

The promotion of tourism in Wales

AN OUTLINE OF THE POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ADVANCING CLOCKS BY AN ADDITIONAL HOUR IN SUMMER AND WINTER

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This short paper is focused on the implications for tourism in Wales of the adoption of the proposal to advance clocks by one hour in summer and winter. It seeks to provide an impartial review of the likely consequences.

INTRODUCTION

The UK remaining in its present time zone of winter GMT and summer GMT+1 hour has been the subject of public and political debate for over 40 years since the 3-year experiment of maintaining the summer time clock throughout the year was abandoned. Recently, policymakers have been looking at this issue more closely to establish the changes that would be likely to result from achieving a better matching of our waking hours with the available hours of daylight. The source of the problem at present is that during the year we spend on average about five of our waking hours *before* midday — very few of them when it is dark — but nearly half of the ten to eleven of our waking hours *after* midday and before going to bed, when it is dark.

The most widely-discussed proposal is to move clocks forward by an additional hour in both summer and winter. The extra hour of natural light in the latter part of the day would be appreciated on all 365 days of the year whilst, for the great majority of the population, the loss of the hour of daylight in the morning would only be experienced in the winter months. Advocates of the proposal — known as ‘Single Double Summertime’ (SDST) — claim that it would bring many benefits especially in relation to tourism, leisure and health. Opponents are concerned that the effects of the loss of an hour of daylight on winter mornings, notably in terms of mood and problems associated with activity in poor lighting conditions, would be too high a price to pay for the year-round benefits of an extra hour of daylight every evening.

TOURISM IN WALES

Wales has a wide variety of tourist destinations for which it is well suited owing to its distinctive character. This is well borne out by data on the subject. One has only to cite its unique countryside coastline path (to be fully completed in May), including the Pembroke peninsula; its three National Parks, especially Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons; its mediaeval castles, including Caernarfon; its city museums, art galleries and sporting facilities, notably in Cardiff with its Museum of Welsh Life attracting over 600,000 visitors annually; and its annual festivals, such as the Eisteddfod, to realise how extensive are its cultural, historic, recreational and spectator attractions. They explain why so many visitors from other regions of the UK as well as from abroad take their holidays in Wales in spite of its relative geographical inaccessibility compared with other European regions. Moreover, as *every* Welsh county includes many of these attractive destinations, the promotion of Welsh tourism generally is likely to stimulate all their local economies and job creation within them.

The Welsh Assembly Government data show that the UK accounts for over 90% of tourism trips to Wales. Of these, 70% come for a holiday, 20% to visit friends or relatives and 7% for a business trip. Of trips by UK tourists to Wales, about half go to the countryside and small towns or villages. One million trips to Wales are made by overseas tourists each year, with the highest proportion of them coming from the Republic of Ireland, Germany and the USA.

Even excluding indirect value added that occurs from tourist-related activity, tourists spend over £8 million a day on trips in Wales, amounting to around £3 billion a year. It has been calculated that the total contribution of the Wales visitor economy, both from direct and indirect sources, exceeds £6 billion, which is over 13% of total economic activity in Wales.

About 170 thousand people are employed in all tourist and tourist-related industries, about half of them directly in tourism, including employment in hotels and other accommodation (over 80,000 bed spaces), restaurants, bars and nightclubs, cultural and sports facilities, and in other leisure and travel services representing approximately 1 in 8 of the workforce. It is worth noting that this sector of employment has the additional **advantage of providing a whole range of jobs from the highly qualified to the relatively low-skilled, suiting in particular the demand for part-time employment. Over half of those in these industries in Wales work part-time, with employment in them catering** for a much higher proportion of jobs for the less well-skilled, and for women and all adults below the age of 40 — in both the latter instances, close to two-thirds.

THE ROLE OF DAYLIGHT AND TEMPERATURE

In research on ways of promoting tourism in Wales and other regions of the UK, the focus is typically on improving the quality of facilities and on means of travelling to them by road, rail and air. Reference is rarely made to making tourism more attractive by, in effect, extending the 'accessible' daylight hours for most tourist activities as they are daylight-dependent. This is particularly surprising given that to do so would be costless and likely to be highly effective.

On average, there are approximately 16 daylight hours during the summer — about one and a half times those in spring and autumn, and double those in winter. When combined with the figures on tourist activity by season, this suggests strongly that daylight plays a more significant role in influencing the seasonal variation. Given that there is far more tourist activity after lunch compared with the morning, it would often prove worthwhile to lengthen opening hours in this way. Lighter evenings would also hold an additional attraction for tourists in that people on holiday prefer to travel in daylight to and from facilities or outdoor activities — other than, perhaps, clubs, pubs and night-time events.

As tourist activity is sensitive to daylight hours as well as to climate, more visiting takes place in the months of the year when the hours of daylight are longer and

warmer. Previous research by the author of this document has established that setting clocks forward by an additional hour (known as SDST) would add about 300 hours each year at the latter part of the day to the average number of 'accessible' daylight hours. Meteorological Office data reveals that, as the warmer time of day is in the late afternoon and evening than the early morning, setting clocks forward would result in more waking hours, especially of tourists, being spent when temperatures are several degrees higher. Indeed, the timing of most tourist activities reflects this benefit.

The lighter evenings would enable more day trips and weekend breaks for walking, climbing, sailing and other sporting activities to be taken, and accelerate the rapidly growing trend towards off-peak and short-break holidays. The greatest benefits are likely during spring and autumn. A sizeable proportion of all holidays in the UK are now taken in the spring and autumn and, even in winter, the numbers are by no means negligible. Sunset with this clock change would occur in March and November at roughly the same time as it now occurs in April and October. Thus, lighter evenings would be likely to result in some extension of the season by enabling a later finish to the day especially during the 'shoulder' weeks of March/April and September/October, and in those spheres of tourism which are daylight-dependent. The later onset of dusk would allow closing times at some tourist destinations to be extended, and expand opportunities for participatory and spectator sports and recreation later in the day. The change would also allow more return journeys to home or hotel to be made while it is still light. It is very likely too that, over time, visitors from overseas would recognise the added attractions of the lighter evenings when they visit the UK.

PROSPECTS FOR EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM

The clock change would significantly boost tourist employment and would therefore be particularly valuable during a period of low economic growth, if not recession, and of rising unemployment. Furthermore, the Welsh economy would benefit from the additional tax revenues arising from increased earnings by the tourist industry.

A conservative calculation was made in an earlier study by the author of the implications of the clock change in this regard: if only a quarter of the monthly changes in tourist activity is attributed to the temperature difference and the influence of the length of the day for daylight-dependent activity and three-quarters to other factors, such as the time of the year set for traditional holidays, tourist activity (including that of overseas tourists) would be boosted by an average of between 3% and 4%. The fact that tourism contributes a comparatively larger share to the Welsh economy than it does to the UK economy would suggest that the clock change would stimulate investment in tourist facilities in Wales to the extent that it could expect an increase in annual earnings from tourism and related industries of up to £200 million and in the creation of over 6,000 new jobs.

CONCLUSIONS

Putting clocks ahead of the current setting by an additional hour in summer and winter would not only deliver wide benefits for tourism in Wales — as it would in the rest of the UK — but contribute considerable other benefits including a significant increase in leisure during the hours of daylight (and sunlight) and therefore outdoor sports and recreational activity. This would be highly advantageous for public health and for enhancing the quality of life especially that of children and most elderly people fearful of going out after dark. It would also bring about a small reduction in road casualties and in electricity costs. These benefits would only have to be offset by the somewhat depressing effect of the extra hour of darkness on winter mornings.

Whilst grounds cited in support of keeping the present time zone have lost much of their relevance over the last few decades (for instance, the rounding up of cows for milking on dark winter mornings) recognition of the benefits has been regularly confirmed in public opinion polls showing that a very high proportion of the population support the proposed change. Adopting the proposal would appear to be an effective, practical and remarkably easily managed way of better aligning our waking hours with the available daylight during the year.

It can be confidently predicted that the clock change would bring benefits to Wales, including in particular the promotion of tourist activity, on a similar scale to those predicted for the rest of the UK:

- **an increase in annual earnings from tourism and related industries in the region of £200 million;**
- **the creation of over 6,000 new jobs in tourism and related industries;**
- **a significant increase in outdoor sports and recreational activity leading to improved health and a better quality of life for the Welsh population.**

They add up to an exceptionally strong case for adopting the reform, particularly as it can be achieved at no cost to the Exchequer!

*The text of this briefing paper is largely drawn from its author's earlier studies at Policy Studies Institute, including **Making the Most of Daylight Hours, 1988; Time for Change: setting clocks forward by one hour throughout the year, 1993; Making the Most of Daylight Hours: the implications for Scotland, 2010; Deloitte/Oxford Economics, The economic contribution of the visitor economy: UK and the nations, 2010, and the Welsh Economy Research Unit, The Tourist Impact Model for Wales, 2011***