

First ever marriage review to free-up dream wedding venues

The two-year project, which is the first of its kind, will review the current laws on how and where marriages can take place – many of which date back to the 19th Century.

It will look at removing unnecessary red-tape to increase the choice and lower the cost of venues. It could open up opportunities for civil ceremonies at sea, in private homes or military sites for service personnel.

Subject to the findings from the independent Law Commission the changes would ensure couples can marry in a way that is individually meaningful for them, while continuing to preserve the dignity of marriage ceremonies.

Separately, the Government will accelerate plans to allow civil weddings and civil partnerships to be held outside and will look to implement these through secondary legislation, subject to any necessary consultation.

Any new venues would have to meet the existing test of solemnity and dignity.

Welcoming this progress Prime Minister Theresa May said:

As both Home Secretary and Prime Minister I have been proud to sponsor the legislation that created equal marriage, and to extend civil partnerships to ensure all couples are given the same choices in life.

The vital institution of marriage is a strong symbol of wider society's desire to celebrate commitment between partners. But we can do more to bring the laws on marriage ceremonies up to date and to support couples in celebrating their commitment.

This review will look at how we can ensure marriage keeps pace with modern Britain.

The Government recognises the role of religious services as a preferred option for many couples, and values the continuing status of the Church of England as the established church in England.

However, a Law Commission report in 2015 raised concerns around marriage laws, citing a patchwork of inconsistent and highly technical provisions, which have lacked fundamental reform since 1836.

Under current law couples are limited in their choice of wedding location. Civil ceremonies must take place at register offices or in approved premises that have been licensed for the purpose by local authorities.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Getting married is a deeply personal decision, so we want couples to have greater choice in how and where they celebrate their commitment.

Whilst we will always preserve the dignity of marriage, people from all walks of life should be able to express their vows in a way that is meaningful to them.

This review will look at the red tape and outdated rules around weddings – making sure our laws are fit for modern life.

The Law Commission will now work with a wide variety of groups, including faith leaders and those with experience of conducting marriages, to examine how best to reduce red tape and ensure we have a simpler, fairer system that provides more choice, genuine alternatives to the cost of an approved venue or being restricted to a register office.