



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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Sitting and Voting Times in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

During the meeting of 4 November 2014, family friendly provisions in relation to the arrangements for sitting times and voting times in the Swedish Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly was discussed. This paper briefly summarises the sitting and voting arrangements for the Northern Ireland Assembly², Scottish Parliament³, National Assembly for Wales⁴, House of Commons⁵, Dáil Éireann⁶, House of Lords⁷ and Seanad Éireann⁸.

¹ Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

² Standing Orders of the Northern Ireland Assembly: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Standing-Orders/>.

³ Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/17797.aspx>.

⁴ Standing Orders of the National Assembly for Wales: <http://www.assembly.wales/en/bus-home/Pages/bus-assembly-guidance.aspx>.

2 Summary of Sitting and Voting Arrangements

This table summarises *normal* sitting and voting arrangements for legislatures on the islands of Britain and Ireland. All legislatures have exceptions and provisions that prioritise certain parliamentary business.

Legislature	Sitting Arrangements (Plenary Meetings)	Voting Arrangements (Divisions)
<i>Northern Ireland Assembly</i>	Monday noon – 6:00 pm, Tuesday 10:30 am – 6:00 pm (SO10)	After a question is posed (SO25); collection of voices or division (SO27)
<i>Scottish Parliament</i>	Monday 14:30 – 17:00, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 09:15 – 17:30, Friday 09:30 – 12:30 (Rule 2.2)	Decision time: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 17:00, Friday 12:00 (Rule 11.2); electronic or roll call (Rule 11.7)
<i>National Assembly for Wales</i>	Seek to avoid business before 9am or after 6pm (SO11); Tuesday and Wednesday starting at 1:30pm (SO12)	At the end of an item of business; electronic, show of hands or roll call (SO12)
<i>House of Commons</i>	Monday 2:30pm – 10:30pm, Tuesday and Wednesday 11:30am – 7:30pm, Thursday 9:30am – 5:30pm, Friday 9:30 – 3pm (SO9) For sittings in Westminster Hall: Monday 4:30pm – 7:30pm, Tuesday and Wednesday 9:30am – 11:30am and 2:30pm - 5pm, Thursday: 1:30pm – 4:30pm (SO10)	Challenge to the decision of a question; by division (SO38)

⁵ Standing Orders of the House of Commons: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmstords.htm>.

⁶ Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?m=&DocID=-1&CatID=5>.

⁷ Standing Orders of the Houser of Lords: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldstords/ldstords.htm>.

⁸ Standing Orders of Seanad Éireann:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/ViewDoc.asp?fn=/documents/ProceduralDocuments/document1.htm&CatID=31&m=s>.

<i>Dáil Éireann</i>	Tuesday 2:30pm – 8:30pm, Wednesday 10:30am – 8:30pm, Thursday 10:30am – 4:45pm (SO21)	On a question being put (SO68); electronic or by division (SO71)
<i>House of Lords</i>	Not defined in SOs, but generally Monday and Tuesday from 2:30pm, Wednesday from 3pm, Thursday from 11am, Friday 10am, finishing 10-11pm ⁹	When called; by division (SO53)
<i>Seanad Éireann</i>	10:30am Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (SO21)	When a question is put (SO58); electronic or by division (SO62)

It should be noted that extensions to the times defined in Standing Orders are not necessarily exceptional. For example, during 2013 the Northern Ireland Assembly sat beyond 6pm on 35 occasions¹⁰.

⁹ 'Business of the House of Lords', Parliament website, accessed 6 November 2014:

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/faqs/house-of-lords-faqs/lords-statistics/>.

¹⁰ Information from the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Office 23 October 2014.