# Nicola Sturgeon reflects on ten years of same-sex marriage in Scotland



Former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has spoken of the landmark legislation that allowed same-sex couples to marry in Scotland, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act, which became effective on December 16, 2014. Sturgeon considers the introduction of this law to be among the top five achievements of the Scottish Parliament.

Sturgeon clarified that she does not view the legislation as a personal triumph, but rather as a significant marker of Holyrood's legacy. “It’s something I look back and take pride in,” she stated. The legislation received overwhelming support in the Scottish Parliament at the time, passing with a vote of 105 to 18. Sturgeon highlighted the magnitude of this parliamentary majority, asserting that it represented “the biggest parliamentary majority there had been of all the countries that had introduced equal marriage.”

The legalisation of same-sex marriage in Scotland enabled couples in civil partnerships to convert their status into marriage from the end of December 2014, and notable celebrations included Sturgeon and Patrick Harvie, the co-leader of the Scottish Greens, acting as witnesses for one of the first same-sex couples to marry.

Reflecting on the debates surrounding the legislation, Sturgeon acknowledged that while the issue was controversial, the discourse around it was civilized compared to prior legislative debates, such as the repeal of Section 28 in 2000. She stated, “I think it made Scotland a better place, a more inclusive place with equality much more a reality, saying to gay couples that their love was as valid as anybody else’s and could be celebrated in the same way.”

With a considerable rise in same-sex marriages since the law's enactment, as of September 2024, there have been 10,138 same-sex marriages recorded, with Registrar General Alison Byrne congratulating the initial couples who will soon mark their decade of marriage under the new law.

Nevertheless, Sturgeon expressed concern over recent “pushback” against rights for various communities, specifically noting a trend towards divisive and toxic debates surrounding equality issues. She underscored the need for continual advocacy for equality and inclusion, stating, “We’re talking here of almost a global phenomenon where debate on all manner of issues has become much more divisive and toxic.”

Scottish Green co-leader Patrick Harvie also reflected on the importance of equal marriage, labelling it “one of the greatest achievements for equality in the devolution era.” He cautioned against regressions in the progress made, particularly highlighting the struggles faced by the transgender community. He affirmed his belief that Scotland must continue to move forward in LGBTQ+ rights, echoing a sentiment that history has shown struggles for rights can face resurgence.

Alex Cole-Hamilton, the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, described the passing of the equal marriage legislation as a “landmark moment of progress” for Scotland. He emphasized the importance of ongoing advocacy to ensure the rights and freedoms gained are not taken for granted.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/marriage_and_civil_partnership_scotland_act_2014_the_equality_and_human_rights_implications_for_marriage_and_the.pdf> - This document explains the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, including its extension of marriage to same-sex couples and the conversion of civil partnerships into marriages.
* <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/5/notes/division/3/1/1> - This page details the amendments made by the Act, specifically the repeal of the legal impediment against same-sex marriages and the allowance for same-sex marriages regardless of the parties' domicile.
* <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s5/civil-partnership-scotland-bill> - This source provides context on the legislative history, including the 2014 Act that allowed same-sex couples to marry and the subsequent Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill to extend civil partnerships to mixed-sex couples.
* <https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/publications/now-the-dust-has-settled-the-marriage-and-civil-partnership-scotl> - This publication assesses the impact of the Act, including making marriage gender-neutral and the conversion of civil partnerships into marriages.
* <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/marriage_and_civil_partnership_scotland_act_2014_the_equality_and_human_rights_implications_for_marriage_and_the.pdf> - This document also discusses the implications for religious or belief bodies and their choice to conduct same-sex marriages, aligning with Sturgeon's reflections on the civilized debate.
* <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/5/notes/division/3/1/1> - This source further clarifies the legal framework that enabled same-sex marriages in Scotland, supporting the historical context provided by Sturgeon.
* <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s5/civil-partnership-scotland-bill> - This page highlights the legislative support and the broader context of equality legislation in Scotland, including the involvement of various political leaders.
* <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/marriage_and_civil_partnership_scotland_act_2014_the_equality_and_human_rights_implications_for_marriage_and_the.pdf> - The document explains the rights and protections afforded by the Act, including the ability to change legal gender without ending a marriage, which aligns with the discussions on ongoing equality issues.
* <https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/publications/now-the-dust-has-settled-the-marriage-and-civil-partnership-scotl> - This publication provides an academic perspective on the impact of the Act, supporting the reflections on its significance and the ongoing challenges in LGBTQI+ rights.