

New laws on marriage come into effect today



The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 came into effect today and this means that any couple of the same sex can either convert their civil partnership to a marriage or they can give the requisite 15 days notice of intention to get married. The first ceremonies will take place on Hogmanay 2014.

We met two couples at Leith Registrars this morning, firstly Stacey and Georgie who have been together 11 years and who will be married on 31 December, and secondly Geoff and Tony who are now officially married.

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS Same sex marriage legal from today](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Stacey and Georgie will be married at Victoria Park Hotel in Edinburgh by humanist celebrant Fiona Thomas.

Stacey said : “Regardless of your gender you should be able to marry who you want to and for us it is really important. When we had our civil partnership we did that because we have children and it was important for each of us to have legal rights to the other’s children. At that point it was the next best thing, but for us to be able to be a legally recognised married couple is a massive step.”

Stacey has two teenage daughters and the couple also have a 9 year-old son. They wanted to simply fill in the forms to convert their relationship to a marriage but the children were adamant that there had to be a party. They are getting married in the evening with about 90 guests present. Stacey explained

she will be wearing a dress and Georgie will be wearing her full kilt regalia.

Fiona Thomas is the celebrant who will conduct the ceremony by which Stacey and Georgie will become a married couple. She said : "It is a big step towards a fairer and equal society. So for us we are really proud to be involved today. We have had a chat together and have discussed their ceremony. All humanist ceremonies allow the couple to write their own vows and tell their own story. the ceremony will be unique to them. I will conduct the ceremony on the day and I look forward to what will I am sure will be a wonderful occasion. Our services have been offered free to those who responded to our recent call to be among the first."

Fiona also explained that this is a transformative step for the Humanist Society Scotland as they have now been granted permanent status as wedding celebrants under the new rules.



Geoff Pearson and Tony Cairns have been together for 39 years and this morning they converted their civil partnership to a marriage. They had a big party last time and decided only to do the paperwork this time. Geoff said: "It is quite good, because now we are quite dull. We used to be a gay couple that people talked of in hushed tones. Now we are just like everybody else, and on the same register as everyone else getting married this year!"

They were the first gay couple at Leith Registrars to get married this morning at 9.20am but we wonder if they were the first married couple in Edinburgh under the new legislation?

When The Scottish Government announced the dates in October, the then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Alex Neil, said:

"It is wonderful that same sex couples can now begin to make

plans to have their marriage just as any other couple can.

“This historic legislation had overwhelming support across the Scottish Parliament, demonstrating to the world how importantly Scotland views equality.

“That support means that, from 31 December, same sex couples who want to show their love and commitment to each other could get married in front of family and friends at a ceremony they choose together.

“This will be an important signal that our nation is absolutely committed to the same rights for all our citizens.

“It will be a proud and no doubt emotional day for many, and I, for one, can’t wait.”

The Equality Network, the Scottish lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) equality charity welcomed the announcement.

Tom French, Policy and Public Affairs Coordinator for the Equality Network, said:

“We are very pleased that after years of campaigning for equal marriage it is now just weeks away from becoming a reality. Today’s milestone announcement means that same-sex couples across Scotland will be able to set a date and start planning their weddings. With the first ceremonies set to take place on Hogmanay, Scotland can be proud that we will bring in the new year as a fairer and more equal country.

“The 31st December 2014 will be a date that is remembered for many years to come, and a profoundly emotional day for those couples who celebrate their commitment to each other, and for all LGBTI people who grew up in a country where being gay was still criminalised until 1981. Scotland is now a leader on LGBTI equality, with one of the most progressive equal marriage laws in the world. There is still more to do to

ensure full equality in people's day-to-day lives, but this year we have taken a huge leap forward towards creating the fair and equal Scotland we all want to see."

