

Tim Farron: 'I do not think gay sex is a sin'

Tim Farron has opened up publicly for the first time about his Christian faith and in a candid interview with the BBC has said that he does not believe gay sex is a sin.

The Liberal Democrat leader has very clearly said he does not believe being gay is a sin, and nor is gay sex.

He makes no secret of his private faith but believes political leaders should not make theological pronouncements or declare what people's personal faith should be.

But why is he speaking out now? Whilst he does not believe politicians should declare what is or isn't sin he was concerned some people were forming an impression of him that is not accurate.

Tim's impressive LGBT+ record

Mr Farron has an impressive record on LGBT+ issues, both at home and abroad.

At Home

PrEP

The Liberal Democrats believe that Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) available on the NHS to those at high risk of HIV infection.

Norman Lamb, as Health Spokesperson and with the full support of the Leader has supported this campaign in and out of Parliament.

Gay Blood Ban

In 2014 Tim Farron added his name in support of a Private Members Bill [Blood Donation (Equality)].

In 2015, Tim endorsed the Freedom to Donate campaign and strongly welcomed the review of the ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood.

Tim has said that the ban is "scientifically and socially outdated, deeply and unjustly stigmatising, and urgently need to change."

In 2016 Tim tabled a parliamentary bill that would end the ban on blood donations from men who have sex with men.

The Liberal Democrats have been campaigning for the end of the blanket ban since 2006 and in Coalition in 2011 we won a partial victory which removed the restriction on gay men – but only if they had been celibate for 12 months.

Turing Law

Thousands of gay and bisexual men convicted of now abolished sexual offences have been posthumously pardoned thanks to Liberal Democrat pressure.

Liberal Democrat peer John Sharkey, whose Private Member's Bill was instrumental in securing a pardon for Alan Turing, reached an agreement with the Government in November 2016 to grant a posthumous pardon to thousands of gay and bisexual men convicted under long-abolished sexual offence laws.

Tim Farron said: "The Liberal Democrats continue to be the strongest voice on equality in Parliament.

"Although it comes too late for those convicted, the friends and relatives of the thousands of people who suffered under this unfair and discriminatory law will now have a weight lifted off their shoulders."

X-passports

Gender is listed on all passports issued worldwide that meet International Standards. The use of "X", meaning "Unspecified" as a gender marker is enshrined in the standards, but few countries currently issue new passports with these markers.

An increasing number of people in the UK identify as neither male nor female, or live part time in various gender roles. As well as giving people the ability to identify as they choose and not have the state impose an identity upon them, a perceived mismatch between gender roles and official ID can cause problems dealing with official organisations such as the DWP, Police or Border Agency.

Julian Huppert during the Coalition and Norman Lamb since have advocated for the introduction of x – passports.

Tim has said: "Our party conference introduced the Transgender and Intersex Charter with astounding support from party members. This called for the phased removal of gender markers in documentation unless it is absolutely necessary, and the introduction of an 'X' gender option and 'Mx.' title option on the remainder and a streamlined simplification of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to allow individuals to change their legal gender at will amongst other things. And we are leading the way, our own party documentation is changing to phase out gender wherever possible. Something as small as not having to choose whether to tick the male or female box on applications can make a huge difference. In the last Parliament we desperately tried to get the Tories to agree to introducing gender neutral passports. This is not as radical an idea as it might seem – other countries like Australia have already introduced it and it is accepted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. It is frankly ridiculous that even on something this small the Tories have refused to act."

Trans Prisoners

Liberal Democrats have strongly advocated on behalf of the rights of individual trans-prisoners. Tim Farron has been at the forefront of this work

in Parliament. In 2015 he took up Tara Hudson's case, he said:

"There is a clear need for a policy change in this area. It looks like the Ministry of Justice needs be dragged kicking into the 21st century.

"As I understand it, Tara has lived all her adult life as a female. I worry potential risk of harm to her in a male prison which was deemed to have levels of violence 'considerably higher than in similar prisons' by the prisons inspectorate." –

Simplifying the Gender Recognition Act

During Tim's first conference as party leader the Liberal Democrats voted in favour of simplifying the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to allow individuals to change their legal gender at will and for allowing changes to government-issued documentation on the basis of gender reassignment to be provided free of charge.

The Spousal Veto

Before England and Wales introduced same-sex marriage, it was necessary for married trans people to end their marriages in to gain legal gender recognition. Around 30 couples were forced to annul their marriages in this way. They have described it as like having their marriages "stolen".

Thankfully this is no longer the case. However, instead, when a married trans person seeks gender recognition, their spouse must give permission. If they do not give permission "for the marriage to continue" then the trans person is blocked from having their gender recognised. The marriage continues to exist.

The Liberal Democrats would believe the law should be reviewed with the intention of removing them."

Sex Education to include teaching about LGBT+ relationships and rights

The Liberal Democrats have long campaigned to make sex education compulsory in all schools. This was repeatedly blocked by the Conservatives during the Coalition government. The Government has finally capitulated thanks to pressure both internally and externally.

Tim has previously said that children must have "access to good sexual health and relationship education and give parents the help and support they need to talk to their children about this issue."

Liberal Democrat peers recently attempted to amend the Children and Social Work Bill to ensure that sex education would be taught irrespective of the religious background of the school

Deportation of LGBT+ individuals

Liberal Democrats have a manifesto commitment to stop the deportation of people to countries where their sexual orientation or gender identification

means that they risk imprisonment, torture, or execution. Over the years Liberal Democrat MPs and Peers have raised the plight of LGBT+ facing deportation.

Abroad

Chechnya

Tim Farron was the first party leader to come out against the outrageous homophobic purge in Chechnya. Tim said: "These reports from Chechnya are truly horrifying, and represent an extreme manifestation of increasing homophobic brutality and intolerance in Putin's Russia.

"The UK government must strongly condemn this disgusting violence, and use every possibly opportunity to raise this with the Russian government, as well as in the UN and other international bodies.

"The UK must work with those who share our values to stop the mindless targeting of the LGBT community, which is still prevalent in too many countries across the world.

"Only through defending universal human rights will we ever hope to achieve a world in which every person can live, work and flourish without discrimination.

"It is disappointing that Boris Johnson has failed to stand up for these people by not visiting Russia after Trump told him to stay at home."

Russia

Tim laid the following EDM: "That this House deplores the recent legislation passed in Russia banning the promotion of non-traditional relationships; notes that this is akin to the former Section 28 legislation in the UK; further notes that the new law appears to be part of a wider crackdown on the freedoms of the LGBT community in Russia; believes that we must listen to those Russian LGBT groups and activists who urge very strongly that boycotts in any form or nature, from sporting, like the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, to drinking vodka, are not supported by them and only increase the likelihood of harm towards LGBT Russians; and calls on the Government to work through international and diplomatic channels, like the G20, the Council of Europe and the International Olympic Committee and commercial and business interests already involved in sponsoring the 2014 Winter Olympics, alongside indigenous LGBT campaign groups based in Russia itself, to stand up for the human rights of the Russian LGBT community"

Speaking about the EDM he said: "As a long-time supporter of Amnesty International I believe human rights are inalienable and something we must protect and extend throughout the world. The recent laws passed in Russia are the equivalent of the awful section 28 laws we had in the UK. I hope the government will use every avenue of diplomatic pressure possible to make them drop these laws, this is an area we can take a stand and I hope we will."

Uganda and Nigeria

Tim signed this EDM on LGBT rights in Uganda and Nigeria

Lib Dem MEPs also wrote to the European Commission urging for action to be taken over new anti-homosexual laws introduced in Uganda