

NSS welcomes legalisation of outdoor weddings in England & Wales

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The National Secular Society has welcomed moves to permanently allow outdoor weddings in England and Wales.

The government has today [announced](#) it will indefinitely legalise measures introduced last summer during the Covid-19 pandemic allowing outdoor civil weddings and partnerships. The measures were relaxed to allow for more guests while social distancing measures were in place.

Reforms to religious ceremonies will be made "in due course", the government said.

A consultation found 96% of respondents backed making this change permanent, while 93% supported extending it to religious weddings.

The NSS also [backed](#) both proposals as "stepping stones" towards [broader reforms](#) to wedding law proposed by the Law Commission last January. The Law Commission's report into the consultation on its proposals is due to be published in July.

The NSS [campaigns](#) for greater freedom and equality in marriage laws for people of all religions and beliefs.

Justice Minister Tom Pursglove MP said: "A wedding is one of the most important days in a person's life and it is right that couples should have greater choice in how they celebrate their special occasion.

"These reforms will allow couples to hold more personalised ceremonies and provide a welcome boost for the wedding sector."

Prior to the measures adopted during the pandemic, laws in England and Wales only permitted weddings to take place indoors at approved premises for civil ceremonies, or places of worship registered for marriage.

The only exception was for Jewish and Quaker weddings, which can be held anywhere.

The law change will only apply to premises with linked outdoor areas. Venues will still be subject to many requirements to register as a premises for weddings.

NSS head of policy and research Megan Manson said: "This is excellent news. Both religious and non-religious people in England and Wales are united in their support for greater freedom for couples to marry where they wish – and the government has listened to them.

"Allowing outdoor marriages is an important step towards modernising our archaic and unfair marriage laws, which treat people differently according to their religion or belief."

"We strongly encourage the government to build on these progressive reforms by adopting the proposals outlined by the Law Commission to make our wedding laws fit for the 21st century."

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