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

In opposition

The Bill is allegedly about 'equality' when, in fact it creates inequality. Given that it is such an important measure I am concerned about the somewhat contentious consultation process and the speed with which the legislation is being pushed through against the opposition of a significant number, if not the majority, of the electorate. History has shown that quick laws tend to be bad laws with a range of unintended consequences. The Bill currently before the UK Parliament, which has been criticised by senior legal figures both within and outwith Parliament on its inconsistencies and flaws, highlights the problem. This Bill should be delayed until after the next election as not only did no party campaign on it at the last election but also because it represents a fundamental change to an institution which has remained unaltered for thousands of years in its most fundamental aspect ie the union of members of the opposite sex.

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

In opposition

As Civil Partnerships give same sex couples the same legal rights as opposite sex marriages I can see no need for this legislation. The terms 'marriage' and 'civil partnership' are clear and understandable. One of the main reasons put forward for this change, and my MP has voiced it, is that if two people, whatever their sex, love each other they should be allowed to marry. If this is regarded as a principle then why should the option not be open to sisters to marry sisters or brothers to marry brothers, or any same sex people who share a home. Changing the definition of marriage will open a host of potential issues which have either not been considered or have been disregarded, apparently without being fully thought through as to the effects on wider legislation or the practicalities of daily life.

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

Neither

For assorted practical reasons marriages need to be recorded, so as long as the people performing them have some form of accreditation or appropriate licensing system I can see no objection to 'belief celebrants', however that is to be defined, performing

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

This assumes the legislation passes. If so the response is similar to Q6

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

Neither

It would remove one inequality as heterosexual couples do not have access to civil partnerships but if the original legislation proposed had been about equality it would have included the creation of civil partnerships for heterosexual couples.

**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 can see no objection to where a marriage takes place as long as all of the parties agree the location.

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

Neither

This must be a matter for the relevant religious bodies or belief organisations to determine. It is not for the state to impose its will. No one is forced to join or adhere to any particular religion or belief so if their current religion or belief syst

**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?**

Neither

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

Given the press reports of individuals who have been reprimanded or removed form their posts for voicing beliefs which do not chime with those supporting same sex marriage this is the most important element of the entire process. It must be made clear in any legislation that no one should be subject to either the criminal law or civil procedure for stating their views that same sex marriage is wrong. Similarly, under employment law, no one should be punished for expressing views sincerely held, however unpalatable or unfashionable they may be. There may well be a specific problem where religions or religious sects run educational establishments eg Roman Catholic or Islamic schools, where any form of promotion of same sex marriage or homosexuality is starkly against their core belief system. How are employees of such organisations to be protected. Freedom of though and speech is a cornerstone of our democracy and any attempt to limit it must be resisted.
Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?

Recent press reports show that law abiding people have been demoted or removed from their posts because they have made comments that they believe that same sex marriage is wrong. They have been disciplined because their views are at odds with their organisation’s view. I find this trend extremely worrying as the individuals appear to have been, in all other aspects, carrying out their job functions to the required standards. This is a form of censorship which should have no place in a free country. This could be seen as an attempt to limit freedom of speech and as it has happened before the Act is in place it shows a need for clarification in the Bill to prevent such attempts at censorship.

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

Will there be clarification that OSCR will not use as grounds for de-regulation the fact that an organisation holds the view that same sex marriage is incompatible with its constitution or objectives. Similarly, will there be clarification that local authorities and other public bodies will not discriminate against organisations which do not support same sex marriage eg refusing to hire premises or enter into contracts with such organisations.

Are you responding as...

a private individual

Hugh McIntosh
12 July 2013