



**LSx**

London Sustainability Exchange

# “Faith & Power”

A Heathrow Community Fund  
Development Grant Project

London Sustainability  
Exchange (LSx)

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## 1. Introduction

This work, funded by the Heathrow Community Fund seeks to explore attitudes, behaviours and motivators towards energy saving with Sikh and Hindu communities in the London Borough of Hounslow. It builds on LSx's "Faith" work as developed with UK Power Networks, Thames Water, SGN and SSEN, as part of which a similar project toolkit was produced in conjunction with Muslim communities in London. This work seeks to extend the approach for Sikh and Hindu communities and produce a project toolkit that will be used to inform future work and encourage community-led action, enabling communities, the local authority and other services to tackle fuel poverty.

## 2. Literature Review

As a starting point, an extensive literature review that focuses on energy projects, interventions and programmes that are particularly targeted towards diaspora communities has been conducted. The purpose of this literature review is to utilise any findings, best practice and recommendations to inform the development of findings and recommendations for the project.

### Background to Relevant Trends/Themes in Domestic Energy Use

A report published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies in 2013 found that energy prices had risen sharply over the previous decade, and that energy spending made up a much larger proportion of the budget of low income households than high income households<sup>1</sup>.

The Ofgem 2017 State of the Energy Market Report finds that the energy market has become increasingly divided, with consumers who actively seek cheaper tariffs regularly securing better deals whilst others continue to overpay.<sup>2</sup> The report also suggests that more vulnerable and hard to reach groups are more likely to be in the second category of consumer, meaning that those who can least afford to pay for more energy are those who are most likely to be doing so.

A report published by Citizens Advice in 2016 identified vulnerable energy customers as those who are less able to protect or represent their interests in the energy market. Low income households are less likely to switch energy supplier, frequently leaving them paying higher tariffs than necessary. These households are also less likely to engage with newer technologies, such as smart metres<sup>3</sup>. The Public Attitudes Tracker in 2017 also found that 30% of households are either worried or very worried about paying their energy bills. This begins to paint a picture of an energy market in which certain groups struggle to take control of their energy use and spending, leaving them excluded from opportunities to use energy more effectively.

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<sup>1</sup>"Household Energy Use in Britain: A Distributional Analysis", *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2013  
<<https://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r85.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup>"State of the Market Report", *Ofgem*, 2017,  
<[https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2017/10/state\\_of\\_the\\_market\\_report\\_2017\\_web\\_1.pdf](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2017/10/state_of_the_market_report_2017_web_1.pdf)>

<sup>3</sup>"Frozen Out: Extra costs faced by vulnerable consumers in the energy market", *Citizens Advice*, 2017, <<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/Frozen%20out.pdf>>

In addition to this, a report published by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy from 2003 to 2015 shows that ethnic minority households are more likely to be affected by fuel poverty than white households.<sup>4</sup> A household is said to be living in fuel poverty if it spends more than the average amount on energy, and would be left with an income below the poverty line if it were to spend the amount required to meet its energy needs.

This trend is also apparent in the Mayor of London's Draft Fuel Poverty Action Plan (published 2017) which identifies the common characteristics of households living in fuel poverty, such as residents with long-term disabilities, lone parents, those living in rented accommodation, and BAME residents, which align with sections of society who may be socially vulnerable and hard to reach.

These findings reinforce the argument that domestic energy use is a topic of some concern, be it active or passive, for certain portions of the population. This is particularly true for low income households, and ethnic minority households.

## Background to the London Borough of Hounslow

The London Borough of Hounslow is identified as a *super-diverse* borough by the 2011 census (Figure: 1). This means that the area has a history of migration, with high levels of current migration and high employment levels in migrant-dense industries (Figure: 2), and a higher than average number of houses in the rented sector<sup>5</sup>. This demographic makeup includes groups aligned with the profile of households more likely to be affected by fuel poverty, as outlined above. The *Thriving Communities & VCSE Sector Strategy 2015-19* by the London Borough of Hounslow adds weight to this argument, pointing to both an increased cost of living and reductions in welfare, and an increase in fuel poverty within the borough.<sup>6</sup> The borough is therefore an area of interest for research around energy use and ways of communicating with hard to reach communities.

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<sup>4</sup>"Fuel Poverty", *Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy*, 2017 <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/fuel-poverty/latest>

<sup>5</sup>"Social and Public Service Impacts of International Migration at the Local Level", *Home Office*, July 2013<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/210324/horr72.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210324/horr72.pdf)>

<sup>6</sup>*Thriving Communities & VCSE Sector Strategy 2015-19, London Borough of Hounslow*, July 2017<<https://democraticservices.hounslow.gov.uk/documents/s134834/Thriving%20Communities%20VCSE%20Sector%20Strategy.pdf>>

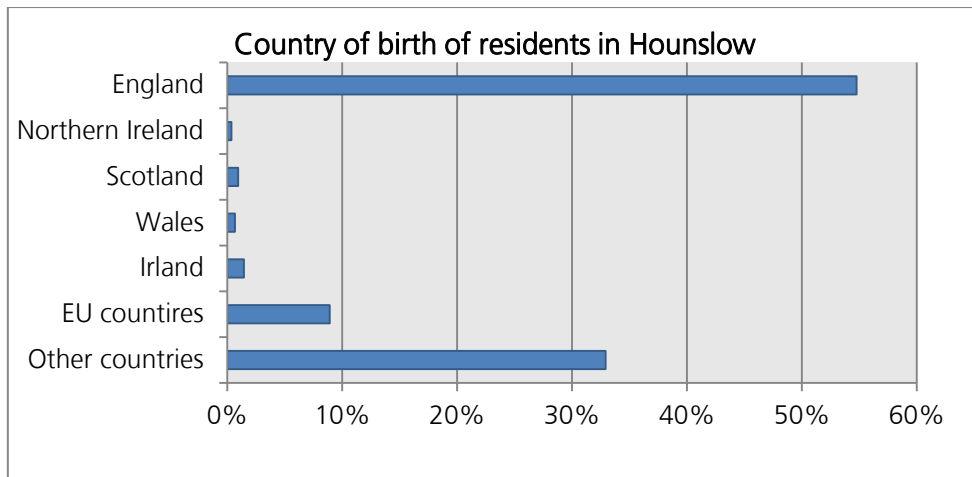
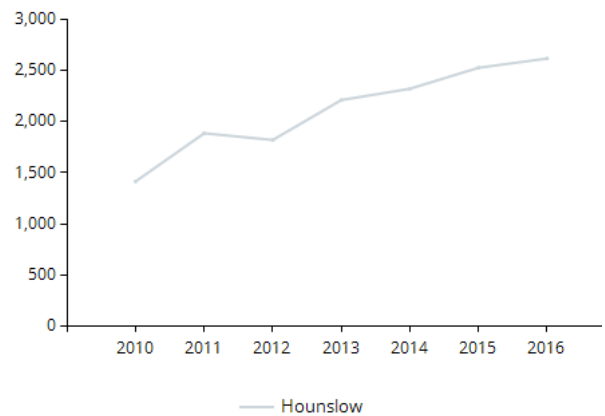


Figure 1: Residents' diversity in Hounslow<sup>7</sup>

% Employed per sector

	Hounslow	London	England
A:agriculture and fishing (SIC 2007)	N/A	.1	.9
B,D,E:energy and water (SIC 2007)	1.2	.8	1.5
C:manufacturing (SIC 2007)	2.7	3.7	9.2
F:construction (SIC 2007)	5.9	6.9	7.4
G,I:distribution, hotels and restaurants (SIC 2007)	23.1	16.3	18.6
H,J:transport and communications (SIC 2007)	20.3	12.1	9.3
K-N:banking, finance and insurance (SIC 2007)	21.4	26.2	17.7
O-Q:public admin. education and health (SIC 2007)	19.1	26.4	29.1
R-U:other services (SIC 2007)	6.4	7.1	5.9

Count of Births of New Enterprises (2016)



Source: ONS

Figure 2: Employment and new enterprise

Previous projects conducted by LSx have also pointed to difficulties reaching the types of communities being targeted here, with reference to language barriers and information being held predominantly online as being contributors to poor communications around fuel poverty

## Behavioural Change

A range of behaviour change frameworks have been developed which can be applied to domestic energy use. These models all vary in their approaches, but all agree that behavioural change cannot be achieved by awareness raising alone.

For example, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) "4 E's" framework suggests that the principles of engagement, encouragement, enabling, and exemplification should be employed to various degrees in order to encourage behavioural change<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> UK Census Data: Hounslow, <http://www.ukcensusdata.com/hounslow-e09000018#sthash.adZ1CNYp.dpbs>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/69277/pb13574-behaviours-report-080110.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69277/pb13574-behaviours-report-080110.pdf)

Another commonly referenced behaviour change model is the MINDSPACE model, as outlined below:

<b>Messenger</b>	we are heavily influenced by who communicates information
<b>Incentives</b>	our responses to incentives are shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding losses
<b>Norms</b>	we are strongly influenced by what others do
<b>Defaults</b>	we 'go with the flow' of pre-set options
<b>Saliency</b>	our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us
<b>Priming</b>	our acts are often influenced by sub-conscious cues
<b>Affect</b>	our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions
<b>Commitments</b>	we seek to be consistent with our public promises, and reciprocate acts
<b>Ego</b>	we act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

The model acknowledges a broader range of factors which may contribute towards behavioural change. When considering how best to communicate with different faith communities, these elements should be carefully considered.

The Energy Cultures Framework, as outlined by Stephenson et al. discusses behaviour change more specifically in the realm of domestic energy use.<sup>9</sup>The framework also suggests that behaviours around energy use are informed by complex interactions between different aspects of life. These are categorised as cognitive norms, material cultures, and energy practices. Behavioural change occurs when one of these elements becomes misaligned or shifts. Cognitive norms include education, upbringing, and demographics, all of which are relevant when considering communications with faith groups around domestic energy use.

The assertion of these models, that behaviour is influenced in part by our surroundings and understanding of norms, is echoed by practical experience as reported by the Community Energy movement, which acknowledges that consumers are more receptive to messages from sources which they can relate to and trust<sup>10</sup>.

Research into fuel poverty among the elderly also touches on this idea by acknowledging that attitudes towards the use of energy in the home are often the product of values and ideas accumulated over a lifetime. Behaviours in this respect are therefore the product of broader social, contextual, and attitudinal factors. It seems likely therefore that these ideas could be transferred in part to understanding how best to communicate with other hard-to-reach social groups around their energy use habits.

## Links between Religion and the Environmental Movement

The conjunction between certain aspects of religious lifestyles and the environmental movement has been studied to some extent, with particular reference to the emergence

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<sup>9</sup> Stephenson et al., 'Energy cultures: A framework for understanding energy behaviours', *Energy Policy*, vol. 38, 10, 2010, pp. 6120-6129.

<sup>10</sup>"Community Energy State of the Sector Report: A Study of Community Energy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland", *Community Energy England*, 2017

<[https://communityenergyengland.org/files/document/51/1499247266\\_CommunityEnergy-StateoftheSectorReport.pdf](https://communityenergyengland.org/files/document/51/1499247266_CommunityEnergy-StateoftheSectorReport.pdf)>

of the field of religion and ecology in the 1990s. Comparisons often focus on the concepts of earth stewardship and social justice that many world religions, as well as sectors in the environmental movement, promote<sup>11</sup>. However, as a large proportion of the literature focuses on Christian beliefs and cultural practices relating to the USA, the focus is also often limited to the perceived conflict between science and religion, and the broader policy landscape, rather than individual lifestyle choices.

How then can the findings of this body of work be applied to this specific case? The 'environmental ecology' movement acknowledges that religious beliefs can and do inform attitudes towards environmental conservation. Taking this in conjunction with the Energy Cultures Framework laid out by Stephenson et al., leveraging religious beliefs could be inserted within the 'cognitive norms'.<sup>12</sup> This would require understanding religion less as an active belief system and more as a background context, shaping cultural norms and behaviours.

What is more, for many people concepts of nature are greatly influenced by their culture, religious upbringing and social environment. Talking about environmental issues through the prism of religious and cultural experience may therefore present an effective method of communication in this sphere. This potential for leveraging behavioural change through faith-based communications has already been explored by the Groundwork SPIRIT Project, who developed a multi-step plan for communicating with faith groups around environmental issue.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to this literature review, **Box 1** provides a summary of LSx's work with faith communities

#### **Box 1 LSx work with faith communities**

LSx have worked with London's diverse cultural and faith groups to promote sustainable lifestyles alongside religious practices, observances and values for over 10 years. Through this work we have identified the following guidelines for successfully engaging diverse faith groups:

- **Trust is important** - People are much more likely to respond to information from their friends, family, religious group or other trusted networks
- **Values** are an important driver to motivate people of faith
- **Religious leaders** can help provide the link between sustainable practices and religious teachings
- **Link in with existing activities** – activities should work alongside **existing activities** and events within the place of worship to ensure maximum outreach
- The religious leader is instrumental to **the success of any campaign** run with religious groups.
- **Remove barriers to information** – provide culturally-appropriate material and resources

<sup>11</sup>Gregory E. Hithusen, Mary Evelyn Tucker, "The Potential of Religion for Earth Stewardship", *Frontiers in Ecology & the Environment*, Vol. 11, 7, 2013, pp. 368-376.

<sup>12</sup> Stephenson et al., 'Energy cultures: A framework for understanding energy behaviours', *Energy Policy*, vol. 38, 10, 2010, pp. 6120-6129.

<sup>13</sup> *Groundwork London*, 2018, <<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/london/pages/spirit>>

Our work with faith groups over the last 10 years has:

- Involved more than 50 faith groups
- Trained 2,000 champions
- Reached over 2 million people of faith
- Estimated savings of £4million
- Saved over 50,000 tonnes of CO2

From our work, the following exemplar projects are noteworthy:

**Faith & Water (2014)** was an award-winning collaborative project between Thames Water, University College London and LSx which engaged Londoners from the five leading faith groups, to understand the cultural and religious practices, use and significance of water in order to develop targeted social marketing campaigns relating to conservation. Target behaviours were identified and water savings campaigns were co-designed with communities that would resonate with people of faith or from similar cultural backgrounds. A pilot project was undertaken in 2017 with the **Rumi Mevlan Mosque (2017, funded by Thames Water)** drawing on insights developed from the Toolkit to encourage and enable water savings, this pilot project involved practical actions, including a cooking workshop, and reached a total of 2,040 people.

**Hinduism and H<sub>2</sub>O (2006-8)** focused on 'faith and fun' to engage the Hindu community in the efficient usage of water, and to promote water conservation. 5 champions engaged 1,000 households in water saving behaviours, and reached more than 3,000 members of the wider community. This work was presented to the National Water Conservation Group

*'It is a very good idea to have these talks on Hinduism and nature because it is fundamental to what we believe. Conservation and preservation is the core of our lives and every Hindu has this duty to respect nature.'*

– Participant, Hinduism & H<sub>2</sub>O

**Fit2Drink (2011)** was a pilot campaign aimed at promoting tap instead of bottled water to East London's Muslim community. Delivered by LSx, the Muslim Women's Collective, MADE in Europe and the East London Mosque, the project encouraged behavioural change through a peer-to-peer social marketing campaign. A Friday Kutbah (sermon) created by IFEEES was used to reach more than 4,500 people to secure pledges and share faith-based messages on consuming water sustainably. Festivals, social media and a TV appearance helped create wider awareness.

*" We bring down water from the sky for you to drink—you do not control its sources" Qur'an15:22.*

**Faith & Power (2016 funded by UK Power Networks)** – Research was undertaken with 1025 Londoners to help UK Power Networks develop customer insight to strengthen their relationships with customers, answer broader strategic questions, and deliver business change. We found that it is important to identify messages and have trusted messengers



that will best resonate with culturally diverse and vulnerable customers in order to understand customer willingness to support energy efficiency through new technology such as smart meters, and increase their priority register, amongst other things.

**Faith & Utilities: Green Mosques (2017/18 funded by UK power Network, SGN, Thames Water & SSEN)** – This project combined electricity, water and gas networks in South and West London to help tackle fuel & water poverty, promote gas safety and protect vulnerable people within London’s Islamic communities. 21 champions and 16 additional volunteers from 13 charitable organisations & Mosques to deliver events & talks, and provide tailored in-depth advice & support activities supporting 533 households and reaching **23,950** people through Mosque based engagements, events, talks and Kutbahs.

### 3. Method

The main research is to gain insight into the attitudes, behaviours and motivators of the Hindu and Sikh communities towards energy saving building on the findings of the literature review and that of our own work.

- **Focus groups** discussions were conducted with
  - Indian Punjabi Sikhs (6 men and 4 women) at the Guru Nanak, Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara in Hounslow
  - 10 participants and the Tamil Community Centre in Hounslow
- **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted with 25 people at the Lakshmi Narayan Temple in Hounslow
- An **analysis workshop** was conducted with representatives from Voice for Change (our community partner working on the project), representative from the Tamil Community Centre and the Guru Nanak, Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara and the Lakshmi Narayan Temple
- **Supplementary telephone conversations** were completed on an ad-hoc basis with willing participants from the focus groups.
- **Supplementary workshop** was completed with Tamil Community Centre in Hounslow
- **Textual analysis** and a **desk-top research** was used to support the analysis of the findings in context.

#### Alternations to proposed methodology


We slightly altered the proposed methodology favouring *semi-structured interviews*, *telephone conversations* and a *supplementary workshop* over the use of an *online*

*survey*. Our partners indicated that their communities would be far more responsive to personal contact.

### **Community partners**

We worked in partnership with [Voice 4 Change](#), a national advocate for the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector (BMS VCS). Prior to that, Voice 4 Change have proved to provide great access to faith communities for LSx in West London over several years.

#### 4. Findings & discussion: Sikh Communities

<p><b>Religious and Spiritual context</b></p> <p>Sikhism is a Monotheistic Dharmic religion which was founded at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by <b>Guru Nanak</b>. Sikhism is primarily based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and those of nine Sikh Gurus who followed him.</p> <p>Sikhism is a congregational religion with worshippers coming together at the Gurdwara to pray, mark and celebrate key events.</p>	 The image shows the Khanda, a Sikh religious symbol. It consists of a double-edged sword with a circular base and a crescent-shaped top, all rendered in black silhouette.
<p><i>The importance of light</i></p> <p>Light is of central importance, representing the presence of the Almighty. It gives life, destroys evil and makes the whole universe function properly. Light is the purest form of energy, which also represents the soul that, when it meets the body, creates life. The importance of light in Sikhism means that sacred places tend to be decorated with lights. As such, and important for energy conversations, the Gurdwara is illuminated with electronic and natural light (candles) at every morning, even if is light outside. The symbolic meaning behind this action is to show that the Guru's light is visible and accessible.</p>	

#### Key findings

- Awareness and consideration of the environment is low among this community, however, some of the male participants demonstrated a greater understanding or willingness towards energy saving. Traditionally men tend to pay the bills and control the money in the household, although women are perceived to be better at "saving" and "budgeting" money and energy.
- Participants had no knowledge of the Priority Service Register (PSR) but were very receptive to finding out more, and were keen to sign up. For one participant, this was particularly important as he has a pacemaker.
- Some of the participants had smart meters although they did not find them useful, other participants had not heard of smart meters and were confused about the Smart GB messaging, their purpose and use. Some confused smart meters with other smart home devices such as Hive.

#### Motivations

- Sikhs are encouraged to be **responsible for their consumption** of natural resources. There is therefore a strong social consideration of how energy is used.
- **Money** was seen as the biggest motivator for saving electricity.
- There is an interest in **learning more about environmental considerations** and being more energy efficient.

## Barriers

- Participants reported a **lack of knowledge and information** on how to save electricity in the home.
- **Language** was noted as being a potential issue for some when trying to access relevant information on energy saving.
- The importance of lighting in Sikhism is a major barrier to minimising energy usage, especially during times of worship (puja) and during the festival of Diwali when Sikhs decorate their homes with lights. One participant noted that during Diwali they usually receive higher bills than during the rest of the year.
- Teenagers and young people were seen as being higher energy users than their parents and less considerate of energy saving.
- Knowledge of community energy was low among this group and the installation of solar energy panels in particular was seen as being expensive.

## Activities

The following activities were suggested by the community:

- **Energy workshops and talks** by experts were regarded as a useful mechanism to help create awareness and motivate energy efficiency among the community.
- **Workshops** on understanding and making use of smart meters would help facilitate efficiency savings in the home.
- **Word-of-mouth** would be an appropriate mechanism for communications on the community level.
- An **"eco-audit"** could help identify and enable electricity savings in the Gurdwara.

every morning before ' "puja paath" (prayer) we need to shower and that costs electricity, It's a routine followed by every Gyaniji (religious leader), getting ready to do the prayer itself. They wake up every morning at 4am, so to illuminate the sacred place within the gur duwara even when there is light outside. There is a symbolic meaning, fairy lights are used to awaken God up. So for worship purposes a lot of energy is used in that purpose. From 5 o clock in the morning people starts coming in to visit, to pay their respect until 9 o clock at night. – *Focus group Participant.*

It is always the money that motivates people to save energy. If we do that we should have saved energy that can be used for the community project for shaping other things, especially for the ones who are lacking access to electricity. For the benefit of the wider community sometimes poverty can lead people to save energy as they don't have it whereas, having enough money can lead people to waste more. – *Focus group Participant.*

## Findings in context: Analysis

Sikhs believe in one God, *Waheguru*, the creator of all things. Guru Nanka (God's teacher) was the first of 10 Gurus and whose followers became known as Sikhs, meaning *learners*. The Sikh Gurus provide a role-model for the Sikhs, challenging inequality and exploitation.

Sikh teachings are contained in the writing of the Sikh Gurus, the Guru Granth Sahib. The ecological basis rests in the understanding that the Creator ('Qadir') and the Creation ('Qudrat') are One.

Sikhs believe in *mukti*, liberation from the ego and from reincarnation. People of Sikh faith believe that the world was created as place for every plant and animal to prove it was good enough to reach *mukti*. The Sikh Gurus believe that peace can only be found when desire and greed are subdued and diminished and that the environment can only be preserved if the balance is maintained.

Sikhs, as God-conscious beings, aspire a higher plane of existence (outside the cycle of reincarnation) that can be achieved by doing good. They are strongly motivated by social justice, transforming the surroundings (for the better) and living in harmony with nature.

Living a spiritual life a Sikh means caring deeply about the environment. God is found in all things, and so, there is an inherent protectionism towards the environment in Sikh tradition. Included in the text is a 'rich compendium' of biodiversity. The Sikh Gurus demonstrated through practice how to live in harmony with nature. Guru Har Rai, the seventh Sikh Guru developed a town of parks and gardens and the lives of the Gurus are full of stories of their love for nature.

Sharing is an important for Sikhs, be it food, water or other resources. The Gurudwaras have always been designed to symbolise harmony with nature to include practices that emphasis sharing. For example, the community kitchen (Langar) is stocked by the community on a voluntary basis and served to any visitor without distinction. The meal is always vegetarian and there is an emphasis on avoiding waste from the way the food is prepared and served.

Nature we see  
Nature we hear  
Nature we observe with awe,  
wonder and joy  
Nature in the nether regions  
Nature in the skies  
Nature in the whole creation...  
Nature in species, kinds, colours  
Nature in life forms  
Nature in good deeds  
Nature in pride and in ego  
Nature in air, water and fire  
Nature in the soil of the earth  
All nature is yours, O powerful  
Creator  
You command it, observe it and  
pervade within it.

**Guru Granth Sahib**

## Key messages

- The Gurus have strongly made us aware of our responsibility towards this earth.  
**Guru Granth Sahib**
- "The Lord infused His Light into the dust, and created the world, the universe. The sky, the earth, the trees, and the water - all are the Creation of the Lord." **Sri Guru Granth Sahib** page 723
- Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all. Day and night are the two nurses, in whose lap all the world is at play. Good deeds and

bad deeds-the record is read out in the Presence of the Lord of Dharma. According to their own actions, some are drawn closer, and some are driven farther away. Those who have meditated on the Naam, and departed after having worked by the sweat of their brow O Nanak, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many others are saved along with them! **Sri Guru Granth Sahib** page 146

## 5. Findings and discussion: Hindu Communities

### Religious and Spiritual Context

Hinduism is the oldest World religion, although it is very much integrated in culture and is widely regarded as a *way of life* rather than a religion. Hinduism is very diverse and contains a broad range of philosophies with no belief system as such, because there is freedom to explore the fundamental truths governing nature, our lives and the universe at large. There are three aspects which symbolise the basis of creation, preservation and destruction which can be personified in the forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Major scriptures include the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita.



There are both feminine and masculine aspects of universal cosmic energy. For example, Lakshmi, the Hindu Goddess of wealth, fortune and prosperity, promotes the principles of conscious saving and economy.

Hindu rituals include worship before idols or images of deities, which includes food offerings and the lighting of a lamp. The victory of light (good) over darkness (evil) is celebrated during the autumn festival of Diwali.

### Key findings:

- Awareness and consideration of the environment among this group was found to be particularly low.
- Participants reported a **lack of knowledge and access to information** on how to save electricity in the home.
- People will not necessarily have the knowledge and understanding of sacred texts.
- Traditionally men tend to pay the bills and control the money in the household.
- Energy saving was perceived as something expensive (with reference to renewable energy) or difficult to do, however people showed interest in obtaining more information on the topic.

“ I do not care about the electricity until I get the bill. Then I stay very conscious for the next few days but eventually go back to the previous way of consuming electricity care free” – *Focus group Participant.*

### Motivations

- **Money** was seen as the primary motivator for saving electricity, followed by **health** considerations and then the **environment**, Scriptural authority and spirituality were given lowest priority.
- Hindu scriptures highlight that humans should treat every creature with respect. Overconsumption of resources is discouraged.

- Participants showed an interest in understanding the health benefits around energy saving.
- The testimony of fellow community members, friends or family was seen as a major motivator.

### Barriers

- Participants voiced a **lack of trust** towards experts and authority figures, including the voluntary sector. However, they broadly had a high level of trust for the NHS, largely derived from their own positive experiences.
- People resisting “help” or “charity” on grounds of pride was also discussed as being a potential barrier. This could prevent the adoption of energy schemes, grants or even energy-saving behaviours.
- Language can be seen as a major barrier in accessing relevant information or tips on energy saving.
- A lack of awareness towards individuals’ energy consumption due to financial dependence on a third party (e.g. council, family) was noted.
- Participants noted that a number of community members are *digitally excluded* from access relevant information.

“Why would energy companies want us to pay less?” –  
*Focus group Participant.*

“I had an accident two years ago, since then the Council pays for everything; including bills and carer” –*Survey participant.*

### Activities

The following activities were suggested by the community:

- **Talk radio** would be a good place to discuss energy issues and in the context of religious identity
- **Workshops** to help participants understand bills and switching electricity suppliers would encourage community members to make more informed decisions when it comes to energy consumption.
- **Brochures, posters & pamphlets** in Hindi with info-graphics discussing energy issues, providing energy saving tips/advice could be widely distributed amongst the community.
- **Word-of-mouth** would be an appropriate mechanism for communications and discussion about energy.
- An “**eco-audit**” could help identify and enable electricity savings in the Hindu temples.



## Findings in context: Analysis

Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive way of thinking. No religion lays as much emphasis on environmental ethics as Hinduism, as the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and Smriti contain the earliest messages for the preservation of the environment and ecological balance.

Temples have never really been places of worship in the Hindu tradition, but rather they were represented as mathematical marvels of architecture which allow certain frequencies of energy to be captured and transmitted. Homes are considered as temples, and therefore interviewing Hindu families offers the greatest and most reliable insights into this deep and scientific culture.

As the Universe, including all beings, creatures inanimate and animate are considered as being one, Hindu's see everything as God and hence everything as being divine. This means that nature should never be abused, and in relation to energy saving, as there are many Gods (including Mother Earth (Bhumi/Prakrithi Devi), Sun (Surya Dev), Moon (Chandra Dev) to name a few), it goes without saying that to conserve the forms of energy is to respect nature and hence God.

Additionally, Hindu's environmental actions affect their karma. Karma is a central teaching which states that each of action creates consequences, be it good or bad. Moral behaviour creates good karma, and their behaviour towards the environment has karmic consequences. As Hindu's have freedom of choice, even though they may have harmed the environment in the past, they can choose to protect the environment in the future, thus replacing environmentally destructive karmic patterns with good ones.

What's more, they practice five main principles of love, peace, truth, non-violence and right-conduct. Hindus are vegetarian because they believe that one must not cause any harm to other beings (i.e. non-violence).

The culture of Hinduism promotes energy saving and sustainable living in many ways. Most Hindus even light their lamps traditionally (with wicks and ghee) even during this modern era, as oppose to using electricity (e.g. the use of Christmas lights). As another example, it teaches that asceticism (restraint in consumption and simplicity in living) represents a pathway towards liberation, which treats the earth with respect.

## Key Messages

There are many to choose from, but the following *five messages* maybe be used conversation starter in-line with activities proposed by the community:

- "Today, all the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space) are polluted and, consequently man is mired in insecurity. Today the world is losing its ecological balance as man, out of utter selfishness, is robbing mother Earth of her resources like coal, petroleum, iron, etc. As a result, we find earthquakes, floods, and such other devastating natural calamities. Human life will find fulfilment only when ecological balance is maintained. Balance in human life and balance

in Nature, both are equally important.” (Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Teachings on Nature & the Environment)

- “Whatever man seeks to achieve, he has to rely on Nature. Nature is not anyone’s private property. It belongs to God. Without the grace of the Lord no one can enjoy the benefits of Nature. Not realizing this truth, some people embark on the exploitation of Nature, out of arrogance and self-conceit. This is highly misconceived.” (Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Teachings on Nature & the Environment)
- “*Tain tyakten bhunjitha* (Take what you need for your sustenance without a sense of entitlement or ownership)” (Sunderlal Bahuguna, Hindu environmental leader)
- “Do not perform actions which potentially lead to an unsustainable, catastrophic future and only then try to correct them, but prevent social and environmental problems before they begin” (Yoga Sutra, 2.16) – Maharishi Vedic Science
- “As coherence, order and balance are created in both the individual consciousness of its citizens and in the collective consciousness of society, the sustainable qualities of the unified field of Natural Law are displayed in the pollution-free progress of society as a whole” (Maharishi, 1982)

## 6. Evaluation and Recommendations

This work sought to explore attitudes, behaviours and motivators (and barriers) towards energy saving with two different cultural contexts (Sikh and Hindu communities in Hounslow) with the purpose of informing a *project toolkit* for future outreach and community work.

While we were successful in collecting attitudes and opinions it is important to caveat the 'key findings' with the following:

The views of the individuals who took part in this research cannot be taken as representative of their faith. The Sikh focus group *on the whole* was more representative of a population with a mix of ages (from teenagers to retired), backgrounds and lifestyle (young families, "casual worshippers" to Gurus). This was not the case in the Hindu research and the interviews conducted at the Lakshmi Narayan Temple were completed with people with an overall higher *average age* (60+). Anecdotally, it is acknowledged that attitudes towards the environment, language barriers and 'digital confidence' are not the same for, say, a 64 year old as they are for 24 year old (with younger people *on average* holding less-*conservative* political values, expressing greater concern for the environment, less likely to experience language barriers (with English as a first language as *the second generation*) and more confident online). It is difficult (if not impossible) to de-couple political world-views from religious ones. As such, what our findings indicate might have little or nothing to do with faith.

Whilst significant cultural differences exist between and within the communities taking part in this research, some common findings can be drawn:

- There is a **high demand for energy savings tips**, advice and **enabling mechanisms**, with the main motivation primarily being to reduce bills and save money.
- **Energy awareness was general low across all participants** but there is a strong spiritual incentive to care for the environment in both religions.
  - This manifested as a wider social concern particularly among the Sikh group. As one participant said 'if I save energy, somebody else can use that energy'.
  - Not being wasteful and sharing earthly possessions is viewed as important in both religious contexts.
  - Money had the priority over environment in energy saving context.
- **Energy workshops** led in-partnership with the faith centres would be the most appropriate way to deliver this

- **Language** can be a major barrier in accessing key information and services, and working through partners with the ability to translate the messages is effective.
  - This finding of course only applies to the elder, first-generation and the newly arrived, the younger, second (and third generation) are often tech-savvy and have English as a first language, with perhaps only casual or conversational-level of the parents first language.
- **Community radio** was identified as the most appropriate mechanisms wider outreach
  - Traditional (door-to-door, letter-drops mainstream TV and radio) and online marketing messages is not the best way to reach this group, because of the language barrier, behavioural characteristics habits. *Community radio* is a more appropriate channel to reach these communities than say, the BBC.
- **Word of mouth and community radio are the most appropriate communications mechanism for both Sikh and Hindu communities**, although experts may play a larger role within the Sikh community.
  - Community representatives, teachers, and religious leaders were identified as a key access point to community members, and were viewed as being the best people to give advice on energy saving.

## Recommendations

- The community-focused aspect of both communities would lend itself to a values-led social-marketing approach around energy saving and conservation.
- Conducting focus groups or further research with a more diverse set of participants (age groups and young families in particular) in the people's homes might provide more representative world-views.
- There would be value in exploring other environmental projects, beyond energy, with both communities, biodiversity projects, for example would be particularly fitting the spiritual values of Sikhism.

## Next steps

- The Toolkits can now be piloted (deployed). London Sustainability Exchange plans to run a small pilot in West London in early 2019.

## 7. Appendix

Example of a survey used at the Lakshmi Narayan Temple, showing questions in English and Hindi.



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**What is your biggest consideration to how you use energy in the home? (select all that apply)**  
घर में ऊर्जा का उपयोग करने के तरीके पर आपका सबसे बड़ा विचार क्या है? (लागू होने वाले सभी का चयन करें)

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Saving money- पैसे की बचत



Knowledge- ज्ञान



Spirituality - आध्यात्मिकता



Environment - वातावरण




Warmth and comfort - गर्मजोशी और आराम



Other people - अन्य लोग



Health - स्वास्थ्य



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**If your property has one of the following you can register to the Priority Service Register and receive extra support.**  
यदि आपकी संपत्ति में निम्न में से कोई एक है तो आप प्राथमिकता सेवा रजिस्टर में पंजीकरण कर सकते हैं और अतिरिक्त सहायता प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

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Someone who relies on water and/or energy for medical equipment कोई भी जो चिकित्सा उपकरणों के लिए पानी और / या ऊर्जा पर निर्भर करता है	Someone with poor mobility खराब गतिशीलता वाला कोई व्यक्ति
Someone who is recovering from medical treatment कोई भी जो चिकित्सा उपचार से ठीक हो रहा है	Someone of pensionable age पेंशन योग्य उम्र में से कोई
Someone with a visual impairment एक दृश्य विकार के साथ कोई	Someone who has dementia कोई भी जो डिमेंशिया है
Someone with a hearing impairment श्रवण हानि वाला कोई व्यक्ति	Someone with a child or children under 5 years old 5 साल से कम आयु के बच्चे या बच्चों के साथ कोई
Someone who is chronically ill कोई भी जो गंभीर रूप से बीमार है	A non-native English speaker एक गैर मूल अंग्रेजी बोलने वाला

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