



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX

11th June 2012

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham St
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary,

Response to Consultation on "Equal Civil Marriage"

I attach a response from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to your consultation document on the government's proposals to redefine the legal definition of marriage to include the civil union of same-sex couples.

The consultation document makes clear that the Government is principally concerned to elicit views on how legislative change could best be achieved and not with whether or not such change should happen. It is of serious concern to us that this proposal, which has such immense social importance for the stability of our society and which has significant implications for the unique institution of marriage and of family life, should be proposed on this basis and with such limited argument. These are issues of great magnitude with far reaching consequences for how our society sees itself well into the future.

As the consultation document has not set out many of the issues to which the Government's proposals will give rise, we are taking the opportunity of our response to raise them as matters of public concern, and we have not confined ourselves to the specific questions set out in the consultation document.

In the interest of upholding the uniqueness of marriage as a civil institution for the common good of society, we strongly urge the Government not to proceed with legislative proposals which will "enable all couples, regardless of their gender to have a civil marriage ceremony".

Yours sincerely

Archbishop Peter Smith

Vice-President, Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales
Chair of the Department for Christian Responsibility and Citizenship