

Millionaire Gay Couple Sues to Force Church Wedding

Millionaire gay couple the Drewitt-Barlows have confirmed they have launched a legal challenge to the right of churches to opt out of gay weddings.

In fresh comments published by the *Chelmsford Weekly News* in the U.K. today, Barrie Drewitt-Barlow said legal action had started.

"We've launched a challenge to the government's decision to allow some religious groups to opt out of marrying same-sex couples," he said.

"We feel we have the right as parishioners in our village to utilize the church we attend to get married.

"It is no reflection on our local church, who have been nothing but supportive towards us. We understand their hands are tied by a higher group of people within the church."

Earlier this month, Drewitt-Barlow said he and his civil partner, Tony, would go to court to force gay weddings on churches.

He said at the time, "The only way forward for us now is to make a challenge in the courts against the church.

"It is a shame that we are forced to take Christians into a court to get them to recognize us."

He added, "It upsets me because I want it so much—a big lavish ceremony, the whole works. I just don't think it is going to happen straight away.

"As much as people are saying this is a good thing, I am still not getting what I want."

A government bill legalizing same-sex marriage in the U.K. cleared Parliament earlier this year, and the first same-sex weddings are expected in 2014.

The legislation allows churches to opt out of performing gay weddings, and it specifically protects the Church of England.

However, top human rights lawyer Aidan O'Neill says protection for the Anglican Church is "eminently challengeable" in court.

A copy of O'Neill's legal advice was sent to the prime minister in January, but Mr. Cameron nevertheless proceeded with the legislation.