

# THE SIKH NETWORK

# quarterly

Issue 02  
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Responsible for monitoring progress and strategic direction of the Sikh Manifesto over the next five years

The Sikh Network presents its quarterly newsletter following the 2015 General Election. Priorities have been decided, a work programme established and progress is being monitored on each of the 10-points in the Sikh Manifesto.

## Monitoring and reporting progress



The Sikh Network has introduced a dashboard and RAG rating to monitor progress against each of the 10 Sikh Manifesto sections. This is updated at the end of each quarter just before the quarterly newsletter is issued and the main actions required in the next three to six months agreed.

There is also a weekly conference call of the core team of around a dozen at a fixed time each week that is proving highly efficient and effective as a means

of regular communication that limits the number of face to face meetings. The core team of volunteers also communicates daily with written communications and has developed an excellent working relationship. The success to date is down to a shared understanding and vision on what needs to be achieved and people who are willing to share the workload with a range of skill sets and contacts.

After the General Election the Sikh Network agreed priorities for the first 12 months. There has been huge progress on several sections of the Sikh Manifesto where priorities were set and is reflected in this and the last newsletter. Activities have taken place and are planned on all sections of the Sikh Manifesto.

Looking back on the last 12 months it is remarkable to reflect on the impact of the Sikh Manifesto and what has been achieved by the Sikh Network with no financial resources of its own. Much has been achieved with the dedication of Sikh Network volunteers with the full backing of organisations like the Sikh Federation (UK) and sponsorship and support from a number of other Sikh organisations and Sikh businesses.

## Separate ethnic monitoring of Sikhs

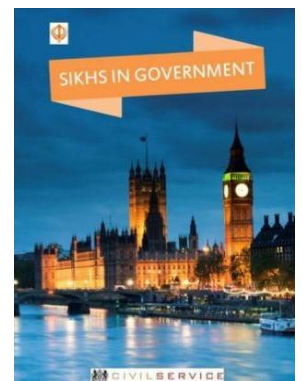
The Sikh Network has been working with the Sikh Federation (UK) leading work on securing a separate tick box for Sikhs for the 2021 Census. This Sikh Manifesto commitment has strong cross party support and is critical to ensuring Sikhs are not missing out on access to vital public services. This is because public service delivery is often based on ethnicity data from the Census. In the last quarter we have had highly productive meetings with senior officials from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The meetings were acknowledged by all parties as being very conducive.

Subsequent to the meetings, the Sikh Network engaged with numerous Sikh professionals from different sectors (health, local authorities, professional services, education, media, banking etc.). Through this wider

engagement Sikh professionals were encouraged to submit comprehensive and evidence based consultation responses to the ONS's first formal consultation for the 2021 Census. We will continue to work with the Sikh Federation (UK) and ONS to secure a separate Sikh tick box in the upcoming Census processes.

## Launch of Sikhs in Government

Sikhs in Government, a non-political network that represents all Sikh staff across the civil service, held its launch event on 17 September 2015 in the House of Lords. The event was well attended by a cross section of Sikhs and the wider community. The network aims to provide a forum for open discussion and raise awareness of Sikhs across Government by acting as a central point in Government for information relating to Sikh issues, working on



increasing the diversity of the Civil Service and increasing progression of Sikh staff and fostering closer ties with the Sikh community and Government. The Sikh Network along with other major Sikh political organisations were represented at the launch in the House of Lords and welcome this initiative and will be supporting mentoring and career progression of Sikhs in Government.

## Demand for a Statutory Code of Practice on the 5Ks and Sikh turban

In September two Sikh schoolgirls were ordered to remove their turbans on the first day of school. St Anne's Catholic School Headteacher Lyn Bourne apologised to the families of Prasimran Kaur, 11, and Simranjot Kaur, 13.

The Sikh Federation (UK) wrote to the Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education, calling for tough action to prevent similar instances from happening in the future. She said the girls' case was a "wholly regrettable incident" and warned schools that they must do more to ensure their uniform policy respects the needs of Britain's diverse religious and cultural communities.



She stated schools must prevent discrimination of pupils from minority races and faiths and avoid breaching equality laws, referring to the Equality Act 2010. The Governing body at St Anne's Catholic School and Southampton

City Council were urged to step in to ensure school policies on race and religious discrimination are properly enforced. This incident provides an excellent case study for why a statutory Code of Practice for the 5Ks and Sikh turban is needed to assist public bodies.

## ***Engagement with the two main candidates for London Mayor***



Last month we had an excellent meeting with Zac Goldsmith, the Conservative candidate for the Mayor of London. He took away the Sikh Manifesto and said he

was going to go through it and see where he could assist apart from the matters we specifically discussed.

Both candidates are now on record as backing a site in central London for a permanent monument to recognise Sikh sacrifices in the First World War (Section 6 of the Sikh Manifesto). Backing for the Vaisakhi celebration next April in City Hall and the June 1984 remembrance march and freedom rally in central London were also discussed with Zac Goldsmith. We hope to report in the next newsletter about our meeting that is to take place with Sadiq Khan, the Labour candidate for the Mayor of London.

## ***“Women in Politics” launched by the Sikh Network: Sikh women encouraged to come forward to take up political roles***



The Sikh Network held the first Women in politics event Saturday 3rd October at Sandwell Council Chambers. The attendance at the event which was fully booked, indicated a need to engage more women and especially those from underrepresented groups to have an opportunity to participate in politics at a locally and national level.

The Sikh Manifesto produced by the Sikh Network earlier this year addressed the need for effective representation in Parliament for Sikhs. The objective of this event was to take this section forward and to inspire women to engage with politics by becoming members, campaigning, and pursuing careers as Cllrs, future MPs and MEP's by providing insight to the political issues, processes and life from the perspective of successful women at all levels.

The panel of women speakers represented all levels of the political system, including a local councillor, a Member of Parliament, a Member of the European Parliament and a Member of the House of Lords, all with cross party representation. They each shared their personal journeys, barriers, support and inspirations with the audience, urging and encouraging greater engagement from women.

Kate Willoughby from Emily matters inspired and captured the audiences as she read a speech of suffragette Emily Davison, while Jess Philips, the Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley, talked about 'women standing up for women's issues' and having the strength to stand up and be counted.

Also in attendance was Suria Photay – the Conservative candidate in Wolverhampton South East in the last election, Baroness Lorely Burt - former Liberal Democrat MP from Solihull and Nina Gill one of the Labour MEPs from the West Midlands. The event was hosted by Cllr Preet Kaur Gill who is a Labour Cllr in Sandwell and a member of the core group of the Sikh Network.



The event also included interactive workshops where delegates were split into working groups and each give a relevant key political topic to discuss and present a fresh party perspective to the group.

## ***Sikh Network professionals provide update on progress with the Sikh Manifesto & future plans at the National Sikh Convention***

The Sikh Network's Preet Kaur and Jas Singh both addressed the sangat at the National Sikh Convention held at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Wolverhampton in September. They provided feedback on the past 12 months following the announcement and launch of the Sikh Manifesto, general election campaign update and focused priorities for the coming year. Preet also shared future plans and events such as encouraging more Sikh Women to take an active role in both Sikh and mainstream politics.

## ***Derby's first Sikh ethos school opens***

Derby's first Sikh school opened its doors to 120 pupils in September, starting a new era of primary education in the city.

The Akaal Primary School, with classes for reception year and Year 1 pupils, is housed in temporary buildings in Hartington Street behind the National Sikh Museum. Prime Minister David Cameron said he will "not waver" in his commitment to open 500 new free schools over the next five years – as he announced the first wave to be approved this parliament and pledged to deliver two waves of new schools every year until 2020.

Akaal primary joined 252 free schools which are already open and is among 52 that opened in September.

The Department for Education is continuing to work with Derby City Council to negotiate a permanent site for the school in the Sunnyhill area.

Dr Daljit Singh Virk, chairman of Akaal Academy Trust, which is running the school, said: "The school will provide a values-based education and a greater choice of primary schools in Derby.



## ***Forthcoming events***

- **World Sikh Summit** – 31 October & 1 Nov
- **Genocide & killings** of religious minorities in India: Parliamentary event – 3 Nov
- **Mass protest by Sikhs** and a wide –ranging group of non-Sikh organisations against Narendra Modi on 12 Nov
- First ever **Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurburb** Celebration in Parliament – 25 Nov
- **Art Exhibition** – Free Sikh Political Prisoners campaign – tbc Dec

