

18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## Participation in a National Advisory Group on the Reopening of Gurdwaras

*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*

The COVID-19 global pandemic does not discriminate in its spread. The Government imposed lockdown in the UK has aimed to contain the spread of the virus and protect its citizens.

The reopening of society is an experimental exercise by Government and requires communities to work together without competing for assumed primacy. The Sikh community as a genuine partner in this process has already behaved responsibly (within the framework of the law) by sharing advice and issuing guidance to all, from institutions to individuals, with emphasis on continued isolation, safety and wellbeing of the Sangat and the functioning of our Gurdwaras.

The establishment of a Task Force for faith communities, to advise on policies, for the safe reopening of places of worship is a key initiative. Whereas the selection of Judaeo-Christian and Islamic faith leaders reflects a calibre and representative authority on behalf of those faiths, the same level of consideration has not been afforded to the Sikhs. At this time of crisis, the current Government appointee who satisfies the faith criteria for representing Sikh requirements to a mainstream audience is a question for another day.

The need of the hour is for Sikh Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions to set aside any chagrin and political sensitivity regarding the Government interface and focus on supporting the Task Force for the benefit of the Sikh community. A National Advisory Group (NAG) has been set up inviting participation and consultation from all Gurdwaras and Sikh Bodies by the selected appointee, as a recognition and necessity to obtain broad Sikh collective agreement on the next steps.

Unfortunately, the strict timeframe set out by the Government does not allow for any restructuring at present. Together with 25 other Sikh Gurdwaras and organisations, SA will work to ensure Sikh concerns and needs are represented and addressed by this consultation. We shall continue to work with any representative the Government may reappoint if they choose to do so, but SA will always put the safety and welfare of the Sikh Community first.

We believe the only way to influence these decisions is to participate in the NAG, rather than remain a noise outside of this influential group.

SA remain steadfast in our faith and allegiance to the Sri Akal Takht and its accepted Maryada and endeavour to represent Sikh aspirations, concerns and welfare in accordance with that belief and determination.

**Community Resource Team**  
**Sikh Assembly**