

# Tim Farron: 'I do not think gay sex is a sin'

Tim Farron has opened up publicly for the first time about his Christian faith and in a candid interview with the BBC has said that he does not believe gay sex is a sin.

The Liberal Democrat leader has very clearly said he does not believe being gay is a sin, and nor is gay sex.

He makes no secret of his private faith but believes political leaders should not make theological pronouncements or declare what people's personal faith should be.

But why is he speaking out now? Whilst he does not believe politicians should declare what is or isn't sin he was concerned some people were forming an impression of him that is not accurate.

## **Tim's impressive LGBT+ record**

Mr Farron has an impressive record on LGBT+ issues, both at home and abroad.

### **At Home**

#### **PrEP**

The Liberal Democrats believe that Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) available on the NHS to those at high risk of HIV infection.

Norman Lamb, as Health Spokesperson and with the full support of the Leader has supported this campaign in and out of Parliament.

#### **Gay Blood Ban**

In 2014 Tim Farron added his name in support of a Private Members Bill [Blood Donation (Equality)].

In 2015, Tim endorsed the Freedom to Donate campaign and strongly welcomed the review of the ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood.

Tim has said that the ban is "scientifically and socially outdated, deeply and unjustly stigmatising, and urgently need to change."

In 2016 Tim tabled a parliamentary bill that would end the ban on blood donations from men who have sex with men.

The Liberal Democrats have been campaigning for the end of the blanket ban since 2006 and in Coalition in 2011 we won a partial victory which removed the restriction on gay men – but only if they had been celibate for 12 months.

## **Turing Law**

Thousands of gay and bisexual men convicted of now abolished sexual offences have been posthumously pardoned thanks to Liberal Democrat pressure.

Liberal Democrat peer John Sharkey, whose Private Member's Bill was instrumental in securing a pardon for Alan Turing, reached an agreement with the Government in November 2016 to grant a posthumous pardon to thousands of gay and bisexual men convicted under long-abolished sexual offence laws.

Tim Farron said: "The Liberal Democrats continue to be the strongest voice on equality in Parliament.

"Although it comes too late for those convicted, the friends and relatives of the thousands of people who suffered under this unfair and discriminatory law will now have a weight lifted off their shoulders."

## **X-passports**

Gender is listed on all passports issued worldwide that meet International Standards. The use of "X", meaning "Unspecified" as a gender marker is enshrined in the standards, but few countries currently issue new passports with these markers.

An increasing number of people in the UK identify as neither male nor female, or live part time in various gender roles. As well as giving people the ability to identify as they choose and not have the state impose an identity upon them, a perceived mismatch between gender roles and official ID can cause problems dealing with official organisations such as the DWP, Police or Border Agency.

Julian Huppert during the Coalition and Norman Lamb since have advocated for the introduction of x – passports.

Tim has said: "Our party conference introduced the Transgender and Intersex Charter with astounding support from party members. This called for the phased removal of gender markers in documentation unless it is absolutely necessary, and the introduction of an 'X' gender option and 'Mx.' title option on the remainder and a streamlined simplification of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to allow individuals to change their legal gender at will amongst other things. And we are leading the way, our own party documentation is changing to phase out gender wherever possible. Something as small as not having to choose whether to tick the male or female box on applications can make a huge difference. In the last Parliament we desperately tried to get the Tories to agree to introducing gender neutral passports. This is not as radical an idea as it might seem – other countries like Australia have already introduced it and it is accepted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. It is frankly ridiculous that even on something this small the Tories have refused to act."

## **Trans Prisoners**

Liberal Democrats have strongly advocated on behalf of the rights of individual trans-prisoners. Tim Farron has been at the forefront of this work

in Parliament. In 2015 he took up Tara Hudson's case, he said:

"There is a clear need for a policy change in this area. It looks like the Ministry of Justice needs be dragged kicking into the 21st century.

"As I understand it, Tara has lived all her adult life as a female. I worry potential risk of harm to her in a male prison which was deemed to have levels of violence 'considerably higher than in similar prisons' by the prisons inspectorate." –

### **Simplifying the Gender Recognition Act**

During Tim's first conference as party leader the Liberal Democrats voted in favour of simplifying the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to allow individuals to change their legal gender at will and for allowing changes to government-issued documentation on the basis of gender reassignment to be provided free of charge.

### **The Spousal Veto**

Before England and Wales introduced same-sex marriage, it was necessary for married trans people to end their marriages in to gain legal gender recognition. Around 30 couples were forced to annul their marriages in this way. They have described it as like having their marriages "stolen".

Thankfully this is no longer the case. However, instead, when a married trans person seeks gender recognition, their spouse must give permission. If they do not give permission "for the marriage to continue" then the trans person is blocked from having their gender recognised. The marriage continues to exist.

The Liberal Democrats would believe the law should be reviewed with the intention of removing them."

### **Sex Education to include teaching about LGBT+ relationships and rights**

The Liberal Democrats have long campaigned to make sex education compulsory in all schools. This was repeatedly blocked by the Conservatives during the Coalition government. The Government has finally capitulated thanks to pressure both internally and externally.

Tim has previously said that children must have "access to good sexual health and relationship education and give parents the help and support they need to talk to their children about this issue."

Liberal Democrat peers recently attempted to amend the Children and Social Work Bill to ensure that sex education would be taught irrespective of the religious background of the school

### **Deportation of LGBT+ individuals**

Liberal Democrats have a manifesto commitment to stop the deportation of people to countries where their sexual orientation or gender identification

means that they risk imprisonment, torture, or execution. Over the years Liberal Democrat MPs and Peers have raised the plight of LGBT+ facing deportation.

## **Abroad**

### **Chechnya**

Tim Farron was the first party leader to come out against the outrageous homophobic purge in Chechnya. Tim said: "These reports from Chechnya are truly horrifying, and represent an extreme manifestation of increasing homophobic brutality and intolerance in Putin's Russia.

"The UK government must strongly condemn this disgusting violence, and use every possibly opportunity to raise this with the Russian government, as well as in the UN and other international bodies.

"The UK must work with those who share our values to stop the mindless targeting of the LGBT community, which is still prevalent in too many countries across the world.

"Only through defending universal human rights will we ever hope to achieve a world in which every person can live, work and flourish without discrimination.

"It is disappointing that Boris Johnson has failed to stand up for these people by not visiting Russia after Trump told him to stay at home."

### **Russia**

Tim laid the following EDM: "That this House deplores the recent legislation passed in Russia banning the promotion of non-traditional relationships; notes that this is akin to the former Section 28 legislation in the UK; further notes that the new law appears to be part of a wider crackdown on the freedoms of the LGBT community in Russia; believes that we must listen to those Russian LGBT groups and activists who urge very strongly that boycotts in any form or nature, from sporting, like the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, to drinking vodka, are not supported by them and only increase the likelihood of harm towards LGBT Russians; and calls on the Government to work through international and diplomatic channels, like the G20, the Council of Europe and the International Olympic Committee and commercial and business interests already involved in sponsoring the 2014 Winter Olympics, alongside indigenous LGBT campaign groups based in Russia itself, to stand up for the human rights of the Russian LGBT community"

Speaking about the EDM he said: "As a long-time supporter of Amnesty International I believe human rights are inalienable and something we must protect and extend throughout the world. The recent laws passed in Russia are the equivalent of the awful section 28 laws we had in the UK. I hope the government will use every avenue of diplomatic pressure possible to make them drop these laws, this is an area we can take a stand and I hope we will."

### **Uganda and Nigeria**

## **Tim signed this EDM on LGBT rights in Uganda and Nigeria**

Lib Dem MEPs also wrote to the European Commission urging for action to be taken over new anti-homosexual laws introduced in Uganda

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## **Letter to Marks and Spencers**

I am following up my questions to you about the possible closure of the Wokingham store after hearing the views of more of my constituents.

There is a general feeling amongst those interested in the issue that we would like Marks and Spencer to stay in the town. The Town Centre as you know is currently undergoing a substantial redevelopment to make it a more attractive retail centre with more floorspace. Wokingham Borough is expanding with four major new sites for additional housing, including two nearby in Wokingham itself. New residents will need good shops. The Borough expects these changes to generate more footfall in Wokingham centre. The area around the Marketplace is a great setting for shopping, with a rich diversity of places to have a coffee or buy a meal. The Town actively promotes itself with a calendar of events designed to bring more people into the centre.

Your sales figures and market research will of course inform your judgements about the retail offer that would work best for your business. There does seem to be more direct competition on food than on some of your standard textile lines which might have a bearing on how best to trade your current unit.

I would be happy to help find a way to keep it open to serve future Wokingham customers.

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## **Andrew Gwynne response to Theresa May's speech this afternoon in South Wales**

**Andrew Gwynne MP, Labour's Campaigns and Elections Chair**, in response to Theresa May's speech this afternoon in South Wales, said:

"It is clearer than ever that a vote for the Tories is a vote for the few,

not the many. Rather than uniting the country and tackling the challenges we face, their policies are divisive and are taking us backwards.

“Only Labour will invest to create shared prosperity. Only Labour will protect our public services.”

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## **Press release – Media services: same rules needed for TV and internet to protect children better – Committee on Culture and Education**

**Children should have the same protection whether they are watching TV, a web-shared video or a web-streamed film, said committee MEPs on Tuesday.**

Culture Committee MEPs advocated tightening up the child protection provisions of EU rules on audiovisual media services and also those on advertising and promoting European audiovisual works. Their ideas still need to be endorsed by Parliament as a whole.

### **Protecting children against violence, hatred, terrorism and harmful advertising**

Video-sharing platforms will have to take corrective measures if users flag any content as inciting violence, hatred or terrorism, MEPs agreed. To this end, these platforms would need to put in place an easy-to-use mechanism allowing users to report content and be informed of measures taken.

MEPs also propose banning advertising and product placement for tobacco, electronic cigarettes and alcohol in children’s TV programmes and video-sharing platforms.

Rapporteur Sabine Verheyen (EPP, DE) said: “One of our main priorities is the protection of minors. We proposed adapting some of the rules applying to programmes on television to internet services, such as rules on advertising, product placement and sponsorship. Certain advertising in programmes aimed at a children’s audience will be restricted, allowed only to a very limited extent or will be prohibited in general.”

### **New quotas on TV advertising**

For TV advertising, MEPs agreed on new rules imposing a maximum 20% daily

quota, giving the broadcaster the flexibility of adjusting their advertising periods.

### **European content quota of 30% for on-demand platforms**

To reflect Europe's cultural diversity, MEPs called for a 30% quota of European works in on-demand platform catalogues, instead of the 20% proposed by the EU Commission. This quote should include works in the languages of the countries where they are distributed.

Under the amended rules, EU member states could ask on-demand platforms to contribute financially to the development of European audiovisual productions, either by investing directly in content or by contributing to national funds. Their contributions should be proportional to their revenues in the country where they would contribute.

Rapporteur Petra Kammerevert (S&D, DE) said: "To increase quotas for video-on-demand offers does not necessarily ensure a stimulation of new European audiovisual content, but it is a clear EU policy signal. Such a quota should be achievable and should not be an undue burden on anybody". "At the same time, we want to enable member countries to commit video on demand platforms to payments of national film funds that can stimulate the production of new European works".

### **Next steps**

Parliament as a whole will decide on 15 May in Strasbourg whether to open inter-institutional talks, for the final approval of the legislation, on the basis of the committee proposals. The Council plans to adopt its negotiating mandate on 23 May.

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## **[ESMA publishes an opinion on MAR accepted market practices on liquidity contracts](#)**

### **Background**

MAR's purpose is to guarantee the integrity of European financial markets and promote investor confidence. The concept of market abuse typically consists of insider dealing, unlawful disclosure of inside information, and market

manipulation.

However, some exceptions apply. The prohibition of insider dealing and market manipulation does not apply to trading in own shares in buy-back programs or trading in securities for the stabilisation of securities when some conditions laid down in MAR are met. Moreover, MAR does not apply to public authorities in pursuit of monetary, exchange rate or public debt management policy. Other specific exceptions apply in the framework of the EU's climate policy or the EU's Agricultural Policy for instance. MAR also provides a defence against market manipulation if the transaction was legitimate and carried out in accordance with an AMP and MAR describes the non-exhaustive factors that a competent authority should take into account before deciding whether or not to accept a market practice.