

Notes on OBFA Members' Meeting held on
12th November 2014 at 1600hrs

Those present at the meeting were:

Maqbool Sultan - Chairman
Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles – Chairman, UK
Shawqi Sultan – Secretary General
Abdulhussain Jaffer
Sh. Aflah Al Rawahi
Ahmed Al Araimi
Alastair Long
Hani Zubair
Hussain Jawad
Khalil Al Khonji
Mohamed Habib
Mohammed Ali Sultan
Mohsin Haider Darwish
Mukhtar Hasan
Nicholas Pattison
Pankaj Khimji
Paul Sheridan
Qais Al Yousef
Redha Bhacker
Saleh Taleb Al Zakwani
Sh. Yousef Yaqoub Al Harithy

The session was designed to brainstorm ideas for OBFA to promote. A number of ideas were put forward. In particular the benefits of modernising the construction industry was raised in some detail, which would reduce dependency on expats as well as introduce significant energy savings. It was recognized however that this would be a slow process given the number of Government agencies potentially involved. It was also recognized that a consultant would be needed (RIBA, CIOB?) and that clear terms of reference would need to be developed for that consultant.

That led to a discussion on sources of income and how to create a sustainable future for OBFA and its relationship with other bodies. It was suggested that there should be a small part-time administration unit both in Oman and the UK. The part-time assistant would in the UK report to OBFA Secretary-General - Ewan Stirling. In Oman the reporting would be via the Oman Secretary-General - Shawqi Sultan through the usual OBFA e-mail. Shawqi added that he did not feel that at present there was any need for outside help as his office can cope with the amount of work presented, however, in future this issue could be looked into.

The next OBFA function has been planned for February next year but may be brought forward to align with the Lord Mayor's (Alan Harwood's) visit in January (19th?).

There was a strong advocacy to develop a presentation for that meeting on Oman's strong logistic strengths, based principally on Duqum, but including all four free zones.

In March there is a Mansion House conference, which OBFA might attend, along with the Governor of the Central Bank and the Omani banks. This will need to be funded by the Government.

The Chairman summarised the meeting as follows:

1. Agree Terms of Reference for the Construction Study.
2. Prepare a presentation for the visit of the Lord Mayor in January at which OBFA will brief on the free zones (with PAIPED/Duqum in the lead).
3. In principle OBFA would wish to participate in the Mansion House meeting in March with the Central Bank leading.
4. The UK Summer event may well be held in Belfast.

Under AOB, the subject of the lack of an OBFA strategy was brought up along with details of the proposed Venture Capital Fund.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman with thanks to all present and in particular to Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles for his presence and contribution.