



Consumer Focus Scotland Response to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's Call for Evidence on Changes to Daylight Saving: Implications for Agriculture and Rural Communities.

January 2012

About Consumer Focus Scotland

Consumer Focus Scotland is the independent consumer champion for Scotland. We are rooted in over 30 years of work promoting the interests of consumers, particularly those who experience disadvantage in society.

Part of Consumer Focus, our structure reflects the devolved nature of the UK. Consumer Focus Scotland works on issues that affect consumers in Scotland, while at the same time feeding into and drawing on work done at a GB, UK and European level.

We work to secure a fair deal for consumers in different aspects of their lives by promoting fairer markets, greater value for money, improved customer service and more responsive public services. We represent consumers of all kinds: tenants, householders, patients, parents, energy users, solicitors' clients, postal service users or shoppers.

We aim to influence change and shape policy to reflect the needs of consumers. We do this in an informed way based on the evidence we gather through research and our unique knowledge of consumer issues.

Summary

1. Consumer Focus Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's Call for Evidence into the implications of the proposed changes to daylight saving for rural communities and agriculture.
2. We represent consumers, particularly disadvantaged consumers, in a range of circumstances, including tenants, householders, patients, parents, energy users, solicitors' clients, postal service users, and shoppers. The proposed change to GMT+1 would undoubtedly have an impact on consumers in Scotland in many of these areas, including, but not limited to, the household energy sector.
3. We believe that it is appropriate to consider whether current daylight hours continue to be aligned to the activity patterns of the population. Most of the evidence that does exist relates to an experimental period during which GMT+1 was all year round, carried out some 40 years ago in Great Britain. Given the changes in society since then, it would be helpful to have a wider discussion, together with research on the likely costs and benefits, and on consumers' attitudes and concerns about the issue. In the absence of current evidence, we have limited our response below to discussion of some of the key issues for consumers in Scotland.

Issues and Evidence

4. Any change to GMT+1 would lead to darker mornings in Scotland in winter, and especially around the winter solstice. At that time, sunrise would occur in most major cities in Scotland at approximately 9.30am, but even later in more northerly locations. Darker mornings would, of course, be offset by an additional hour of daylight in the evening.¹
5. Previous opposition to the change to GMT+1 has focused on the impact on Scottish agriculture, the potential increase in road deaths, and other effects of darker winter mornings i.e. commuting to work in the dark.²
6. However, we note that the first two concerns may no longer be justified.
7. Firstly, farming practices have developed to the extent that the National Farmers Union no longer opposes a change to GMT+1 and has adopted a neutral stance.³
8. Secondly, despite the common misconception that road deaths in Scotland rose during the 1968-71 period when clocks were set at GMT+1, subsequent analysis shows that road deaths in Scotland overall actually fell by 8.6% during this period.⁴ Had GMT+1 been implemented in the 1990s, it is therefore

¹ Policy Studies Institute (1993) Time for Change: Setting clocks forward by one hour throughout the year. A new review of the evidence.

² Policy Studies Institute (1993) Time for Change: Setting clocks forward by one hour throughout the year. A new review of the evidence.

³ <http://www.nfuonline.com/News/Should-we-change-the-clocks/>

⁴ Cronin B & Garnsey E (2009) Daylight Savings in GB: Is there evidence in favour of clock time on GMT (revised)

estimated that there would have been a net reduction in the number people killed or seriously injured of 41 persons per year.⁵ Following from this, research carried out on behalf of the University of Cambridge suggests that the change to GMT+1 would result in approximately £200 million of savings to the NHS each year, from the reduction in road injuries and deaths.⁶

9. That said, statistics in the 2005 Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' Position Paper⁷, containing an analysis of the available data from the 1968-71 experiment, showed that there was an increase in the approximate number of deaths and serious injuries in Northern Scotland of around 20 or 9% compared with the number expected under GMT. It may be, however, that given changes in the intervening period, such as improved road safety measures, that this would not be the case were any change to be introduced now.

Possible Benefits

10. There are suggestions that there could be substantial benefits to consumers from such a change, not just in Scotland, but throughout Great Britain. These include a positive impact on leisure activities, health and well-being; boosting tourism by allowing attractions to open for longer; and creating more independence for vulnerable and elderly consumers.⁸
11. A number of studies have suggested that introducing an additional hour of daylight in the evening would lead to considerable energy savings each year. The 1993 Policy Studies Institute report *Time for Change* estimated annual savings on consumers' electricity bills throughout the UK of £260 million.⁹ This figure would now be significantly higher, based on current energy costs. The report suggested that these savings would be made through a combination of reduced demand for fuel, lighting and heating.
12. Further, research commissioned by the University of Cambridge suggests that changing to GMT+1 would reduce energy demand peaks. This would result in a reduction in the use of reserve power and generation costs to cover peak demand times.¹⁰ Any reductions in the costs of generation would not necessarily be passed on to consumers, however.
13. We note that all of these potential benefits remain theoretical; the literature reviewing previous experience does not appear to consider these issues.

⁵ Broughton J & Stone M (1998) A New assessment of the likely effects on road accidents of adopting GMT+1/GMT+2 regime, Transport Research Laboratory

⁶ Cronin B & Garnsey E (2009) Daylight Savings in GB: Is there evidence in favour of clock time on GMT (revised)

⁷ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Single/Double Summer Time Position Paper – May 2003 – Revised September 2004, Updated October 2005.

⁸ Policy Studies Institute (1993) *Time for Change: Setting clocks forward by one hour throughout the year. A new review of the evidence.*

⁹ Policy Studies Institute (1993) *Time for Change: Setting clocks forward by one hour throughout the year. A new review of the evidence.*

¹⁰ Cronin B & Garnsey E (2009) Daylight Savings in GB: Is there evidence in favour of clock time on GMT (revised)

Conclusion

14. The available evidence suggests that two specific concerns expressed in the past have been, at least in part, addressed, although we would note that safety concerns regarding consumers in more northern locations, many of which are remote rural locations, may remain. In addition, clear, if theoretical, advantages for consumers have been identified in relation to reduced energy costs, and their health and well-being.
15. The fact remains, however, that much of Scotland would be waking to longer, darker mornings if GMT+1 were to be introduced, and this would clearly affect Scotland's consumers more generally. We are not aware of any research which would provide an insight into *current* consumers' awareness of, or attitudes towards, the changes proposed.
16. To inform the debate, we believe that research should be carried out into both the likely costs and benefits of any change, and consumers' perceptions of the potential benefits and disadvantages of a move to GMT+1, particularly in Scotland.
17. Such research might also explore alternatives, and the extent to which they would deliver benefits, such as moving the clocks forward earlier in the year than at present.

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