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OPENING UP CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS TO OPPOSITE SEX COUPLES

Thank you for contacting me about the future of civil partnerships.

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 had a specific focus on extending marriage to same-sex couples who could not previously marry. The Act did, however, stipulate that there should be a review of civil partnerships in England and Wales.

The Government carried out a full public consultation on the future and operation of civil partnership in 2014, receiving almost 11,500 responses, during which a range of views were expressed. The majority of respondents were against broadening civil partnerships to include opposite sex couples. In 2016 the decision not to extend civil partnerships to opposite sex couples was subject to judicial review that found the current system does not discriminate against heterosexual couples. I am encouraged that the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against the High Court judgment and confirmed that the current approach is lawful.

Some people have expressed concern that the continued availability of civil partnerships for only same sex couples could result in inequality and unfairness for opposite sex couples. On the other hand, many feel that now marriage is available for all couples the need for civil partnerships falls away. There is, of course, the option for all those in a civil partnership to convert it into a marriage, however I recognise that not all couples in civil partnerships wish to do this. I believe it is sensible for the Government to get a sense of the impact of extending marriage to same sex couples, before deciding on the way forward for civil partnerships.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP