
John Pullinger CB CStat | National Statistician

Sir David Norgrove
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority Board
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
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By email only

15 June 2017

Dear David,

ENDING PRE-RELEASE ACCESS TO OFFICIAL STATISTICS PRODUCED BY ONS

At the meeting of the UK Statistics Authority Board in December 2016 I outlined my concerns with the arrangements for early access to ONS statistics, noting a trend for increasing instances of access and the damage to trust in official statistics that comes from this.

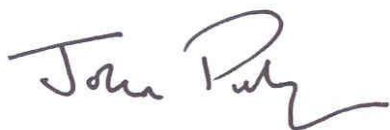
Following that discussion I undertook a review of the arrangements, to try to mitigate these concerns. The review led to a number of changes to the protocol for pre-release access to ONS statistics. These strengthened the controls, and reduced both the number of people enjoying early access and the length of time the statistics were available before release. They came into effect on 1 March 2017.

It is already clear to me that the changes are not successfully dealing with the risks the review sought to mitigate. The UK Statistics Authority Board considered a report on the review and advised that the National Statistician should remove all pre-release access to ONS statistics. In addition, there have been wider public concerns highlighted in a letter to The Times signed by 114 academics and other experts. On the basis of all the information now available to me I consider that the public benefit likely to result from pre-release access to ONS statistics is outweighed by the detriment to public trust in those statistics likely to result from such access.

I have therefore decided that pre-release access to ONS statistics will stop with effect from 1 July 2017. Should there be a need for exceptional pre-release access to particular individuals for a specific release this would be fully transparent.

I am happy to discuss this with you and other members of the Authority Board.

Yours sincerely



John Pullinger