

Merlin Group adopts new kirpan policy

Sikh Council UK – 10 March 2018

Sikh Council UK is pleased to report Merlin Entertainments Group has adopted a policy agreeing to Sikhs wearing kirpans at its venues in the United Kingdom. The company is the largest European entertainments group operating in Europe and runs 124 attractions across the world. The company's venues in the United Kingdom include Alton Towers, Madame Tussauds, Sea Life Aquariums, the Seal Sanctuaries, Legoland, the Dungeons, Chessington World of Adventures, Thorpe Park, Warwick Castle, Shreks Adventures and the Blackpool Tower.

The London Eye venue is however an exception to the policy and the existing restrictions in place at this site will continue to apply but there is a commitment to revisiting this in the future. The new policy will come into effect from Saturday 17th March 2018 and follows a company review of the carrying of articles of faith into its attractions. The company has stipulated that Sikhs will be able to wear kirpans at the company's venues subject to its conditions that the kirpans measure no larger than 6" in length in total including the handle and cover, are worn underneath clothing/ out of view and worn securely particularly in relation to rollercoaster rides.

Sikh Council UK Chair of Community Safety Ravjeet Singh said "We welcome the decision of Merlin Entertainments Group to adopt a new policy on kirpans. We will monitor developments and continue to work with the company to try to find an agreeable solution for the London Eye. Overall this is a positive development and builds on the policies adopted at other leisure industry venues over the past year under existing frameworks following consultations with Sikh Council UK. This remains a key priority area for Sikh Council UK and is work in progress in which we continue to make representations including on keeping restrictive conditions to a minimum including on size. We encourage any Sikhs facing difficulties wearing their kirpans or other kakkars to get into contact with Sikh Council UK at the earliest opportunity."

Merlin Entertainments Group Head of Security Eric Dench said "Merlin Entertainments Group recognises that patrons attending its venues come from diverse communities and faiths and we are pleased to adopt a policy on the wearing of kirpans by Sikhs following a review of the carrying of articles of faith at our venues. The policy underlines the company's commitment to respecting the importance of the kirpan to Sikhs and it provides clarity to all concerned about the arrangements going forward. We are grateful to Sikh Council UK for their assistance and will continue to work with them in the future".

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Sikh Council UK is the largest representative body of Sikhs in the UK. We are recognised as the national advocate for British Sikhs in the United Kingdom and in the European Union.