



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Sammy Wilson MP MLA
DFP Private Office
Craigantlet Buildings
Stoney Road
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SX

11 June 2012

Dear Minister,

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is required, pursuant to Section 69 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to advise the Executive on legislative and other measures that ought to be taken to protect human rights. In accordance with this function I am writing in relation to the issue of equal access to marriage.

By virtue of not being an excepted matter under Schedule 2 or a reserved matter under Schedule 3 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the issue of marriage falls within the competency of the Northern Ireland Assembly and more specifically the Department of Finance and Personnel.

As you will be aware the UK Government is currently undertaking a consultation on the issue of equal civil marriage in order to consider how the ban on same-sex couples access to a civil marriage can be removed. The Scottish Government has also recently completed a consultation on the same issue and further response is awaited on the results.

The Commission is conscious of these developments in both Scotland and England and Wales, and the possible implications that any legislative change may have on Northern Ireland. The Commission has responded to the UK Government Equalities Office consultation and I enclose a copy of our submission for your reference. Chief Commissioner: Professor Michael O'Flaherty ■ Director: Virginia McVea



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

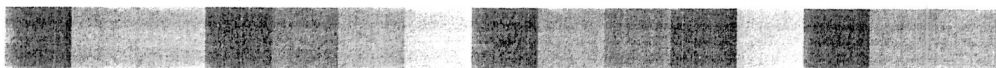
The Commission welcomes any further engagement on the issue of equal access to marriage and stands prepared to provide further advice should this be required.

Yours sincerely,

Professor O'Flaherty
Chief Commissioner

Encl. (1)

Chief Commissioner: Professor Michael O'Flaherty ■ Director: Virginia McVea



Temple Court ■ 39 North Street ■ Belfast BT1 1NA ■ Tel: (028) 9024 3987 ■ Fax: (028) 9024 7844

Textphone: (028) 9024 9066 ■ SMS Text: 07786 202075 ■ Email: information@nihrc.org

Online: nihrc.org ■ twitter.com/nihrc ■ facebook.com/nihrc ■ youtube.com/nihrc