



28th November 2018

Dept of Justice and Equality,
51 St. Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2,

Consultation on Seasonal Clock Changes- Submission from the Western Development Commission

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Western Development Commission would like to make a very brief submission to the consultation on seasonal clock changes. The WDC is a statutory agency which operates under the aegis of the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The WDC's aim is to foster and promote the economic and social development of the Western Region¹.

The main issue of concern to us is that in parts of the Western Region sunrise and sunset times can be up to 15 minutes after those in Dublin (for which you provided the data in consultation document). This means that in mid-winter, the mornings are darker for longer in the West (although of course we also have daylight for slightly longer in the evening).

According to your consultation document sunrise on 20 December in Dublin is currently 08:37 on 'wintertime'. At the end of December in some places in Mayo, Galway and Donegal sunrise is at 08:58. We would be concerned that if there was a decision to remain on 'summertime' all year in parts of the Western Region sunrise would not be until almost 10:00 in late December (09:58 in both Achill and Gweedore, for example, see <https://www.timeanddate.com/>).

In this situation, while the brighter evenings would of course be very welcome in the summer time, we would be concerned that early morning travel and activities in the winter would be more difficult. In addition they could potentially be more dangerous when the weather is cold as frost and ice will thaw later if 'summertime' were to be in place for the whole year. This is of particular concern as the Western Region is largely rural and many journeys are taken on untreated regional and local roads.

We are conscious, however, that if most of Europe were to opt to stay on 'summertime' and we were to remain on 'wintertime' there would be a two hour time difference, which could have some impact on business activity and social interaction.

¹ Donegal, Sligo Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare

This consultation asks three important questions to which we respond below:

1. Do you want to stop changing the clocks twice a year?

While there are some negative aspects associated with the clocks changing twice yearly, it has been an effective policy to ensure that people have the best opportunity to make use of daylight. We would also note that while the EU is considering stopping the practice, as one of the more northerly member states, the effect of the change will be greater for us than for many parts of Europe.

2. If the clock changes stop, do you want to remain on summer time or winter time?

Given the points we have made above, particularly in relation to winter mornings we believe it would be preferable to remain on winter time.

3. What would your opinion be if this proposal were to give rise to different time zones between Ireland and Northern Ireland?

If this change were to give rise to a different time zone in Northern Ireland (and in the rest of the UK) we believe that this would cause difficulties both for business and for social interaction. This would particularly be the case for those close to the border but would affect everyone as there are so many links between Ireland and the UK.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to make this submission. Please do get in touch if you have any queries or would like to discuss it further.

Regards

Dr Helen McHenry

Policy Analyst,
Western Development Commission