

**BANK OF LONDON AND THE MIDDLE EAST SEES FLURY OF AWARD WINS  
FOLLOWING THE 2009 ISLAMIC FINANCE NEWS ANNUAL POLL**



**London, 12 January, 2010** – Bank of London and The Middle East plc (BLME), the London based wholesale, Sharia'a compliant bank, announced today that it has been voted Best Islamic Bank in the UK, Best Leasing Provider in the UK, as well as for UK Deal of the year, by the Islamic Finance News (IFN) Annual Poll 2009.

Participants in the poll, which is considered the most comprehensive and definitive industry survey, nominated BLME to win the award of Best Islamic Bank in the UK in recognition of the bank's expertise in providing bespoke financing to a significant cross section of institutions, businesses and individuals.

The award for Best Leasing Provider was won by BLME following a year in which the bank completed a large number of innovative leasing transactions competing directly with conventional banks. Throughout 2009 BLME provided £102 million of lease finance including \$68 million in the US lease market.

BLME also won the award for UK Deal of the year for arranging the £12.5 million lease financing for Scottish Coal plc. This deal allowed for periodic funding through 2009 and it endorses BLME as being at the forefront of Islamic banking in the UK. This is believed to be the UK's largest Shariah compliant leasing deal in 2009.

Humphrey Percy, CEO of BLME, said:

"We were proud to receive the award of leading Islamic bank in Europe last year, which was a great achievement just 18 months after our launch. To win the award for Best Islamic Bank in the UK 12 months later, as well as Best Leasing Provider and UK Deal of the year, is a huge testament to hard work and success the team at BLME have achieved throughout 2009.

“As a bank and an industry we have been through a tumultuous last 12 months along with the rest of the international financial markets. As we begin 2010 however, we expect to see an increase in the mutual interest between investors in the Middle East and Europe, which BLME is in an ideal position to advise and facilitate. In addition, we continue to see successful progress across each of our five core areas of business and greatly look forward to the challenges and opportunities that the next 12 months will bring.”

The IFN Annual Awards Polls are seen as the most transparent and competitive awards in Islamic finance, based on a unique poll which is a highly qualitative reflector of the global Islamic financial markets. The awards recognize the best providers of Islamic financial services across a series of markets and sectors as voted by readers of IFN, who include Islamic finance issuers, investors, non-banking financial intermediaries and government bodies from around the world. The results were announced after 2,657 votes were cast over a month-long period across 45 categories.

The winners will receive the prestigious awards at two special awards ceremonies: the first will take place on the evening of the 25th February 2010 at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Kuala Lumpur, followed by another at the Grand Hyatt Dubai on the 8th March 2010.