

Committee calls for a four-day working week pilot in Wales

3 years ago



Wales should lead the way in exploring how a four-day working week could boost productivity, wellbeing and the economy, in a country which has some of the longest working hours in Europe.

The calls come as a result of a Senedd Petition by social entrepreneur Mark Hooper from Barry.

After gathering evidence on the issue, [a report published](#) on Tuesday 24 January by the [Senedd's Petitions Committee](#) recommends that the Welsh Government conducts pilots within the devolved public sector to reduce working hours with no loss of earnings for employees.

The pilot should work with trials already held in the private sector and be impartially assessed to measure the economic, social and environmental impacts.

They should also consider the global evidence from countries such as Iceland, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Belgium, New Zealand and Japan who are making serious moves towards trialing or introducing new working patterns.

"It is a bold proposal but no more bold than those campaigners who fought for a five day week, paid holiday and sick pay which we now take for granted," says Chair of the [Senedd's Petitions Committee](#), Jack Sargeant MS.

"People in Wales work some of the longest hours in Europe. Despite these long hours the UK lags behind on productivity, once we break that link of 'hours worked equalling productivity' we can start to look at a four-day week differently.

“Experiments are being conducted around the world – but we will have a much stronger knowledge of how they fit our circumstances here in Wales if we conduct our own trials. I hope the Welsh Government will consider our call for a modest experiment in our public sector, so that future debates on this subject will be more fully informed by evidence from Welsh people on the economic, social and environmental impacts of a four-day week.”

Some of the arguments for a reduced working week claim it can boost productivity alongside well-being. Benefits for the environment and greater gender equality are also cited as arguments in favour.

The petitioner, Mark Hooper welcomed the [report](#): “This is a major step forward towards a world where we have a better relationship with work. Today, our lives are too often dominated by how we earn our living and that makes us more ill, sadder and ultimately less productive.”

During its inquiry the Committee also considered the arguments against. The report acknowledges that some sectors would struggle to operate within a four-day structure – such as education, health, hospitality and personal service – and that reducing hours could exacerbate stress-related challenges for some workers who already feel over-worked.

Whilst Senedd Committees endeavour to reach a cross-party consensus, agreement could not be reached on this topic. Included in the report is the minority view of Committee Member Joel James MS, who did not agree with the final conclusions.

The report will now be sent to Welsh Government for consideration.

[From Five to Four? Support trials of a four-day working week in Wales](#)