



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

30<sup>th</sup> July 2021

*Jean Conthreut,*

**RE: HUMANIST MARRIAGES**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of marriages, and specifically the legal recognition of humanist marriages in England and Wales; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I share your concerns about the current marriage laws and agree that meaningful change needs to take place. You may be interested to know that when the Government held a consultation on this in 2014, the majority of respondents were in favour of changing the law to allow legally valid non-religious belief ceremonies in unrestricted locations.

I know that the Government wants to reform marriage ceremonies to make sure that there is a simple, fair and consistent legal framework, so that people can have a wedding that is meaningful to them. That is why the Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how, and where, people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of the project, the Law Commission will be considering how a scheme could include weddings conducted by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations and where weddings should be able to take place.

The Law Commission's consultation on proposals for reform of the law governing how and where couples can get married closed on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021. I understand responses are now being analysed. These responses will inform the development of the Law Commission's final policy, to be published in a report with recommendations for the Government in the second half of 2021. I understand that the Government will then decide on provision for non-religious belief marriage in light of the Law Commission's recommendations.

Additionally, I understand that the Government does not have any legislative plans to change the current safeguards. However, I know that a registration official has a duty to stop proceedings if they believe that either party to a marriage does not have the capacity to marry. You may also be interested to know that the Law Commission project into weddings includes the formalities and safeguarding checks required before a marriage is conducted. I will closely follow this review and scrutinise the Government's response to any recommendations made in the final report.



I believe that the requirement for venues to be seemly and dignified should be maintained. However, I welcome that, alongside the Law Commission review, outdoor civil wedding and partnership ceremonies in England and Wales have been legalised for the first time. This change took effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 and offers greater choice to couples in a boost to the wedding sector after what has been a very challenging period.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**