

# THE SIKH NETWORK

# quarterly

Issue 01  
May-Jul 2015

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

The Sikh Network presents its first quarterly newsletter since the May 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.

## The impact of the Sikh Manifesto

The Sikh Manifesto was launched on 31 January 2015 and has exceeded all expectations in terms of its impact. It empowered Gurdwaras, Sikh organisations and individual Sikhs to raise issues with hundreds of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) in a way never seen before in UK-wide elections.

**56%**

of candidates targeted supported all 10 items in the Sikh Manifesto



**81%**

of candidates targeted supported 9 or more items in the Sikh Manifesto



The Sikh Manifesto and the associated campaign received unprecedented mainstream media coverage that reached and captured the imagination of Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. The response to the Sikh Manifesto from PPCs across the political spectrum was hugely encouraging. 180 candidates were specifically targeted in over 120 constituencies.

## Support for specific items in the Sikh Manifesto

The Sikh Network working with the Sikh Federation (UK) provided information to the Sikh community in advance of the General Election on the relative support for the Sikh Manifesto in over 50

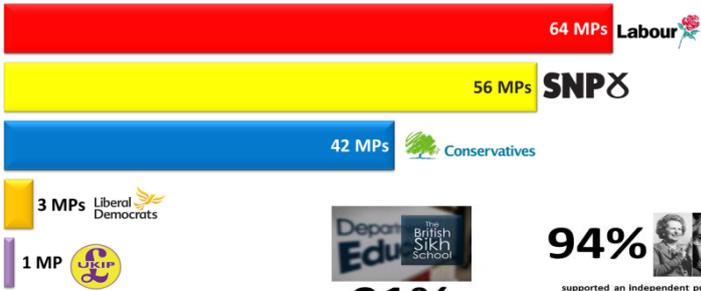
constituencies to help Sikhs decide how to vote. In a number of marginals with many Sikh voters, such as Bedford, Brentford and Isleworth, Ilford North, Northampton North and Wolverhampton South West the Sikh Manifesto made a real difference in terms of the final outcome despite the overall trend in the national vote.

## MPs elected who support the Sikh Manifesto

Securing the support of so many elected MPs for issues set out in the Sikh Manifesto gives the British Sikh community a solid foundation to work with Government and opposition parties.

However, the real hard work starts now and the Sikh Network encourages those interested in any of the issues in the Sikh Manifesto to become active within the Network at a local, regional or national level and help progress relevant issues over the next five years.

166 MPs were elected that specifically supported the Sikh Manifesto



**91%**

supported a network of state funded Sikh ethos schools



**84%**

backed UN-led inquiry into 1984 Sikh Genocide

**94%**

supported an independent public inquiry into UK Government actions in the lead up to and after the 1984 Sikh Genocide



**3/5**

of candidates supported the application of self-determination to the Sikhs

## Formation of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for British Sikhs

The APPG for British Sikhs held its AGM on 30 June and Rob Marris having returned to Parliament once again became the Chair of the APPG. Chris White the Conservative MP for Warwick and Leamington and Emma Reynolds, the Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government agreed to become Vice Chairs of the APPG and Adam Holloway the Conservative MP for Gravesham agreed to become the Secretary.

### Message from Rob Marris MP:



"I founded this APPG in 2005, and was its inaugural Chair for 5 years until I left Parliament in 2010. From 2010 until 2015, the Chair was the indomitable Labour MP Fabian Hamilton from Leeds North East. At our AGM on 30 June 2015, I was honoured to be

elected as Chair again. After a sometimes intense – but always polite – discussion, the APPG decided its Programme of Work is as follows:

### World War I monument (Section 6 of the Sikh Manifesto)

To press the UK government for an appropriate site and a suitable monument in central London, to reflect and record the huge sacrifice made by so many Sikhs particularly in both World Wars.

### Census 2021 (Section 2 of the Sikh Manifesto)

To continue to press the Office for National Statistics to include, on the next Census form, a separate ethnic question/tick-box specifically for Sikhs.

### France and Belgium (Section 7 of the Sikh Manifesto)

To continue to press the UK government itself to continue to press the governments of France and of Belgium to repeal their discriminatory laws regarding religious dress (re: Articles of Faith etc.).

**Guru Nanak Dev Ji's birthday** - To institute an annual celebration in the House of Commons. It is hoped that this year's will be on puranmashi on Wednesday 25 November.

**Vaisakhi** - To continue with the annual celebration in the House of Commons, which I inaugurated almost 10 years ago.

**Public life** - To encourage Sikhs to feel comfortable to participate in public life; for example through training, visits and mentoring."

Going forward the Sikh Network and Sikh Federation (UK) are advising and providing support to the APPG.

***Tens of thousands of Sikhs march through London in Remembrance March and Freedom Rally***

Tens of thousands of Sikhs from across the UK gathered in central London to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the June 1984 attack on the Sri Harmandir Sahib Complex.



Tom Watson MP, a leading candidate to become Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, spoke passionately at the Freedom Rally and repeated his support for an independent public inquiry. He said when revelations emerged in January 2014 of UK Government involvement the matter ceased to be an internal one for India.

A letter was delivered to David Cameron renewing calls for an independent public inquiry into UK Government military assistance in the June 1984 attack on the Sikhs' holiest shrine.

Sikhs demanded the inquiry be extended to look at pressure from India in its' attempts to deny British Sikhs the democratic right to protest to highlight the Genocide of Sikhs and expose widespread human rights violations in India.

Disclosures from 1985 under the 30 year rule have raised further questions on restrictions imposed on law-abiding Sikhs and it is also clear information continues to be withheld that has added to the lack of confidence in the adequacy of the Cabinet Secretary's report presented to Parliament last February.

The letter said too many questions remain unanswered and the public at large have a right to know the truth of how the UK Government 31 years ago assisted India to cover up the Genocide of the Sikhs in 1984.

David Cameron was also urged to recognise the systematic, pre-planned and deliberate killing and physical destruction of Sikhs in June 1984, in the months that followed and in November 1984 individually and collectively as a Genocide as defined by the United Nations in 1948. The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh in December 2014 referred to what happen to the Sikhs in 1984 as a 'Genocide' and that 'justice would be meted out to the victims only when the perpetrators of the crime are punished'.

The event was supported by a number of Sikh Youth organisations and charities including Sikh Federation (UK), Midlands Langar Seva Society, SWAT London, Khalsa Bikers, Tribute1984 & Sikh Relief. Many mainstream media outlets covered the event with the support of the Sikh PA.

***"Sikhs in politics" event at PwC offices as Labour leadership candidates offer support***

The Sikh Network invited politicians from the main political parties to discuss the Sikh Manifesto as well as how the different parties can better



encourage participation from British Sikhs in politics following this year's general election.

The first part of the event focused on some of the short to medium term priorities in the Sikh Manifesto and discussed how the Sikh community will focus on implementing these over the next year to eighteen months in partnership with the current government and opposition parties.

The second part of the event saw discussion on how the main political parties should reach out and encourage participation of Sikhs in politics, including the House of Lords.

The Sikh Manifesto and the related PwC event have proved useful in attracting very positive responses and commitments from three of the four Labour leadership hopefuls who all want to fundamentally change the way they work with the British Sikh community and ensure better Sikh representation of Sikhs in Parliament.

***Assisting the campaign for the release of Sikh political prisoners***

The Sikh Network has worked with the Sikh Federation (UK) and many youth organisations to take forward the campaign in the UK for the release of Sikh political prisoners held in Indian jails. The campaign has been brought into focus by the hunger strike by 82-year old Bapu Surat Singh, a permanent resident in the United States.



***Future of community language qualifications, including Punjabi secured***

After the Sikh Manifesto was published an additional election issue concerning the future of GCSEs and A levels in community languages such as Panjabi emerged and led to considerable lobbying. Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education reacted and two weeks before the General Election wrote to Exam Boards telling them to reverse their decision.

On 22 July Schools Minister Nick Gibb announced the government had stepped in and taking action to work with the boards and Ofqual to make sure as wide a range of language subjects as possible, including Punjabi continue to be taught in the classroom. To avoid any gap in provision in certain the government extended the timetable for awarding organisations to continue with existing qualifications until September 2018.