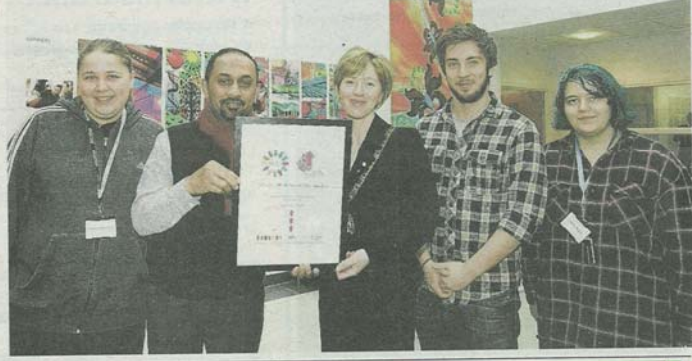


ISLAMIC ARTS GROUP FOUNDER IS PRESENTED WITH NATIONAL AWARD AT HOUSE OF LORDS



LEFT: Anouar Kassim, right, is presented with his award by John Hayes, Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning. RIGHT: Mayor Councillor Debbie Brock congratulates the students and Mr Kassim. The winning artwork is shown in the background



Epic award puts arts group on the map

ART students have been celebrating after helping to win a national award for a local community group.

The Milton Keynes Islamic Arts Heritage and Culture Organisation scooped the Epic Partnership Award with its Islamic Art Banner.

And last week Anouar Kassim, founder and chairman of MK-IAC attended the first ever Epic Awards winners' reception at the House of Lords to receive the award.

Mr Kassim accepted the Partnership Award on behalf of MK-IAC for its work with Milton Keynes College.

He said: "It was a dream come true. It has opened doors for us and we have to use the opportunity to make a huge difference.

"MK-IAC has successfully demonstrated the quality and beauty of Islamic diverse arts in their activities by engaging and educating communities. We are honoured and chuffed, especially at having to go to Parliament to receive our award."

The epic awards are an initiative of Voluntary Arts England and designed to highlight excellence and innovation in arts groups across England.

The project enabled students at Milton Keynes College to explore Islamic culture through contemporary and traditional art.

Winners received prizes including cash, membership of the National Association of Local Government Arts Officers and an award-specific prize of mentoring or training.