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## **PRESS RELEASE: PRAYERS BEGIN AT NEW CAMBRIDGE MOSQUE**

**(No embargo)**

Regular worship has begun at the Cambridge Central Mosque, 309-313 Mill Road. Prayers are now held five times daily. This was not the official opening. An opening ceremony for VIPs and community members will be arranged at some point later in the year when all decorative works are complete.

The mosque incorporates prayer space for 1000 worshippers. It is inclusive of the different Muslim denominations, and also seeks to be the UK's most female-friendly mosque, with a range of spaces and facilities for female mosque users. It also incorporates housing for staff, an underground carpark, a cafeteria (not yet open) and a lecture room. It is surrounded by a beautiful Islamic garden which makes it a welcoming space for Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours.

Billed as Europe's first eco-mosque, the facility incorporates cutting-edge green features, including photovoltaic panels, rainwater harvesting, an air-source heat pump, and sedum roofs. Swift boxes are provided in the roof crenellations.

The architect, David Marks MBE (1952-2017), was one of the UK's leading architects, credited with structures such as the London Eye and the Kew Treetop Walkway. He conceived the Cambridge mosque as a forest of 'trees' fabricated from cross-laminated timber, which would recall Qur'anic teachings about the harmony of humanity and nature, and also reference English Gothic and Islamic and Turkish geometrical themes.

The mosque is built and operated by the Cambridge Mosque Trust, a UK charity. The chair, Dr Tim Winter, says: 'We are delighted to offer this magnificent facility to everyone in the great global hub that is Cambridge. It is a symbol of the dynamic diversity and tolerance that make Cambridge such an extraordinary place to live. We look forward to working with our Turkish partners and our other donors and well-wishers in order to make this an icon of mutual tolerance and respect, so needed in our polarized and anxious times.'

Construction costs are estimated at £24 million. Donors have contributed from around the world, but the largest donor has been the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs. Other donors have included Turkish engineering firm Yapi Merkezi, and the Qatar government's national fund.

The first imams appointed are Dr Sejad Mekic and Shaykh Ali Tos.

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