

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	Ad hoc statistical release: UK Sea Fisheries Statistics April 2020 (link)
Name of producer organisation	Marine Management Organisation (a Non-Departmental Public Body of Defra)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Rebecca Cavanagh rebecca.cavanagh@marinemanagement.org.uk 0208 026 7413
Name and contact details of Head of Profession for Statistics/Lead Official	Simon Dixon Chief Statistician simon.dixon@marinemanagement.org.uk 0208 026 6481
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ad-hoc-statistical-release-uk-sea-fisheries-statistics-april-2020 (statement under the published document)
Date of breach report	26/05/2020

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Trustworthiness: T3 Orderly release T3.6 - Statistics should be released to all users at 9.30am on a weekday.
Date of occurrence of breach	26/05/2020
<p>Our UK Sea Fisheries statistics release was scheduled for release at 09:30 on Tuesday 26 May 2020. This was the day after the late May bank holiday. As per normal practice we sent the release to our publishing team on the working day before release (Friday 22/05/2020) requesting automated release of the statistics on GOV.UK at 09:30 on the following Tuesday. The release was received but the automated release was mistakenly not actioned. Following our standard practice we checked the release at 09:30 on the 26 May, noticed that the release was not available and contacted the publishing team by email and phone. We chased senior managers in the communications team to alert them to the issue. Being the first working day after the bank holiday the publishing team was exceptionally busy and twice uploaded an incorrect file (related to another MMO work area). This meant it took until 14:00 for the correct release to be published.</p> <p>After noticing the breach, we alerted the Defra Head of Profession's office and began compiling this report.</p>	

3. Impact of the breach

<p>We are not aware of any specific issues directly relating to this breach. The delay in releasing the statistics was relatively short and there were no time sensitive internal products relying on their timely publication.</p> <p>We notified our external and internal stakeholder lists as soon as the statistics were available and so all known users will now be able to access the statistics. We decided it was not a proportionate response to email our large stakeholder list informing them of the delay. The publication is a new adhoc release and we were not aware that a short delay to the publication would impact any users.</p>
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Further, we considered that tweeting or emailing headline figures was not appropriate. Releasing any highlights prior to the associated caveats and methodology being available would not have provided a complete picture.

We have added a note to our GOV.UK page welcoming feedback from users on whether the delay has affected them. Since this note was published on GOV.UK on 26 May we have received no comments or feedback from users on the delay.

We will continue to monitor our feedback form to determine if there were any other impacts to our stakeholders we aren't currently aware of.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

This was a case of an existing process not working as effectively as it should have. We are currently engaging with our publishing team to understand whether any automated checks can be built into the upload process to help mitigate against anything similar happening in future. We have also reminded the publishing team of our obligations for timely release under the Code of Practice.

In future we will confirm receipt of the release and that its release has been set up for the designated time on GOV.UK with the publishing team on the working day before publication.

Our note to stakeholders published alongside the delayed statistics explains the issue, apologises for inconvenience and reassures users of the steps we have taken to prevent reoccurrence of the issue.