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

In opposition

I am opposed to the redefinition of marriage to include relationships between people of the same sex so my views on the Bill in general should be read against that background.

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

In opposition

Constitutionally, culturally and emotionally, marriage has always been a relationship between a man and a woman. Whatever provision can and may be made for relationships between two persons of the same sex, there is no need to define this as "marriage" in order to provide for civil equality if that is the intention. Needless offence to those who share my viewpoint is objectionable where there is a political and legislative route acceptable to the vast majority of people.

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

In support

Insofar as the celebrant is performing a civil function I see no reason to exclude belief celebrants provided that some measure of solemnity is required in a ceremony in which promises are made and received.

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)?

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

In opposition

For the reasons stated previously this is simply unnecessary. If the equality imperative is that equal rights are given before the law, the civil law is perfectly capable of delivering rights and protections without adding the tag of "marriage" to a relationship which cannot be identical in every sense to a marriage between one man and one woman.
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 opposition

I see no objection to removing restrictions on location but I expect that a registrar should always have the right to refuse to conduct a ceremony at a location which the registrar in his/her discretion considers inappropriate.

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

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 opposition

Those who marry as man and woman ought to remain married. Those who may marry under new legislation as persons of the same sex ought not to stay married after a change of gender is recognised.

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

This is a very wide and complex issue. Much has been said by politicians about ensuring that protections are given to religious celebrants who are not willing to conduct same sex marriage ceremonies. My concern is that their colleagues, fellow members and organisations may find themselves discriminated against for holding the same views - how can the law ensure protection against unintended consequences?

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

Freedom of speech involves both the right to hold what one believes as the absolute truth while defending the rights of others to hold the opposite. The tone of the Government’s proposals has suggested that the minimum of protections will be introduced to ensure that people can say what they believe but there is no clear undertaking to ensure that they can live out their lives consistently with those beliefs. Guidelines are simply insufficient to ensure protections which, at a fundamental level, are assured by the ECHR. A citizen will need to be assured of protection in all his/her capacities – individual, celebrant, parent, consumer etc. Providing protections under employment law alone will not be sufficient. How will the Government legislate to ensure that public agencies do not brand as bigots those who disagree with the present Government’s morality agenda? In the field of education there is no point in limiting parental rights to areas of sex education or RME when a revisionist view of marriage may be taught and history re-written in other subject areas. I am concerned that individuals who are employed within, or appointed to roles in, public sector, third sector or grant receiving organisations (or
the organisations themselves) may be penalised for making public "outside that employment or role " views which do not support the proposed legislation.

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

No

Are you responding as...

a private individual

David Laing
1 August 2013