



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

6<sup>th</sup> February 2022

*Dear Constituent,*

### RE: HUMANIST MARRIAGE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of humanist marriage. I have read your comments on this issue with interest.

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

The Government wants to reform marriage ceremonies to ensure a simple, fair and consistent legal framework, so that people can have a wedding that is meaningful to them. With this in mind, the Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission would conduct a fundamental review on how, and where, people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of the project, the Law Commission considered how a scheme could include weddings conducted by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations and where weddings should be able to take place.

This consultation closed in January 2021 and the responses are now being analysed. These responses will inform development of the Law Commission's final policy, to be published in a report with recommendations for the Government, expected in July 2022. It is welcome that the Government remains committed to considering the case for more comprehensive and enduring reform to marriage law once the Law Commission has completed its fundamental review of the law in this area. Indeed, I am the Minister in the Ministry of Justice responsible for overseeing this work.

Legislating now to allow humanist marriages would pre-empt the Law Commission's report, which is expected to provide a framework that could allow for humanist weddings. Although I appreciate the frustration that many have felt while waiting for the publication of the Law Commission's report, it is right that this process is done properly through a wholesale reform of marriage law, which can provide for humanist marriage while preventing disparity from being created with other groups - points I made in responding to the Westminster Hall debate on behalf of the Government.

I certainly look forward to reading and reflecting on the Law Commission's report, which I hope will contain a clear and comprehensive view of the opportunities associated with substantial reform to marriage law. You can also be assured that I very much hear your calls for reform.

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