REFORMING WEDDINGS LAW TO

GIVE COUPLES CHOICE

The case for including **Independent Celebrants** in wedding law reform

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The Give Couples Choice Movement (GCCM) is a collective of organisations and individuals working together to raise awareness of UK wedding law reform and the importance of including independent celebrants.

This paper has been produced by the GCCM with input and support from the following celebrant training and membership bodies:

Academy of Modern Celebrancy
Celebrant Circle
Celebrants Collective
Celebrant Guild
Civil Celebrant Connection
Civil Ceremonies Ltd
Fellowship of Independent Celebrants
Fellowship of Professional Celebrants
United Kingdom Society of Celebrants
Wedding Celebrancy Commission

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Executive Summary

In October 2025, the Ministry of Justice issued its final response to the wedding law reform recommendations put forward by the Law Commission of England and Wales. In this positive response, Baroness Levitt KC confirmed that the UK Government intends to reform weddings law when parliamentary time allows, with a view to undertaking a public consultation on the details in early 2026.

This is very welcome news for both marrying couples and those working within the wedding profession. However, whether independent celebrants will be included as authorised officiants is a subject for discussion during the consultation phase.

The MoJ states in its response:

> *"The consultation will likely focus on protecting the dignity of wedding ceremonies, considering whether independent celebrants should be allowed to conduct legally binding weddings, and exploring the criteria and safeguards for religious and non-religious organisations nominating officiants."*
>
> **Law Commission, 2025**

As training and governing bodies for independent celebrants, we welcome the UK Government's response and we look forward to engaging in the consultation in early 2026.

In preparation for the consultation, this paper puts forward the case for authorising independent celebrants to conduct legally binding weddings, based on the Law Commission's proposed framework. This follows a similar model to several other common-law jurisdictions, such as the Channel Islands, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Drawing on statistics, academic research and the experience of celebrants and couples, we highlight the existing demand for weddings led by independent celebrants, the unique value they bring, and the vital importance of authorising independent celebrants to conduct legally binding marriages.

This paper is a collaboration between several organisations involved in the training and professional development of UK independent celebrants. As a collective group working under the Give Couples Choice Movement (GCCM), we firmly believe that including independent celebrants is the only way to meet the Law Commission's principle aims of fairness, equality, and respect for individuals' wishes and beliefs.

1. The Case for Reform

The legal framework governing marriage in England and Wales is widely acknowledged as outdated, restrictive and unfit for modern society. The current law, largely based on the Marriage Act 1836 and subsequent amendments, imposes rigid distinctions between religious and civil ceremonies and places emphasis on approved venues.

Most significantly, there are rigid requirements regarding where a wedding can be held and who can officiate. Civil weddings must take place in approved premises under the authority of a registrar, while belief-based weddings can only be legally conducted by authorised ministers or religious personnel, and generally only in registered places of worship. This system severely limits the freedom of couples to hold a marriage ceremony that reflects their values.

However, this is all set to change. In 2022, the Law Commission of England and Wales published its final report on wedding law reform, proposing a comprehensive shift in approach to create a more inclusive legal framework for marriage (Law Commission, 2022).

Among its key recommendations is a shift to regulating officiants rather than venues. Crucially, this opens the door to the legal recognition of a broader range of wedding ceremonies, including those conducted by non-religious belief officiants (for example, humanist celebrants) and by independent celebrants.

The Law Commission states that the question of whether to include independent celebrants within the new legal structure is one for UK Government, and on pages 163-176 of the recommendations it puts forward a robust proposal for how this could work in practice. This is summarised in recommendations 23 and 24 (Law Commission, 2022).

These proposals are supported by the vast majority of independent wedding celebrants. In an Open University survey in 2020, almost all respondents said they would like the law to be changed so that they could conduct legally binding marriage ceremonies, and 95% favoured a statutory body being involved in the representation and/or regulation of their profession. Many also said they would be prepared to pay up to £500 for initial accreditation or authorisation, and up to £200 as an annual renewal fee (Pywell, 2020a).

We therefore urge the UK Government to respond accordingly to the support shown during the Law Commission consultation by putting recommendations 23 and 24 into practice as part of the wider reform.

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2. Understanding Independent Celebrants

Independent celebrants are self-employed professional officiants who are not affiliated with a particular religious institution or belief body. Their central role is to design and deliver ceremonies that are entirely bespoke to the couple.

A celebrant typically meets with each couple well in advance, learns about their relationship, cultural background and aspirations, and creates a tailor-made ceremony script. The ceremony will include the exchange of personal vows and may also include meaningful readings and music, belief elements such as prayers or hymns, and symbolic acts such as handfasting or candle lighting. Ceremonies can take place at any venue chosen by the couple, many of which are outdoors.

Couples find this level of personalisation deeply fulfilling. It strengthens the emotional impact of the ceremony and creates a lasting memory for the couple and their guests. One couple puts it like this:

> *"We honestly couldn't have asked for a more personal and heartfelt ceremony. She created something that was pure magic, reminding us why we chose each other and strengthening our bond in the most beautiful way."*
>
> **Sinita & Bhav, The Celebrant Directory**

Independent celebrant ceremonies are not just personal, they are also inclusive. They can honour cultural or religious traditions without being bound to doctrinal requirements. This makes them especially valuable for multicultural families and for individuals whose beliefs do not align with the existing legal options.

How independent celebrants differ from humanist celebrants

By contrast, humanist celebrants are bound by the philosophical principles of Humanism, which is a non-religious belief system that emphasises reason, ethics and human agency. Humanist weddings are entirely secular in nature. While they may include vows, poems or symbolic gestures, they do not contain religious or spiritual references, prayers or blessings.

This distinction is critical. The growing diversity of belief and identity in the UK means that couples often do not fit neatly into either a religious or strictly non-religious category. While humanist celebrants offer a valuable service to those who identify as humanist, they cannot accommodate couples who wish to include spiritual or interfaith elements in their ceremony, or couples who simply do not wish to identify with any formal belief system.

Independent celebrants, on the other hand, are able to serve a diverse population without imposing a particular worldview. This ensures that every wedding ceremony reflects the couple's values, rather than the officiant's (although couples may choose an independent celebrant whose beliefs and values align with their own).

One group of independent celebrants puts it this way:

> *"Independent celebrants believe that every couple deserves a ceremony that reflects who they truly are. Whether a couple's outlook is non-religious, spiritual, traditional, or something entirely their own, celebrants work closely with them to craft ceremonies that express their values, beliefs and story with honesty and warmth. Love comes in many forms, and celebrants are proud to celebrate them all."*
>
> **Carmen Llewellyn, Katie McCall and Lisa Ball, The Celebrant Directory**

As we will go on to highlight, there is already high demand for weddings led by independent celebrants, but couples who wish to have a personalised ceremony are currently required to separate the legal and symbolic aspects of their wedding. This typically involves completing the legal registration of marriage with a registrar in a brief and impersonal setting, then engaging an independent celebrant to conduct a meaningful ceremony – without legal standing – on a different day, at a different venue.

This is the current situation for couples who wish to have almost any form of personalised, celebrant-led ceremony, whether humanist or independent. But while the UK Government has been clear that it will include humanist weddings in the upcoming law reform, there is still discussion to be had as to whether independent celebrants will be authorised.

We believe that legal recognition of only humanist celebrants would be discriminatory in nature, unjustifiably excluding a great many couples and failing to meet the aims of fairness and inclusion that underpin the Law Commission's recommendations.

3. Current Demand for Independent Celebrants

Couples increasingly seek wedding ceremonies that go beyond formulaic scripts and impersonal procedures. Because of this, there is already considerable demand for independent celebrants, despite their ceremonies not being legally binding.

In 2020, it was estimated that over 10,000 wedding ceremonies were conducted by independent celebrants each year across England and Wales. These are in addition to the required legal ceremonies performed separately by a registrar, which many couples regard as an inconvenient and unnecessary duplication (Pywell, 2020b).

It should be noted that this figure is likely to be a significant underestimation, being based on the number of practising celebrants who responded to a survey during a limited timeframe, rather than an assessment of the actual number of ceremonies taking place. In addition, in the years since 2020 the sector has continued to grow at a rapid rate.

Professional celebrant bodies report a significant rise in the number of trained, insured and accredited celebrants operating in the UK, with combined membership data recording approximately 3,000-4,000 active celebrants across wedding, funeral and family ceremonies (including around 500 humanist celebrants).

This reflects the growing demand for independent celebrant ceremonies and a broader societal shift towards personalisation and away from institutional ceremony formats. Couples who give their reasons for choosing an independent celebrant consistently highlight the same themes of feeling seen, understood and supported. As one couple puts it:

> *"You made our ceremony so special and completely us. It was everything we wanted — relaxed, full of love, and perfectly personal."*
>
> **Kiara M, The Celebrant Directory**

4. Professionalism of Independent Celebrants

The term ‘civil celebrant’ was coined in the UK in the 1990s, based on a successful model operating in other jurisdictions such as Australia. A formal celebrancy qualification has been available since 2002, with thousands of individuals having trained as independent celebrants over the past two decades.

The vast majority of independent celebrants are professionally trained, with many having achieved a qualification in wedding celebrancy. They also comply with professional standards, insurance requirements and codes of conduct set out by their professional bodies.

In independent research into celebrant weddings published in 2020, 281 of the 287 independent celebrant respondents indicated that they had received relevant training (Pywell, 2020a). Further evidence of this is found in research funded by the Nuffield Foundation into non-legally binding ceremonies, which states:

> *“It is worth noting how seriously our participants took their role... Within our study, independent celebrants were the most likely to mention not only that they had been trained but also that such training had led to a formal qualification.”*
>
> **Probert et al, 2021**

Given the size and maturity of the sector, independent celebrants are equipped and ready to be brought within the legal framework for weddings. Recognition would not only legitimise their work; it would also provide couples with a seamless experience, allowing them to have both a meaningful and legally binding ceremony at the same time and place.

5. Response to Concerns and Misconceptions

While this paper demonstrates the professionalism and quality of independent celebrants, it is also important to address existing concerns.

In past papers produced by Humanists UK, independent celebrants have been misrepresented in several ways, which we seek to address below.

The content of this section summarises the official response put to the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group by the Wedding Celebrancy Commission (WCC, 2022).

The commercial argument

Some have put forward the view that legal recognition of independent celebrants would create a commercial market for marriage ceremonies in England and Wales. This argument is completely unfounded.

Virtually all officiants charge a fee for the ceremonies they deliver, including humanist celebrants, registrars and religious officiants. Whether this is a single fee or a salaried role in which the duty of performing weddings is required, a fee is charged.

The Law Commission supports our objection to the 'commercial' argument in its final report, stating:

> *"It is perfectly legitimate for nominated officiants to charge for officiating at weddings, and for that charge to reflect any preparation time and the costs involved in being an officiant… The fees [independent celebrants] charge are similar to those charged by registration officers conducting weddings on approved premises or by Humanist celebrants… we do not see the charging of a fee as detrimental to the dignity of the institution of marriage."*
>
> **Law Commission, 2022**

Celebrant training and regulation

Concern has been expressed about a possible lack of training and regulation for independent officiants under the Law Commission's proposed new scheme. But, as evidenced in the previous section, independent celebrants already take their training and professionalism seriously, with most being members of professional celebrant bodies.

Furthermore, if authorised to conduct legally binding weddings, the Law Commission proposes that the General Register Office (GRO) would train and regulate independent officiants regarding the legal functions of their role. The GRO is responsible for the training and regulation of registrars, so there is no reason why this training could not be applied to independent officiants.

The GRO would also assess each independent applicant based on the suggested ‘fit and proper person’ criteria. Independent celebrants applying to be officiants would need to prove that they meet these criteria, which could partly be done by demonstrating they have sufficient training for and experience in their role.

They would therefore be representing the GRO and reflecting the standards of a Civil Ceremony, as currently carried out by registrars. The difference being that independent officiants would have the capacity and flexibility to create fully bespoke, personalised ceremonies.

Dignity and solemnity of marriage

A key message put forward by the Law Commission and UK Government is the need to preserve the ‘dignity and solemnity of marriage’ in future law reform, ensuring that authorised officiants are ‘fit and proper persons’ to conduct legal marriage ceremonies.

Authorising independent celebrants to conduct legal weddings would preserve, and indeed enhance, the dignity and solemnity of marriage by ensuring that the ceremony reflects the authentic values, beliefs and intentions of the couple entering into it. Research on ritual and ceremony consistently demonstrates that personal meaning and participant engagement are key determinants of a ceremony’s perceived gravity and emotional resonance. Independent celebrants are uniquely positioned to foster this.

Furthermore, by following the Law Commission’s proposed model, independent officiants would be authorised and regulated by the GRO – a trusted body well placed to ensure that the standards of dignity and solemnity are upheld.

Extending legal authority to independent celebrants would not dilute the seriousness of marriage; rather, it would strengthen public trust in it by making the institution more inclusive and accessible. In many other jurisdictions, independent celebrants have been authorised for decades without any diminution in the legal or moral weight of marriage. Instead, these systems have demonstrated the value of embracing equality and modern values within a stringent legal system.

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Incorporating belief into ceremonies

Independent celebrants have, at times, been questioned about the appropriateness of offering mixed-faith or spiritual ceremonies when not authorised to do so by religious bodies such as the Church of England.

We do not see any legal or moral issues with this. Independent celebrants do not claim to lead acts of worship in any official capacity; rather, they embrace and celebrate couples' unique beliefs and outlooks, reflecting these in their ceremonies through the inclusion of songs, prayers and readings.

We believe that couples should be given freedom of expression in their wedding ceremonies, providing that these ceremonies remain seemly and dignified. Indeed, the Law Commission's proposed new scheme would allow for such flexibility within civil ceremonies.

Human rights

It has been argued by some that there is no human rights argument for including independent celebrants in wedding law reform. However, it is our firmly held belief that there is a human rights argument for the legal recognition of independent celebrants. Couples who have different faiths, no faith, undefined faith, or simply want to choose how they marry and who marries them, all have human rights.

Article 9 of the Human Rights Act states:

> *"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance."*
>
> **Human Rights Act, 1998**

Clearly, this freedom of expression is not only relevant to those who identify with an organised religion; it applies to all beliefs and outlooks.

The choice to affiliate with one particular religion is becoming less and less desirable in England and Wales, as demonstrated by the 37% of respondents who identified with 'no religion' in the 2021 Census (Office for National Statistics, 2021). But this does not necessarily translate to an increase in atheism or agnosticism. Census data cannot provide a meaningful representation of the nuanced beliefs and outlooks held among the population, meaning we do not get a clear picture of the multitude of views within that 'no religion' category.

Humanists UK claims that many in this ‘non-religious’ group hold ‘humanist values’, but we surely cannot define these respondents as being humanist unless they readily identify themselves as such – especially if humanism seeks to have parity with religious belief systems. It is clear that many people hold existential, spiritual or undefined beliefs that they do not wish to place into a set category.

In modern society we would not justify religious bodies encouraging people to identify as, for example, Christian or Muslim on their wedding day, if they did not indeed hold those beliefs. Therefore, if humanism seeks parity with religious belief systems, it is equally unjustifiable that couples who want a more personalised ceremony should be required to identify with humanism as a belief system in order to do that legally.

The Law Commission states in its final recommendations that reform is needed to enable couples to ‘celebrate their weddings in a way that is meaningful to them, protecting their freedom of expression and belief’ (Law Commission, 2022). We firmly believe that if just humanist marriages are legally recognised and independent celebrants are excluded, this aim will not be met.

Including independent celebrants as authorised officiants is the only feasible way to make sure the needs of all couples are addressed. Therefore, we believe there is a strong human rights case for the legal recognition of independent celebrants.

6. Precedents in Other Jurisdictions

The proposal to authorise independent wedding celebrants is neither new nor untested. This model has been proven to operate well in several other common-law jurisdictions across the world, including the Channel Islands, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

> *"Other jurisdictions which share common traditions, for example, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, also operate modern, fit-for-purpose schemes, which give couples significant choice over where and how their weddings can be celebrated. By bringing the law up to date, our recommendations will make the law in England and Wales more similar to the laws in these countries."*
>
> **Law Commission, 2022**

Two specific examples of such schemes are provided below.

The Channel Islands

In Jersey and Guernsey, independent celebrants are authorised to perform legal marriage ceremonies. This allows for marriages to take place outdoors, and provides couples with more choice regarding what they can incorporate into their ceremonies.

Registered independent celebrants in Jersey are self-employed, working under contract to the States of Jersey. Those who wish to be registered complete a recruitment process organised by the Office of the Superintendent Registrar (OSR) and, if successful, become authorised, registered and monitored by them.

A person is only entitled to be registered as an Authorised Civil Celebrant if they are considered by the Superintendent Registrar to be a 'fit and proper person'. Those who are approved must pay an annual registration fee, comply with the State's 'Code of Practice for Authorised Civil Celebrants', and take an oath before the Royal Court of Jersey (States of Jersey, 2025).

Individual celebrant profiles are on the Government and OSR websites so that couples can select from those who are authorised. Couples who wish to select a registered celebrant for their legal wedding ceremony must apply to the OSR and notify it of their chosen celebrant. Their celebrant is then notified when the paperwork is complete and they collect this a few days prior to the ceremony.

During the ceremony, the paperwork is signed by the celebrant, couple and witnesses, and the celebrant is responsible for returning it to the OSR post-ceremony.

Australia

In Australia, independent celebrants are known officially as Commonwealth-Registered Celebrants, and are authorised and regulated by the Australian Government. Commonwealth-Registered Celebrants perform all types of ceremonies, 'even if they don't match with their own beliefs and cultures' (Australian Government, 2025).

In 2021, 80.7% of marrying couples in Australia chose a Civil Celebrant to lead their ceremony – a figure that's been steadily rising over the past 20 years, up from 53.1% in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The remaining 19.3% of marrying couples in 2021 chose a Minister of Religion to conduct their wedding – a person who is 'authorised to marry people in line with the rites or customs of a religious organisation or body' (Australian Government, 2025).

There are currently over 9000 Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants in Australia, all performing a much-valued role within their communities. It is also a responsibility they are required to take incredibly seriously.

According to the Australian Government's Code of Practice, a marriage celebrant 'must recognise the social, cultural and legal significance of marriage and the marriage ceremony in the Australian community, and the importance of strong and respectful family relationships'. They must also 'respect the importance of the marriage ceremony to the parties' and 'inform the parties about the range of information and services available to them to enhance and sustain them throughout their relationship' (Australian Government, 2025).

Australian celebrants are required to have achieved a recognised qualification in celebrancy and/or have demonstrated skills in celebrancy in order to be authorised. They must also pay an annual registration fee and complete compulsory ongoing professional development (OPD) every year. Furthermore, a registered celebrant is not allowed to discriminate against marrying couples based on race, religion, sex or gender.

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7. The Proposed Model for Regulating Independent Celebrants

The Law Commission, while leaving the ultimate decision up to Parliament, makes some specific suggestions for how independent celebrants could be incorporated into the new legal framework. This follows a very similar framework to those already operating in other common-law jurisdictions.

It is proposed that those wishing to become authorised independent officiants would apply to the General Register Office (GRO). The GRO would have a process in place to assess if the applicant is a 'fit and proper person' for this role.

Once approved, the independent officiant would be required to pay an annual registration fee, undergo training on the legal aspects of their role, and comply with a code of conduct. As with other jurisdictions that follow this model, the GRO would hold a list of authorised officiants and have a continuing professional development and complaints process in place to ensure that quality is maintained.

Importantly, independent celebrants would operate alongside registrars within the 'civil weddings' (rather than 'belief weddings') category. This would provide a key distinction between independent celebrants and humanist celebrants, and would make independent officiants subject to the same regulations as registrars. The key difference being that as self-employed individuals working under the GRO, independent celebrants would have more time to invest in getting to know their couples and creating personalised ceremonies. They would also offer more flexibility, not being required to conduct several weddings per day as many registrars have no choice but to do. This would greatly reduce the burden on local authority registrars.

This proposal was supported by the vast majority of consultation respondents:

> *"A very substantial majority of consultees supported this proposal, noting that it would ensure standards were upheld and that the General Register Office was the appropriate organisation to exercise these functions."*
>
> **Law Commission, 2022**

Ongoing training and professionalism is rightly seen as being highly important within the recommendations, with the Law Commission proposing that the Registrar General should determine the content of both initial and ongoing training. It suggests that such training could be delivered either by the GRO or delegated to another organisation overseen by the GRO. In the event of an independent officiant not engaging with the ongoing training within the required period, de-authorisation would be automatic. This would be upheld by the celebrant's authorisation status being checked when a couple gives notice of their marriage.

The Law Commission also proposes a model that would prevent independent officiants from acting with any conflict of interest, however they did not think it necessary to introduce a set or capped fee for services offered. Rather, it recommends that the rules applied to nominated officiants from belief bodies (such as humanists) should also be applied to independent officiants, given that both types of officiant would be self-employed and entitled to make a living from their role.

> *"We also note that under our scheme, the potential to make a profit would not be restricted to independent officiants: nominated officiants would not be precluded from making a profit, so long as they did not do so in a way that subordinated their beliefs to commercial interests."*
>
> **Law Commission, 2022**

More details on the suggested model for independent officiants and the specific proposals made in recommendations 23 and 24 can be found on pages 163-176 of the Law Commission's final report (Law Commission, 2022).

8. Legal and Policy Considerations

The Law Commission has provided a clear and principled framework for law reform that includes independent officiants. Its proposal to regulate officiants rather than premises offers the flexibility needed to include a wide range of celebrants. It would allow the UK Government to authorise officiants who meet specified criteria, such as training, accreditation, insurance and ongoing oversight.

Inclusion of independent celebrants within this framework is both legally feasible and ethically necessary. The European Convention on Human Rights protects freedom of thought, conscience and religion, therefore the state should not favour particular belief systems – such as Humanism – over others. Any licensing scheme that includes humanist celebrants must also include independent celebrants who can meet the same professional standards.

It is of course necessary to ensure that anyone authorised to conduct a marriage ceremony is a 'fit and proper person', engaging in the required level of training and ongoing professional development. The legislative framework would therefore establish a robust and accountable process for authorising celebrants, which could include criminal record checks, mandatory training, continuing professional development, a code of conduct and a complaints mechanism. Independent celebrants are already engaged in such practices through professional associations and would be well-placed to comply with such a statutory regime.

Allowing independent celebrants to conduct legal marriages would also help to ease the administrative burden on local authority registrars, particularly in areas with high demand. It would reduce the need for couples to split their ceremony into legal and symbolic components and, ultimately, increase public satisfaction with the marriage process.

This reform could also provide an economic boost for England and Wales. Meeting the diverse needs of citizens would surely incentivise a greater number of couples to marry, while the regulation of independent officiants would trigger an ongoing injection of funds into the wedding industry through the registration fees payable to the GRO.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations for Parliament

Legal reform of wedding law in England and Wales presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to modernise an archaic system and make it truly representative of the society it serves.

Independent celebrants play a vital role in meeting the needs of diverse couples who seek a personalised and meaningful wedding ceremony. Their legal recognition is a necessary step in preventing further discrimination and achieving the inclusivity, fairness and freedom of choice that the Law Commission's report envisions.

Specifically, the legal recognition of independent celebrants following recommendations 23 and 24 of the Law Commission report would:

- bring the law of England and Wales in line with several common-law jurisdictions in which this scheme is already working well
- remove discrimination from our wedding laws by accommodating all couples within a fair and simple legal structure
- validate the needs of the multitude of couples who already choose to work with independent celebrants
- allow mixed-faith couples to hold legally binding weddings that incorporate both sets of beliefs
- accommodate couples who wish to have a personalised ceremony without the need to identify with a 'belief category'
- ease the burden on registrars, many of whom are having to conduct several weddings per day
- allow independent celebrants who are already professionally trained and active to continue providing the valuable service they offer to couples.

It is clear from the Law Commission consultation and academic research that the inclusion of independent celebrants is overwhelmingly supported, both by marrying couples and by wedding professionals. It is also clear that independent celebrants welcome the introduction of GRO regulation, which would give couples far more choice over the content of their civil ceremony, while easing the existing burden on registrars.

By embracing reform that includes independent celebrants, Parliament can help to ensure that *every* couple in England and Wales has the right to a legal marriage ceremony that respects their rights and reflects their unique beliefs, outlooks and values.

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Recommendations for Parliament

In light of the above, Members of Parliament are urged to support the following steps:

- Parliament should adopt the Law Commission's recommendations in full, particularly the shift from regulating wedding venues to regulating officiants. This is the linchpin of a more inclusive and modern system.
- Legislation should explicitly include independent celebrants within the category of authorised civil officiants, as per recommendations 23 and 24. This would ensure that couples who do not identify with a specific group can still access a legally recognised, meaningful wedding ceremony, removing discrimination between belief and non-belief identities.
- The UK Government should introduce an authorisation system for independent celebrants that ensures quality, professionalism and public accountability. Such a system would be managed by the General Register Office and regulation should be as stringent as that proposed for religious and humanist officiants, ensuring professionalism across the board.
- The state should invest in public awareness campaigns to inform couples of their new rights and choices under the reformed system. It should also work closely with professional celebrant organisations to support implementation and uphold standards.

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