

Q&A during Guides for Brides Live Video

We're getting married this year. Will these proposals affect our wedding?

No. The proposals are still under consultation and have **not become law**. Existing legal requirements, including venues, registrars and notice periods, remain exactly the same, so couples should continue planning as normal.

We've already booked our registrar. If the law changes, can we cancel and get a refund?

Nothing has changed yet, so existing bookings remain in place. Any cancellation or refund would be subject to your registrar or local authority's terms and conditions, not the consultation itself.

When could the new law come into force?

There is currently **no confirmed implementation date**. The consultation closes on **24 September**, after which the Government will consider responses before deciding whether to introduce legislation. Any changes will depend on Parliamentary time.

We're getting married in 2028. Should we wait before booking?

No. There is no confirmed timeline for reform, and existing authorised venues are expected to remain relevant. Waiting could mean losing your preferred venue or date.

If I book an independent celebrant for a future wedding, will they be able to legally marry us?

Not necessarily. If the reforms are introduced, celebrants would still need to become authorised independent officiants and meet any new regulatory requirements. Until then, couples should continue planning under the current legal framework.

Could these reforms make planning a wedding simpler?

Yes. One of the biggest proposed changes is removing the reliance on registrar availability for licensed venues, giving couples greater flexibility when choosing ceremony times and locations.

Will couples have more freedom to personalise their ceremony?

Yes. The proposals would allow much greater flexibility in ceremony content, including simplified legal wording for civil ceremonies and more scope for personal elements, provided they meet the proposed dignity requirements.

Would handfasting or other symbolic rituals become legally recognised?

Potentially. The consultation proposes that, for some belief ceremonies, symbolic actions such as handfasting could become the legal expression of consent rather than spoken words. This remains under consultation.

We're nervous about public speaking. Will the reforms help?

Potentially, yes. The proposed legal wording is much shorter and allows slight variations if someone stumbles or has difficulty speaking. Celebrants can also continue supporting couples with rehearsal, coaching and practical adjustments.

Would weddings on boats become legal?

Potentially. The proposals would allow weddings on inland waterways, within UK territorial waters and on eligible UK-registered cruise ships, subject to dignity and safety requirements.

We're planning a destination wedding. Does this affect us?

It could. Couples marrying abroad often complete the legal paperwork in England or Wales before travelling. The reforms could allow that legal ceremony to be conducted by an authorised celebrant in a location of the couple's choosing rather than requiring a register office or licensed venue.

Will outdoor weddings still need contingency plans?

Yes. Even if outdoor ceremonies become more widely available, practical considerations such as weather, accessibility and guest comfort will remain essential. Venues will continue to play an important role in providing infrastructure and contingency planning.

I'm a wedding venue owner. Will I need a new licence?

The consultation proposes a system of **pre-authorised venues** rather than the current licensing process, although the details are still being developed.

Will anyone be able to call themselves a celebrant and legally conduct weddings?

No. While the title "celebrant" would remain unregulated, anyone conducting legally binding ceremonies as an independent officiant would need to meet new regulatory requirements and satisfy a "fit and proper" test.

Will independent celebrants finally be legally recognised?

The proposals indicate that **independent celebrants could become authorised to conduct legally binding weddings**, alongside humanist celebrants and other recognised officiants. Many in the industry see this as one of the most significant proposed changes, although the final details are still subject to consultation.