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# Strengthening User Engagement: Discussion of interim report

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3 June 2010



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# Findings and interim recommendations

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Richard Laux

UK Statistics Authority

# Today ...

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- Why we conducted the review, and what we wanted to achieve
- How we did it
- What we found
- What we think needs to be done in future
- What happens next, in terms of the Report

# Aims of the review

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- To maximise the value of official statistics by strengthening user engagement in order to improve the use of the statistics
- By:
  - gathering evidence about current user engagement
  - highlighting good practice in user engagement
  - identifying examples of how different types of users can be approached and
  - suggesting ways to improve communication between users and producers

# Carrying out the review

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- Independent project board of key individuals
- Discussions with producers and users, nationally and internationally
- Interviews with opinion-formers on issues of trust and user engagement
- Formal survey of public confidence in official statistics

# Main findings

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- Engagement exists but is sporadic and piecemeal
- Need to identify uses and then users
- No single solution to strengthening user engagement
- Users need to input at the right time
- Need to increase transparency in communication and decision-making

# Recommendations (1/2)

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1. Enhance compliance with the Code
2. Explain better the relevance and meaning of the figures
3. Improve the ONS website
4. Review use of web technology

## Recommendations (2/2)

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5. Improve communication with journalists
6. Develop web-based forum for user-producer communications
7. Work actively with SUF and user groups



# Next steps

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By 10 June

Written comments on the report

[authority.consultations@statistics.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:authority.consultations@statistics.gsi.gov.uk)

10-18 June

Revisions to the report

18 June

Publication of final report on the website

# Questions

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**Strengthening User Engagement  
– The National Statistician's  
Office Perspective**

**Debra Prestwood**

# Introduction

- Monitoring Report is welcomed
- Interim recommendations
- The way forward on user engagement – the NSO's perspective

# Interim recommendations of SUE Monitoring Report

- Agree with recommendations...
  - ...but concerns about Recommendation 6 (high profile web-based communication forum)
  - need to manage expectations
  - ‘spectrum’ of possibilities

# NSO's Perspective

- Why does user engagement matter?
- What does the GSS need from users?
- How does the GSS want to engage with users?
- What do users want the GSS to do?

# National Statistician's 6 Priorities

*Right statistics in the right way  
making the right impact*

1. Relevant statistics
2. Standards and quality
3. Accessibility and impact
4. Capability
5. Public profile
6. International collaboration

# Why does UE matter?

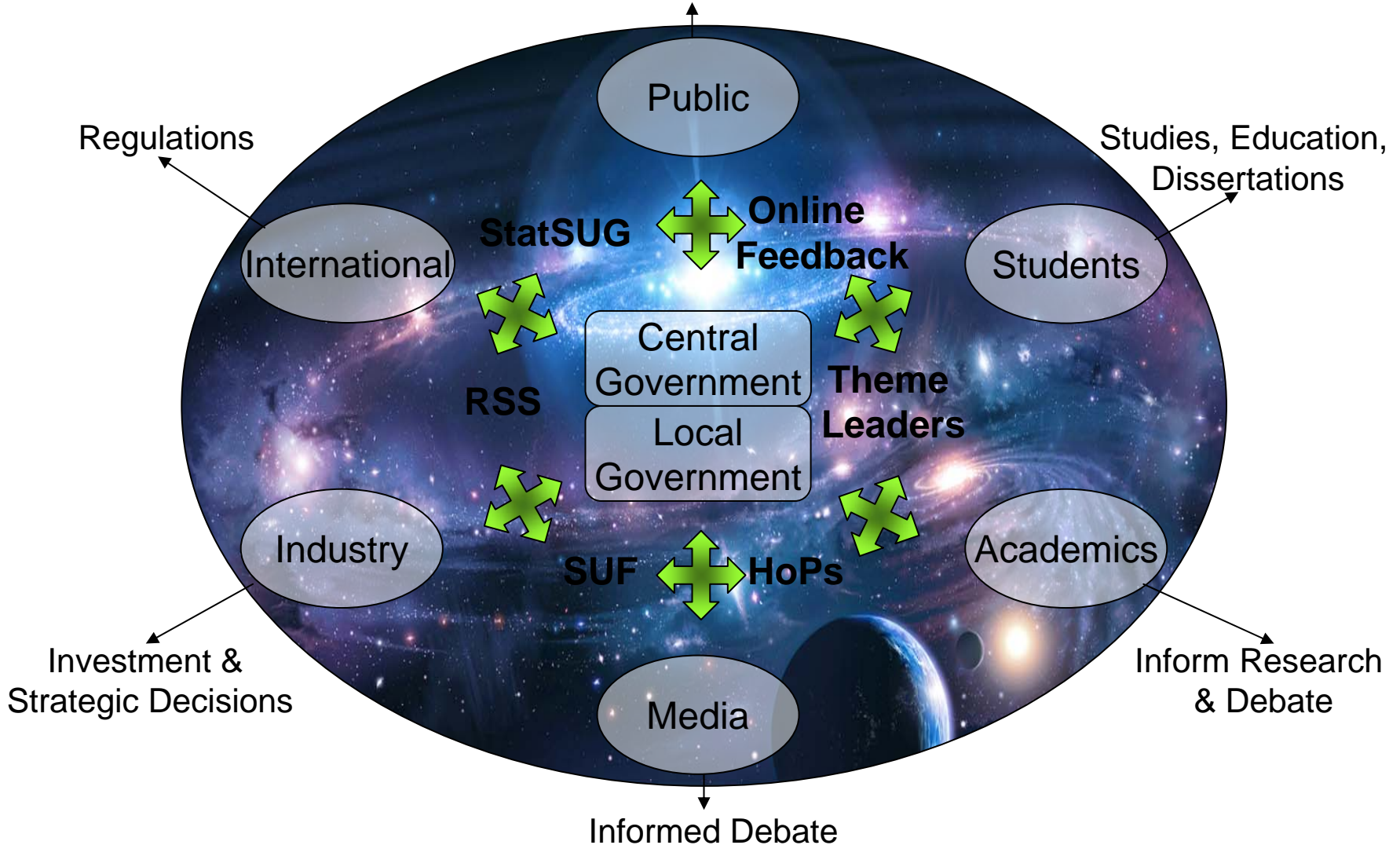
- Underpins NS' 6 priorities
- Active user community
- User engagement is key :
  - Priority setting
  - Ensuring relevant and accessible statistics
  - Code compliance...



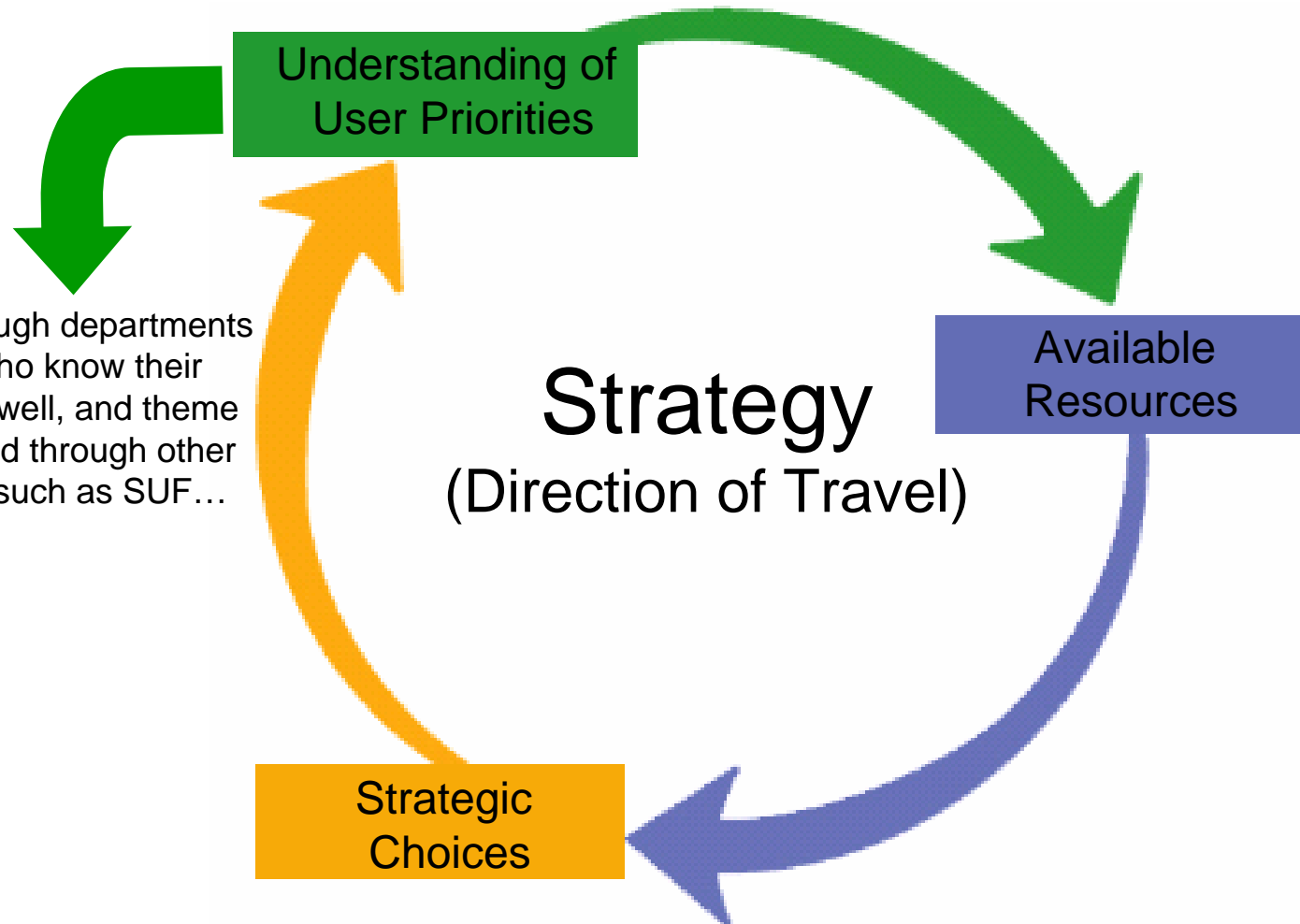
# Model for Engagement

Our Statistical User Universe...

Lifestyle & Economic Choices



# Developing an Official Statistics UE Strategy



# What is being planned?

- Developing user engagement strategy (Dec 2010)
- Theme Leaders (and Theme Groups) are key
- RSS, SUF, StatSUG
- External and internal focus
- Don't want to just focus on User Groups...

# What is being planned?

- ...Optimise use of technology for dialogue with users within resource constraints
- Proportionate and sustainable approach
- ONS User Engagement Strategy – lessons?
- Use of market research

# What is being planned?

- Production of GSS web dissemination strategy (Autumn 2010)
- Make information available in most effective way
- Committed to improving statistical releases and commentary

# What do users want??

- ONS website – new website early 2011
- UE strategy by Dec 2010
- Ensure covers all users
- How do you want to be involved?
- How do you want to engage?



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# Perspective of Statistics User Forum

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Andrew Dilnot, Chair of Statistics User Forum

Royal Statistical Society  
3 June 2010

# User Engagement in the Scottish Government

**Janette Purbrick**

Office of the Chief Statistician, Scottish Government



# Today's Aim

To look at User Engagement in the Scottish Government by looking at:

- Code of Practice & National Statistics Assessments
- Scotstat
- Other aspects of SG User engagement

# Importance

19 instances of 'user' in the Code including dedicated Principle 1 & Protocol 1

"The Code of Practice .... puts user requirements centre-stage" Sir Michael Scholar, December 2009

# National Statistics Assessments

- 7 Scottish Government products have assessments completed to date
- SG Performed well as regards user needs and engagement...many positive comments on good practice with some minor improvements noted

# Key stages of the assessment process involving users

- **User list**
  - Breadth and diversity of user group
  - Used by the Authority to issue questionnaires
  - Users views will be taken on by the Authority
- **Written Evidence for Assessment (WEFA)**
  - The main part of the assessment - evidence must be provided for Principle 1 and Protocol 1 plus other 'user' instances throughout the Code
- **Assessment Report**
  - Feedback on our evidence
  - contains user feedback
  - users will read this

# Identifying Users

## Internal

**Policy, Analysts, Communications etc**

...

## External

**Academia, NHS, Local Authorities,  
Community Planning Partnerships  
(Health), Media, Police Force Boards,  
Criminal Justice organisations etc ...**



- Since 2000, ScotStat has been a network for users and providers of Scottish Official Statistics.
- SG's aim was to improve communication amongst those interested in particular statistics.
- Scotstat facilitates the setting up of working groups on specific statistical issues.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/scotstat>

# Scotstat is...

- An electronic network with all that entails including formal and informal consultations
- An opportunity to take part in the standing **committees/board/sub groups** (NS themed & project) – an opportunity for those who want a more intensive and active means of engagement
- Other events including the annual conference and one off seminars

# Scotstat Membership

- Over 2000 unique registered members! (net gain 14% in 12 months)
- From....Central & local government (all 32 LAs!), Higher & Further Education, NHS, Private sector, Voluntary sector, Self-employed and students
- Demography, Economy & Labour Market and Health and Social Care among the most popular topics by registered user
- Topics registrations do overlap
- Just over 50% registrations permit their contact details to be shared with other Scotstat users



# But...

- Mainly analysts/researchers from local/central government, academia & consultancies
- Membership gaps – lack of journalists, policy people including politicians and the general public
- Driven by SG (resource is the reason but it does encourage user focus within SG Statistician Group)
- Scotstat groups vary in their effectiveness

# Some of the improvements taken forward by SG Statistician Group in conjunction with Scotstat.....

- SIMD/SNS enhancements
- Survey Harmonisation agenda
- Improving local indicators
- Scottish National Accounts project
- Analysis of Health statistics e.g. Swine Flu

# Scotstat Annual Conferences

- 2007, 2008 & 2009
- Successful and useful events
- Highlights common user issues
- Creates focus, drive & enthusiasm
- Builds on networking side of Scotstat
- Timely UK Statistics Authority talk in 2009

Conferences and one-off events are effective mechanisms to reach users

# SG External User Engagement Group

Aims to improve the scale and quality of such engagement by

- Identifying types of external engagement
- Examining potential types
- Ramping up policy, researcher and economist involvement
- Identifying what users need and help meet that need
- Improving user access and understanding of statistics

# 3 main Levels of User Engagement within Scottish Government

## ■ Corporate

- Scotstat webpages, conferences & seminars
- Scotstat Groups like the Network of Local Government Analysts

## ■ Topic/NS theme

- Scotstat Forums/Networks e.g Environment, Transport
- External groups/networks/forums

## ■ Product

- Scotstat emails
- User days
- Webpages
- Email lists e.g. send product updates
- Networks

# Consultations

- **Formal/informal**
- **Full/ Extensive**
- **Short/Specific**
- **Reviews**
- **Frequency – annual/quarterly etc or throughout the year?**

# Adhoc requests

- Good, timely service noted
- Chance to shine 😊
- Keep a data base of adhoc as these can usefully inform a review e.g. survey questionnaires or data collection forms
- If request comes from one LA, publish info for all LA's (SHCS)
- Identifies where user training needed
- SHS-Lite and SPSS (stimulated

# Information for users

- **Conferences and user days**
- **Web pages**
  - **Product information incl acronyms etc**
  - **Consultation story**
  - **Minutes**
  - **Data uses and potential uses**
  - **Data archives**
  - **Other users' views**
  - **Dedicated users' section**



It's important to publish a plan or strategy for engaging with your users

As part of NS assessments, the Authority asked us to think about justifying our product – users are key!

# Summary

- Users are important to statistical products
- Users like networking with each other as well as with producers
- Effective engagement:
  - Establish who they are
  - Ask them what they want/need
  - Listen to them
  - Document what they say
  - Try and do what they want
- Products will improve
- **SCOTSTAT** has been vital and has great potential



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# Questions & panel discussion

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*Chaired by Liam Murray*