

Thursday, December 15, 2011

"Changes to Daylight Saving: Implications for Agriculture and Rural Communities"

Submission of evidence by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

1. The Background:

- 1.1. RoSPA, one of the world's leading safety organisations, is a charity with a 95-year history and a mission to save lives and reduce injuries by preventing accidents on the road, at work, in the home and at leisure. See www.rospa.com for more.
- 1.2. For decades, RoSPA has been at the forefront of the campaign to give the UK an extra hour of evening daylight all year round. The campaign is closer to succeeding now than at any time since 1970, thanks to Rebecca Harris MP's Private Members' Bill which passed its second reading in December 2010, with a majority of 82. Thousands of RoSPA members and all major road safety organisations back this Bill.
- 1.3. If successful, the Bill will lead to the Government conducting a cross-departmental analysis of the benefits of Single/Double Summer Time (GMT+1 in winter / GMT+2 in summer) - which could trigger a three-year trial.
- 1.4. The Home Office's official review of the 1968-71 British Standard Time trial - when clocks across the UK were kept on GMT+1 all year round for three years¹ - showed the experiment helped to prevent about 2,700 deaths and injuries for each year of the trial.²

2. The Road Safety Problem:

- 2.1. During the working week, casualty rates peak at 8am and 5pm for adults and 8am and 3.30pm for children, with the afternoon peak being roughly three times higher than the morning peak for all casualties and roughly four times higher for children. Casualty rates increase with the arrival of darker evenings and worsening weather conditions.
- 2.2. The relative peaks are explained by several factors:
 - Motorists are more tired after a day's work and concentration levels are lower
 - Children tend to go straight to school in the morning but often digress on their way home
 - Adults tend to go shopping or visit friends after work, increasing their journey times and exposure to road dangers.
- 2.3. A reduction in the evening accident peak produces much more significant results than a reduction in the morning accident peak. Although there would be a slight increase in the morning accident peak, this would be more than offset by the reduction in the evening.

¹ Home Office, "Review of British Standard Time", Cmnd 4512: HMSO, 1970

² *A New Assessment of the Likely Effects on Road Accidents of Adopting SDST*, TRL 368, Broughton and Stone, 1998

3. The Benefits of Changing to SDST:

3.1. The Department for Transport's (DfT) consultation paper, "A Safer Way: Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World", confirmed that lighter evenings would save about 80 lives and prevent 212 serious injuries on UK roads each year. For the DfT, there would be a one-off cost of about £5million to publicise the change but then savings of around £138million per year. It would also bring energy savings, business benefits and more opportunities for sport and leisure.³ Based on the calculations in the DfT paper, we estimate that more than 5,000 people have died and more than 30,000 seriously injured on UK roads unnecessarily in the 40 years since the experiment proved the value of the proposed change.

4. Impact on the Rural Community:

4.1. A trial over at least two years, using modern evaluation methods, would result in updated, unequivocal evidence. Such an experiment would also give the people who live or work in rural communities an opportunity to experience the change first-hand and comment on its impact.

4.2. The two principal traditional arguments against SDST within the farming community have been:

- Limitations on animal husbandry activity in the early, darker hours
- Movement of farm machinery on rural roads in morning darkness would increase dangers to farm workers and other road users.

4.3. In discussions with farming bodies, it has become clear that working practices have changed so much since 1971 that the animal husbandry issue is no longer as significant. Further analysis has suggested that the farm machinery issue also needs to be revisited as practices have also changed significantly in that area.

4.4. The National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS) has recently decided to support Rebecca Harris's Bill.⁴ They have said: "If people can put a good argument forward to us as to why there should be change, we're not going to be the ones who stand in the way of that change, if it's for everyone else's benefit."⁵

³ *A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World*, Department for Transport, April 2009

⁴ *Clock change one step closer*, The Scottish Farmer, 24 November 2010

⁵ *We're not against moving clocks forward an hour, say Scottish farmers*, The Guardian, 29 October 2010 (cited in www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/rp2010/RP10-078.pdf)

5. Conclusion:

- 5.1. More widely, The Policy Studies Institute estimates that with a rising proportion of the working population - now three-quarters of the total - in white collar occupations, and with typical office hours starting at 9am, the concomitant darker winter mornings would affect fewer people than before.⁶
- 5.2. RoSPA believes that the only way to understand the current concerns of different interest groups and to update the costs and benefits of this proposal is to carry out an objective, Government-led evaluation as proposed in the Bill.
- 5.3. For more information, read RoSPA's British Summer Time factsheet: www.rospa.com/roadsafety/adviceandinformation/general/british-summertime-factsheet.aspx.

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RoSPA's mission is to save lives and reduce injuries

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⁶ *Making the Most of Daylight Hours: The Implications for Scotland*, Policy Studies Institute, University of Westminster, Hillman, M. 2010