

City memorial would be world's first to honour Sikhs killed during wars

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THE world's first dedicated Sikh memorial is being planned in Derby to represent millions of Sikhs who died in six holocausts and both world wars.

Planning permission is being sought to create the £1 million National Sikh Holocaust and Shaheedi Memorial in Pear Tree.

The Sikh community said it would be "unique" and the first of its kind worldwide.

Gurmel Singh Kandola, one of the volunteers who set up the National Sikh Heritage Centre, in Prince's Street, said funding would come entirely from donations from the Sikh community.

He said: "This memorial is going to have a lot of interest from around the world. It will be really high-profile.

"We hope a member of the Royal family will formally open it later this year."

The memorial, 7.2 metres high and 13 metres wide, would be made from granite and sandstone and built close to the heritage centre, where a museum dedicated to Sikh culture opened two years ago.

It would highlight the huge contribution of Sikhs to the UK – 83,000 Sikhs died in the world wars and a further 109,000 were injured.

And it would be a place to remember the millions who died in six holocausts in India and Pakistan between 1658 and 1995.



The project has been welcomed by Gurmel Singh Bola, whose uncle, Chatter Singh, was killed in 1984 during the most recent holocaust.

The 50-year-old, of Heatherton village, said: "My uncle was shot by a policeman and then a mob starting beating him with metal rods and set fire to him.

"I think this memorial is a very nice idea, especially as there are war memorials around the country but nothing like this."

The memorial, if given permission, would be made of white stone, white granite, black granite and sandstone.

People would enter through an ornate archway and there would be eight steps up to a water feature, with seats lined up on either side for people to sit.

Last year, then Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#) visited the heritage centre, which focuses on the Sikh story.

Mr Singh Kandola said: "We are a community which hasn't healed. The Jewish community has gone some way to heal, but we feel our story hasn't been told.

"We haven't had any closure and this is why we are having this memorial."

He added that "political reasons" had prevented a memorial being built in India.

Engineering firm Morgan Tucker would design and manage the construction of the memorial from different types of stone – each with a specific meaning.

Matthew Tucker, from the firm, said: "We are delighted to be working with the Sikh community on this memorial.

"The combined museum and heritage centre and memorial will put Derby on the world stage."

Full planning permission will be sought shortly. If granted, work could start on site in the spring, said Mr Tucker, with the memorial completed later in 2011.

[Frank McArdle](#), chief executive of [South Derbyshire District Council](#), is patron to the National Sikh Heritage Centre and Holocaust Museum.

He said: "I am convinced that this is an excellent opportunity to promote community cohesion in and around the city of Derby.

"This will be a beacon which will help promote Derby as a destination for Sikhs from all over the world for many years to come."

Six Holocausts In Four Centuries:

1st Sikh Holocaust, 1658

Muslim Emperor Aurangzeb, on becoming the ruler of India in 1658, started a campaign to forcibly convert the entire population of India to his faith.

2nd Sikh Holocaust, 1708-1716

The Mughal Emperors Bahadur Shah and Farrukh Shah took steps to try to exterminate the Sikhs by issuing a number of edicts instructing the population. An estimated 25,000 Sikhs died as a result.

3rd Sikh Holocaust 1726-1746

During this period bounties were placed on the heads of Sikhs. Information on the whereabouts of a Sikh was worth 10 Rupees, a dead Sikh was worth 50 and a Sikh brought alive to the Lahore markets was worth 100.

4th Sikh Holocaust 1758-1767

Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded India from Afghanistan and despised the Sikhs who constantly harassed his armies. For revenge, he sent an army of over 150,000 men to attack a much smaller band of Sikhs.

Over 30,000 Sikhs were killed in February 1762.

This event is known in Sikh history as the Wada Ghallughara, or the Great Holocaust.

5th Sikh Holocaust 1947

India was given independence from the British but the Sikhs' homeland, Panjab, was carved in two between India and the new Pakistan.

Sikhs found themselves being run out of their own homes by mobs.

An estimated 40% of the Sikh population became homeless and 2.5% of the Sikh population killed.

6th Sikh Holocaust 1984-1995

Sikhs demanded resolution of their historical grievances relating to Panjab state but the media, politicians, police, army and extremist organisations were used to silence them. In total about 200,000 Sikhs died.