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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove**

Helen Whately MP  
Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Fiona Hyslop MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs  
Scottish Government

Lord Elis-Thomas AM  
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism  
Welsh Government

*(via email)*

29 October 2019

Dear Ms Whately, Ms Hyslop and Lord Elis-Thomas,

**COMPLIANCE CHECK OF ONS OVERSEAS TRAVEL AND TOURISM STATISTICS**

As I said in my letter to you of 19 August, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has been carrying out a compliance check of ONS Overseas Travel and Tourism statistics.

OSR has today published this review<sup>1</sup>, which sets out changes required in order for these statistics to retain their National Statistics designation. OSR will monitor progress by the ONS against these requirements and will decide in July 2020 whether a further assessment is necessary.

Your primary concern was the fall in the sample size from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and the resulting uncertainty in quarterly estimates of inbound visitors. The ONS now has in place formal workstreams to investigate these issues. The review by OSR welcomes this but finds that the ONS has been slow to respond to issues with sample sizes and to explain them to users. OSR expect ONS to complete investigations into the sample decline by July, and to provide an update by January. Where there are limits on improvements ONS can make to the IPS, OSR encourage the ONS to be clear about such limitations with their users.

Officials from OSR and the ONS would be happy to discuss this review with you and their response respectively.

I would like to thank your officials for their engagement throughout this process.

Yours sincerely,



**Sir David Norgrove**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-ons-overseas-travel-tourism/>