

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Preliminary Estimate – Q4 2013

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/gva/gross-domestic-product--preliminary-estimate/q4-2013/stb-gdp-preliminary-estimate--q4-2013.html>

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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31 January 2014

2. Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

1. Protocol 2 – Release Practices, Practices 7 and 8

2. Paragraphs 2 and 6(1) of the Schedule to The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008

Date of occurrence

28 January 2014

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

BIS receives pre-release access to the GDP Preliminary Estimate release for the following ministers and officials:

- Secretary of State
- Special Advisor
- Permanent Secretary
- Director of Media Relations
- Briefing team comprising two economists and a statistician.

The pre-release copy of the statistical release is supplied to the briefing team, who prepare briefing which is shared later that day with the minister and other pre-release recipients. The briefing is circulated more widely within BIS once the release is published.

On this occasion the official who usually circulates the briefing post-publication was delayed by transport problems so another member of the briefing team, who has pre-release access, circulated it instead. Unfortunately he did so at 09:29, one minute before the official publication time of 09:30.

Reasons for breach

Human error. The person who sent out the briefing did so by the time given on his mobile phone, rather than waiting for the BIS network to show 09:30.

3. Reactions and Impact

None

4. Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

The briefing team have been reminded that briefing should not be circulated outside the list of pre-release recipients until the relevant release has been published at 09:30 and in future to use the BIS network clock which has been checked and is consistent with BT's speaking clock.