

Rt Hon. The Lord Foster of Bath, Chair
Justice and Home Affairs Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

MoJ ref: 135932

15 July 2026

Dear Don,

WEDDINGS LAW REFORM CONSULTATION

I am writing to inform you that tomorrow the Government will be launching a public consultation entitled *Tying the Knot: Reforming Weddings Law in England and Wales*, which sets out our draft proposals for reform of weddings law in England and Wales.

The consultation will explore how the law can be made simpler, fairer and more inclusive, expanding choice for couples while preserving the dignity and significance of marriage and protecting against forced, predatory and sham marriages. These reforms would represent the biggest overhaul of weddings law since the 19th century. Our proposals aim to make weddings more accessible whilst protecting the institution of marriage.

Marriage is one of our oldest and most valued institutions, yet for too many people, outdated and inconsistent rules stand in the way of celebrating this commitment in a way that reflects their values and beliefs.

The Government's proposals are guided by four principles.

First, reforms will introduce a simple, fair and inclusive framework for all weddings. The consultation seeks views on a clearer and more consistent legal structure, with common rules applying to different types of ceremony. The proposals would also enable non-religious belief organisations, including Humanists, to conduct legally binding weddings.

Second, the reforms will expand choice about how and where couples may marry. The consultation proposes moving away from a system based primarily on the building in which a wedding takes place, towards one focused on the officiant responsible for the ceremony. This would allow greater flexibility both over the location and the form of weddings, so that ceremonies can better reflect the couple's beliefs and backgrounds and they can marry in settings that are more meaningful to them.

The third principle is the importance of upholding the dignity and significance of marriage. As greater freedoms are introduced, the Government is clear that a wedding day must always reflect the serious and life-long commitment that is marriage. The consultation therefore proposes a "dignity framework", which would set clear and consistent standards for wedding ceremonies and locations and place a legal duty on officiants to ensure that weddings meet these standards.

The fourth and final principle is that reforms will strengthen protection against forced, predatory and sham marriages. The consultation proposes modernising the preliminaries process that takes place before the wedding day by introducing a digital system with more effective checks and greater visibility and transparency. These proposals seek to ensure that marriages are always entered into freely, with informed consent, and are not used to exploit vulnerable people or gain unfair advantage.

The consultation also seeks views about the role and regulation of officiants, including nominated officiants from religious and non-religious belief organisations, independent officiants and maritime officiants. It asks how officiants should be authorised, trained, monitored and held accountable and what role should be played by a central regulator.

Consultation aims and next steps

This consultation is an opportunity to achieve consensus about reform to weddings law. We will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the consultation period. If you or the Committee has any views, please let me know.

The Government will consider the findings of the consultation carefully before finalising our policy position. Any reform would then take place when parliamentary time allows.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Levitt', written in a cursive style.

THE BARONESS LEVITT KC