden at the Kafel Centre. The consultation was led by Omar Williams (Kafel), Tanya Nash (Prince's Trust) and Siobhan Hayward (BEN). Participatory methods were used to enable everyone to make a contribution and their voice to be heard. Over 40 people, representing a wide age range and from different ethnic backgrounds took part in the event. The feedback was very positive and included many imaginative ideas for the development of a Multi-Cultural Garden. As part of the consultation process, a questionnaire was distributed to the wide community. Out of 200 questionnaires, 104 were returned, a 52% response rate, which was excellent.

Analysis of the Consultation Event

The consultation event involved a visioning question "Imagine in ten years time the Kafel Centre is serving the people in our community in a positive way. What do you see physically in the garden and what activities do you see taking place?" In groups of 6 participants drew ideas for the garden or wrote suggestions down. Each group fed back their ideas which were then grouped to create a spider diagram. Once all the ideas had been recorded, each person was given 5 stars to vote which headings were most important to them. They could put all their stars under one heading if there was one thing they felt strongly about, likewise there was no pressure to use all the stars.

Visioning Question Results

Q. What would you like to see in the Garden?

Q. What would you use the Garden for?

Q. When would you be able to use the Garden?

Click here to see Analysis of Consultation and Questionnaire.

Conclusion

The excellent response to the consultation demonstrated the enthusiasm and support for a Multi-Cultural Garden Project and gave a clear idea of the type of garden the community would like to see developed, as well as highlighting many community and social benefits. Below is a summary of the main points:

- Members of the community consulted about the project envisaged the garden as a beautiful landscaped area, with lots of colour, trees, shrubs and flowers. Seating and shade were identified and the interpretation of the site through artwork reflecting a diversity of cultures, for example floor mosaics and a fountain. A play area was also seen as an important element.
- Benefits to the community included:
 - Creating a safe and attractive environment in a built-up, urban environment;
 - Creating an amenity that will benefit a wide cross-section of the Muslim community and wider community. In particular, women, young people, the elderly and those with disabilities by providing seating and shelter, a play area, and activities for all age ranges;
 - Promoting health by encouraging people to be outdoors and engage in activities such as gardening and growing vegetables and herbs;
 - Providing a focal point for social occasions and helping to promote positive relationships between generations and developing links with the wider community;
 - Involving a wide cross-section of the community in developing activities and events relevant to the garden. For example, the consultation showed that members of the community were very keen to develop art related projects for the garden that reflected the different cultures (e.g. designing floor mosaics, murals, centre pieces such as a fountain, signage and decorative railings). By involving the community in the design and ongoing development of the project it will help to promote a sense of ownership and care for the garden.
- Benefits to the environment included:
 - Introducing native trees and shrubs;
 - Introducing plants from the Indian sub-continent and Africa to reflect Swansea's Muslim ethnic minority communities' heritage;
 - Introducing artwork created by the community which represents links between Islam and the environment;

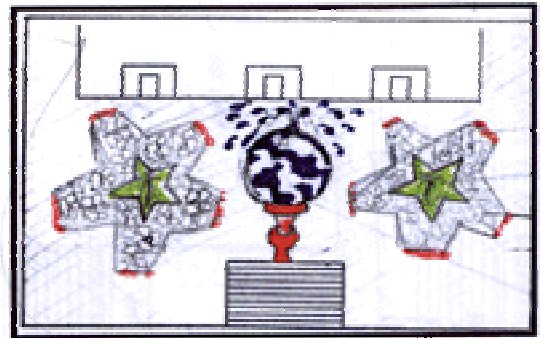
Ensuring that those materials used come from sustainable sources.

- The questionnaire also demonstrated that the garden would be well used at all times during the day. The Muslim community in Swansea is very conscious of how ethnic minorities are viewed in general by members of the wider British society. They are, therefore, keen to do something positive not just for their own community but for the rest of Swansea, to show that they want to bring benefit to everyone by playing their part in developing and taking care of the common environment.

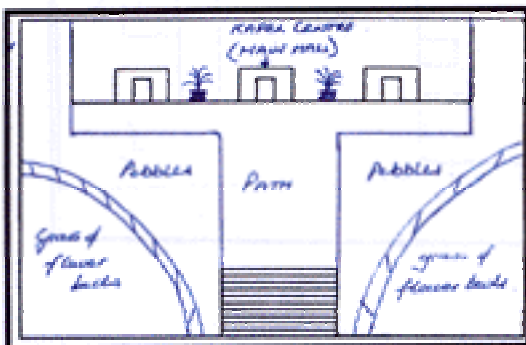
Drawings from Questionnaires



Ayesha (Bengali)



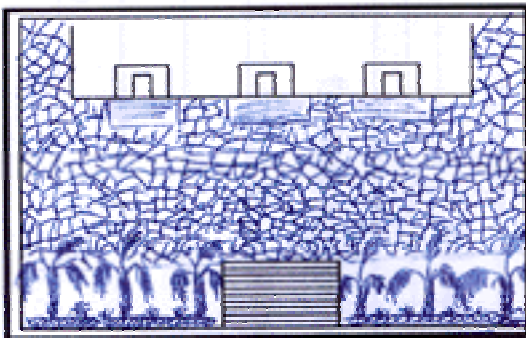
Shafiu Islam (Bengali)



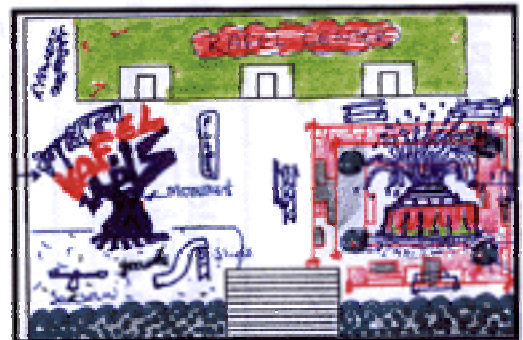
Majoda (Bengali)



Mrs. Jones (British)



Khalil (Pakistani)



Amina (Bengali)

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