How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

In support

This is long overdue and a giant step towards full equality for homosexual relationships.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

In support

Hugely supportive, two people of any sexual orientation should be able to enter loving, committed relationships on a par with their peers.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

In support

I support in as much as I believe if we have religious celebrants, there should be no difference. However, I don't actually agree with the existence of religious celebrants. As I understand it, "marriage" is a State institution with rights and benefits provided by the State. Religious celebrants are only able to perform marriage ceremonies as the State has allowed it. I would much rather see a situation where ALL marriages are conducted in civil ceremonies. If a couple are religious and then choose to have a "wedding" blessing conducted in their place of worship by a minister/priest/imam/rabbi etc. then they should absolutely be free to do so, but this is a separate event with no legal meaning.

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

Neither

Please see my comments in Question 6. I don't believe ANY marriages, the legally binding procedure, should be conducted by religious figures.

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In support

How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?
In support

I don't think it really matters where the ceremony is conducted.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?**

Neither

I'm unsure that I see the need to continue with civil partnerships should the Equal Marriage bill be passed. If it does, then it should be open to any who want it but again, there should be no religious element to it.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?**

In support

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?**

I don't really see that those who have concerns should have any particular protections. Religion should entirely be taken out of marriage ceremonies. Once that's removed, the only people with "concerns" only hold them based on their personal prejudices and ignorance. Same Sex Marriage is only going to affect those couples who chose to have them. I also believe that there's an economic benefit that's not being consider (or publicised at least). With an average wedding day currently costing in the region of £10-15 thousand pounds, allowing a significant section of society access to that may provide a nice boost to the economy!

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?**

Freedom of Speech is an intrinsic part of any democracy, however the debate surround Equal Marriage has frequently turned unpleasant, with opponents adopting an "How dare you not be tolerant of my intolerance" approach. It has to work both ways and I don't think that fact is appreciated by all parties.

**Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?**

Are you responding as...

a private individual

Peter Jeffrey
22 August 2013