



**12th Meeting of the National Statistician's Expert User
Advisory Committee**

Agenda and Papers

Thursday 12 December 2024

14:00-16:00

Microsoft Teams

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda
Thursday 12 December 2024, 14:00-16:00
Microsoft Teams

Chair: Prof. David Hand

Apologies: Ed Humpherson, Paul Boyle

Timing	Agenda item	
1 14:00-14:10 (10 mins)	Welcome, previous minutes and actions	Meeting of 21.10.2024 Prof. David Hand
2 14:10-14:45 (35 mins)	Discussion with User	NSEUAC(24)17 Gordon Blunt
3 14:45-15:05 (20 mins)	Analytical Priority Setting	NSEUAC(24)18 Jennet Woolford
4 15:05-15:25 (20 mins)	Environmental and Natural Capital Accounts	NSEUAC(24)19 Ian Townsend
5 15:25-15:40 (15 mins)	Integrated Data Service and the National Data Library	NSEUAC(24)20 Pete Benton
6 15:40-15:55 (15 mins)	Statistics Assembly	NSEUAC(24)21 Sarah Moore
7 15:55-16:00 (10 mins)	Any Other Business	Prof. David Hand

Next Meeting: Monday 10 February 2025, Microsoft Teams

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National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Group

Draft Minutes
Thursday 12 December 2024
Via Videoconference

Members Present

Professor David Hand (Chair)
Dame Kate Barker
Sarah Cumbers
Phyllis MacFarlane
Sarah Moore
Guy Nason

Additional Attendees

Gordon Blunt (for item 2)
Sonia Carrera (for item 4)
Nicola Fulton (for item 6)
Rob Kent-Smith (for Ed Humpherson)
Julian McCrae (for item 5)
Ian Townsend (for item 4)
Neil Townsend (for item 6)
Neil Wilson (for item 4)
Jennet Woolford (for item 3)

Secretariat

Kerri Gourley
Sally-Ann Jones

Apologies

Eva Aizpurua
Professor Paul Allin
Helen Boaden
Professor Paul Boyle
James Brooks
Professor Sir Ian Diamond
Ed Humpherson

1. Minutes and matters arising

1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Eva Aizpurua, Helen Boaden, Professor Paul Boyle, James Brooks, Professor Sir Ian Diamond and Ed Humpherson. Minutes of the meeting on 21 October 2024 were discussed and it was noted that the minutes of the meeting on 21 October were approved, subject to two comments relating to discussions around the creation of a document to make the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee more accessible to users and ensuring that the sessions of the UK Statistics Assembly were recorded.

2. Discussion with User (Gordon Blunt) [NSEUAC(24)17]

2.1 Gordon Blunt, a freelance Statistician who has worked with several local small charities and nonprofit organisations, joined the meeting to reflect on their perspective as a user of statistics. The following key points were made:

- i. Gordon had worked with small charities and nonprofit organisations who often would not have data of their own to provide them with reliable data;
- ii. the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was praised for providing reliable data that was trusted by the general public and it was highlighted the statisticians who work within the ONS had always been very helpful;
- iii. it was noted that data provided by ONS was very detailed at local level which was extremely helpful as well as having the functionality to create a custom data set which would outline any missing areas;
- iv. ONS data was clean e.g., few errors with formatting and inconsistent names which could be time consuming to rectify, ONS' data was also annotated well and caveated where appropriate;
- v. several things ONS could improve were outlined including the website not returning the most recent statistical bulletin, the spotlight pages could lead journalists to overemphasise the latest period and ONS data sets are not always the easiest to be understood by laypersons;
- vi. the feedback provided was helpful for ONS and it was noted that website transformation was underway within the organisation to ensure that content was more user focused and accessible;
- vii. members discussed ONS developing an Application Programming Interface (API) noting this is one of the most important things that the organisation should be developing;
- viii. ONS should stay away from doing too much analysis and forecasting enabling them to focus on a clear strategy;
- ix. ONS should meet a variety of user needs when accessing ONS data;
- x. ONS should think about the approach when communicating data and set the data in a context so that journalists cannot sensationalise datasets;
- xi. members also discussed data gaps it was highlighted there was not any major gaps except local internet access; and
- xii. members welcomed the presentation and it was agreed that discussions would take place around Gordon assisting with testing the ONS website prototypes.

3. Analytical Priorities[NSEUAC(24)18]

3.1 Jennet Woolford presented a paper which gave an overview of the ONS' Analytical Priority setting process which included governance structures used for setting Analytical Priorities. Members heard how the Analytical Framework

supported the mitigation of Strategic Risk 1 'Ensuring our statistics and analysis keep pace with changing priorities' and as a means of horizon scanning, looking for gaps in analysis and how to address this and more recently the Analytical Framework had been used as a means to manage ad hoc publications which had increased since the COVID-19 Pandemic. The framework would pivot to meet the needs of users and evolving needs of the organisation. This framework was managed through three governance boards Analytical Priorities Board, Outputs Group and Strategic Outputs Committee and members also heard a list of the organisation's current analytical priorities.

- 3.2 Members discussed numbers of ad hoc releases per theme, per quarter. Members discussed topics of ONS analysis and noted that these are the type of conversations that occur at outputs group to ensure transparency. ONS has reduced the volume of analytical releases post pandemic to help manage the website transformation and resourcing pressures within the organisation. Members also discussed how ONS grouped analytical themes together to tell a broader story. Members also discussed the definition of priority as it was noted there had not been much released on housing, inflation and financial resilience in the last six months. However, it was explained that this does not mean the organisation would look to release more publications on the topic but they would prioritise ad hoc publications if required. Measuring impact was also discussed and this was mainly done through media and social media engagement and that this does not always present the full picture. The relationship between analytical priorities and business planning was also touch on.

4. Environmental and Natural Capital Accounts [NSEUAC(24)19]

- 4.1 Ian Townsend presented a paper on the ONS' Environmental and Natural Capital Accounts which outlined how the organisation had been working on Environmental Accounting since the late 1990's and included the results in the Blue Book since 2020. Members heard that the ONS had been a leader in producing a system of United Nations System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) which looks at interactions between the environment and the economy in both directions. Members also heard that the team were looking to improve Environmental and Natural Capital Accounts through further quality improvements to gain official accredited status by increasing timeliness and granularity where possible and engaging with International Frameworks. Given appropriate resourcing, ONS would continue to be a world leader in this space and ensure the environment was reflected in decision making.
- 4.2 Members discussed who the key users were for both Natural Capital and Environmental Accounts, key stakeholders such as the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, HM Treasury and the Devolved Administrations as well as the general public were listed. It was noted that the ONS had a reciprocal relationship with some of the environmental Non-Government Organisations as they provided some of the data that fed into the natural capital accounts and are recipients back of the information they put in. The SEEA accounts were internationally comparable, particularly in the Environmental Accounts and European Union space, as well as several other countries. Members also discussed what the international coverage was of Natural Capital and Environmental Accounts and whether the

users of the accounts were those countries who did not already produce environmental accounts. Collaboration on environmental accounts took place internationally via the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounting, as well as bilaterally with other National Statistics Institutes. Lots of the ONS code used to produce its environmental and natural capital accounts was accessible in public repositories to encourage development in the area.

- 4.3 Members welcomed the update and it was highlighted that there was a link to a UN report giving information on what other countries produce for environmental accounts in the paper if members wanted to look into the topic further.

5. Integrated Data Service and the National Data Library [NSEUAC(24)20]

- 5.1 Julian McCrae presented an update on progress on the Integrated Data Service (IDS). Members heard that the IDS had been making steady progress over the years. Investment had been secured for 2025/2026 to continue development of the platform and the IDS had an increasingly rich data environment. The IDS had recently gained a range of HM Revenue and Customs data which would enable indexing to take place. Linking the data together would enable the organisation to undertake several interesting projects. Members also heard that analytical use cases were starting to emerge on projects that would not have been able to occur without the linkage infrastructure which has been built around the IDS.

- 5.2 Members discussed the National Data Library and it was highlighted that collaboration with the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) was ongoing in the discovery phase and there are not currently firm plans around the end result for the National Data Library however they are currently looking at creating an API data infrastructure with the private sector enabling data sharing. The data usage would be mainly on an operational use basis as opposed to analytical. The National Data Library may not have any data in it but would provide pathways to government departments and create agreements to share data. It was noted however that this could be subject to change depending on the results of the discovery phase but should be something that the IDS could integrate into it. It was highlighted that the Royal Statistical Society was supportive of the DSIT team and was encouraging their presence at the upcoming Statistics Assembly to help understand user needs. Members also discussed the relationship with users and the progress that had taken place to improve the user experience and ensure that the transition from the Secure Research Service would be smoother.

- 5.3 Members welcomed the update and the progress that had been made on improving the IDS.

6. Statistics Assembly [NSEUAC(24)21]

- 6.1 Sarah Moore presented the final update on the Statistics Assembly before the event would take place on 22 January. Members heard that the plans received positive feedback from the UK Statistics Authority Board in November who were content with the plans for the assembly. Members heard that attendance was continuing to rise from a broad range of sectors. The structure of the Assembly was outlined and it was noted sessions would be structured around the discussion topics and led by externals outside of the statistical system. Details would then be provided to the National Statisticians Expert User

Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) to write the report which would go to the UK Statistics Authority Board. Members also heard that the team were looking into putting an international slot in the afternoon and draft topics were still being refined ahead of circulating the agenda shortly.

- 6.2 Members discussed the danger of the event becoming oversubscribed and a strategy had been developed to ensure that ONS and Government Statistical Service attendees would be asked to attend virtually if the event was oversubscribed. Members also discussed the size of break out groups and potentially capping the breakout rooms to average sizes out. There were some topics that would have been on the agenda but there was not enough demand from users e.g. crime and net zero, it was highlighted that the agenda was broadly based out of the call for contributions. Members also discussed overlaps in data on crime collected by ONS and the Home Office it was noted this would be a discussion to surface at the Assembly on what are the asks of the wider statistical system. It was noted that raising awareness and education about what data is readily available should be discussed at a future NSEUAC meeting.
- 6.3 Members were supportive of the plans for the assembly and members were thanked by the team for their support advice and challenge in the planning of the event.

7. Any other business

- 7.1 The next meeting was due to take place via MS Teams on 10 February 2025.

Official statistics

Presentation to the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory
Committee

Gordon Blunt

12 December 2024

Outline

- 1 A little about me (i.e. why am I speaking to you?)
- 2 Good things about the ONS
- 3 Things I think the ONS could improve
- 4 Concluding thoughts

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My background is not in official statistics

Why me?

- I've spent more than 40 years analysing different data sets covering:
 - Financial services
 - Fast moving consumer goods
 - Market research
 - Geographic Information Systems
 - Official data
 - ... and other sources

Since I retired a couple of years ago ...

- I've worked with several **local** charities and not-for-profit organisations
- Sometimes these have had their own data, sometimes not

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Breadth and depth of data

Good things about the ONS

- It's a massive free source of information
- There's an unparalleled breadth and depth to the data
- It's trusted (by most people)
- The statisticians are uniformly helpful when asked questions

Latest releases on the website

- 'Spotlight', explanations, summary time series etc etc
- 'Variations of this time series in other datasets'

Local data

- Census data are available at a very detailed local level
- Working with local charities or not-for-profits, this is often essential

Some of the official data I've used recently

Not all ONS, but all from [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) somewhere

- Education levels
- Deprivation
- Economic activity status
- Age of population
- Retail Sales
- Inflation
 - Overall and by selected sectors
- Labour market statistics
- Trends in registered vehicles
- Woodland cover
- Internet use

More of the official data (or features) I've used

The *Open Geography Portal* is excellent

- A range of boundary files (clients love maps!)
- Local authorities
 - For several different dates, depending on the data concerned
- Electoral wards down to output areas
- The online interface allows me to check I've selected the right boundaries

Census 'create a custom dataset'

- This is an excellent feature, which I've used several times
 - One charity wanted economic activity status by level of education by electoral ward
 - Of course, some small areas were not returned because personal data needed to be protected

ONS data are clean

Unlike some other data sets

- 216th April 2013 [sic]
 - This was actually (as far as can be known) the 14th of April 2013
 - It was one of more than 60 errors that needed to be corrected

Typical data issues in other data sets

- Inconsistent names, formats, invalid values and so on and so on
- Sometimes data cleaning can take 90%+ of a project's time

ONS data are also ...

- Well annotated
- Caveated where appropriate

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Search results a little odd?

Entering 'retail sales' in the ONS' search box on 6.12.2024

- Returned 2,326 results, and the first of these was:
Retail sales, Great Britain : May 2023
- Why not the most recent?
- I had to go to the next page to find the latest release
- Sorting by release date may help, but may not

Contrast this with 'retail sales' in an internet search engine

Where the first link takes me straight to the 'Retail sales, Great Britain Statistical bulletins' page of the ONS website

Journalists

Time series - a particular *bête noire* of mine

Is it possible to influence journalists not to over-interpret the latest observation in a time series?

Education - can you:

- Teach them about random variation and sampling variability?
- Force them to attend training courses run (by you or the Royal Statistical Society) perhaps?

Your website's 'Spotlight' pages are clear and well written, but . . .
. . . do they lead journalists to over-emphasise the most recent period?

'Business intelligence' software for data delivery?

Size of some ONS datasets

- CPI - 4,000+ columns
- Retail Sales - 600+ columns

Excel™

- Much analysis in the commercial sector is in Excel
- Could another delivery mechanism be used, perhaps?

Using 'business intelligence' software

- Might allow the casual user easier access to the data
- Would ensure the casual user found the correct data
 - e.g. not selecting an RPI series by mistake
- Could simplify the expert user's task

Data delivery

Could all data be delivered in the 'Census way'?

- 'Create a custom dataset' is an excellent feature (as already mentioned)
- It produces messages to alert me if:
 - Some areas are suppressed to prevent personal data from being published
(This saves a surprising amount of data checking time)
 - The data won't fit in an Excel spreadsheet
- It allows me to select the data series of interest
- And allows me to combine variables of interest
 - (again, as already mentioned)
- And to visualise them at different levels of geography

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Some observations

No data set is perfect, each one has its own strengths and weaknesses

The good

- The ONS is a rich and detailed source of information
- For those without access to data, it is unparalleled
- 'Create a custom dataset' feature in the Census

The not so good

- Sometimes the data delivery could be improved
- Business intelligence software, perhaps?
- Searches could produce more intuitive results

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)18

ONS Analytical Framework: Setting and Monitoring Analytical Priorities

Purpose

1. This paper is presented for information, to provide an overview of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') analytical priority setting process, including the governance structures and their roles and responsibilities, and the suite of metrics which inform the decisions made by each board.

Background

2. In mid-2022, the Analytical Framework was established to ensure a collectively owned set of analytical priorities, used to monitor ONS' outputs and to inform analytical planning and capacity decisions. Initially, the Framework was designed to oversee the setting of priorities through a horizon scanning function, the ratification of them, and to commission new analytical work to fill identified gaps. Over the last two years, the Framework has evolved to maintain alignment with ONS' strategic priority outcomes. The priority outcomes set constraints for business planning, which then feed through to analytical prioritisation within the Analytical Framework.
3. The Analytical Framework built on existing governance (detailed in the discussion sections) and provided a systematic way for these groups to work together to respond to priorities, providing senior leaders assurance that ONS was meeting Strategic Risk 1 (keeping pace with the analytical priorities of society).
4. In early 2023, the Analytical Framework formed a crucial component of the Outputs Review, which aimed to reduce the total volumes of ONS outputs closer to pre-pandemic levels and ensure we were better meeting our users' needs. The Analytical Priority Board (APB) and Outputs Group (OG) took on responsibility for monitoring volumes of analytical releases and keeping them within set target volumes. By considering the relative importance of each of the agreed priorities, the Analytical Framework provided a framing for the allocation of publishing capacity. From mid-2024, the Analytical Framework has expanded its focus from analytical outputs to cover all ONS statistical and analytical publications on the ONS website.

Discussion – Analytical Priority Board (APB)

5. The Analytical Priority Board (APB) meets approximately quarterly, in the weeks leading up to the Strategic Outputs Committee (SOC). It is attended by the Senior Civil Servants level Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) for the analytical priorities (APs). APB is responsible for AP identification, and for ranking/grading in order of priority for the ONS. There are currently 14 Aps covering the breadth of topics on which ONS produces ad hoc analysis.
6. APB was preceded by a similar board called SLUSH (Stakeholder Liaison, Users and Horizon Scanning) with horizon scanning performed across four themes: economy, society, health, and environment.

7. Ahead of each meeting, SROs provide a steer and justification of the priority grading for their AP based on several factors including alignment to ONS's strategic priorities (including the big 4), funding arrangements and ONS's unique position to deliver. The grading should provide an indication of the volume of ad hoc analytical work (i.e. outputs which are non-regular and are not supporting commentaries, such as methodologies) expected in upcoming quarters. Resource allocation and statistical method developments are outside of the scope of APB.

Discussion – Strategic Outputs Committee (SOC)

8. The Strategic Outputs Committee (SOC) ensures that all outputs published by ONS are agreed and are well planned and delivered in accordance with the 'Statistics for the Public Good' strategy. It was established following the mid-point strategy review in 2023 and review of executive governance, replacing the previous Analysis and Evaluation Committee. It is attended by Directors and chaired by one of the deputy National Statisticians.
9. SOC are responsible for reviewing and ratifying proposals for the analytical priorities for the upcoming quarters as presented by APB and for reviewing the suite of regular outputs.
10. SOC is also responsible for setting overall target volumes of releases, reviewing balance of releases across output types, and reviewing impact assessments of published outputs. An internal-facing Power BI dashboard was developed in 2023 focused on measuring impact. The dashboard shows google analytics and social media engagement/impressions and is used by SOC members to inform the impact assessments.
11. Regular presentation of management information (MI) on the outputs released in each quarter, with breakdowns by output type and alignment to priorities, ensures SOC can provide strategic direction to OG to monitor the implementation and delivery of the outputs plan and schedule. MI is also used to provide insights and predictions for potential areas of concern (such as publishing pinch points, or seasonality in regular releases).
12. SOC is additionally responsible for oversight and challenge of the risk and mitigation owners for the management of strategic risk 1 (keeping pace with changing priorities) and 8 (inclusivity in our statistics and analysis).

Discussion – Outputs Group (OG)

13. Outputs Group (OG) is responsible for commissioning and monitoring the progress of delivery of outputs. The Outputs Group meets twice weekly. It is attended by SROs, and representatives from Communications and Digital Publishing (CDP), Methodology and Quality (MQD) (including Statistics Head of Profession Office), and Finance Planning and Performance (FPP).
14. OG operates to ensure proposed outputs align to current agreed priorities through a review process. All new proposed additions to the release calendar (e.g. anything which is not an existing approved regular release with agreed frequency), must be approved via this governance process. Business areas complete an Outputs Request Form (ORF), acquiring Deputy Director (DD) approval to confirm the work can be done (i.e. there is appropriate data, resource and capability available, and the proposed timelines are feasible). The

Coordination Team then cascade the completed ORF to several reviewers from the OG Board who provide further steer and approval:

- i. The SRO for the primary AP alignment reviews for strategic fit against other work aligned the same priorities (i.e. should the work be done? Does it align in content and timing with existing regular releases and other planned ad hoc work?). It should be noted that in many cases, the DD and SRO are the same person, but as this is not always the case, this review ensures coherence of work on the same topic produced by different parts of the office;
 - ii. CDP representation, including digital publishing, and media and communications review to ensure the proposed content types are appropriate, and that engagement with media relations teams has taken place or is planned; and
 - iii. MQD representation review to confirm proportionate assurance against risks to quality identified and outlined by the business area. Additionally review to ensure engagement with other governance processes such as the One ONS Design Authority, and alignment with Code of Practice.
15. OG meetings are used as an escalation forum when decisions on ORFs cannot be made by the review group, or where additional steer is sought. OG can be used as a prioritisation and decision-making forum when demand exceeds available publishing capacity, or where rapid changes to the publication schedule are needed due to external factors (such as the pre-election period for the general election).
16. Regular presentation of MI allows the Board members to maintain up to date awareness of current and projected volumes of outputs against analytical priority topics and approve use of flexible capacity to publish additional releases where required.

Conclusion

17. The Analytical Framework helps to ensure ONS provide the timely, accurate and relevant insights that government and society needs by setting our analytical priorities and monitoring our impact. The Framework will continue to evolve to keep pace with ONS strategic objectives and user needs.

Emily Hinson, Lead Coordinator, Analytical Hub, ONS, 2 December 2024

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)19

Environmental and Natural Capital Accounts: work to date and potential developments

Purpose

1. This paper outlines work to date and recent developments on our Office for National Statistics (ONS) Environmental and Natural Capital Accounts, aligned with the United Nations (UN) System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA), and developments under consideration through business planning and Spending Review processes.

Recommendations

2. This is note for information. While there are no recommendations, the Committee's views are welcome.

Background

3. The ONS has ensured that the UK has been and remains a world leader in producing and UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) aligned accounts:
 - i. our Environmental Accounts, which follow the SEEA Central Framework (CF), and which measure the contribution of the environment to the economy, the impact of economic activity on the environment, and responses to environmental issues; and
 - ii. our Natural Capital Accounts (NCAs), aligned with the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (EA), estimating the economic value of the natural environment in terms of stocks (asset value) and flows (annual value) of goods and services nature provides, known as ecosystem services.
4. A pilot set of ONS environmental accounts were first published in 1996, and a summary was added to the UK's 'Blue Book' in 1999. After a 2011 white paper, The natural choice: securing the value of nature, referred to an ONS/Department for Food and Rural Affairs collaboration on a roadmap towards a UK natural capital account, we published the first ONS NCA report in 2014, and have included them in the Blue Book since 2020. Our SEEA accounts work has expanded since the creation of a dedicated Environment Division in 2021, and accelerated after the Treasury-commissioned Dasgupta Review of the Economics of Biodiversity.
5. Around the world, more countries are implementing SEEA accounts: the UN's 2023 [global assessment](#) showed 90 countries implementing SEEA, compared with 69 in 2017, with a further 48 reporting that they are planning to do so.

Discussion

6. Recent publications include our:
 - i. latest Environmental Accounts, with provisional 2023 residence-based greenhouse gas and air pollution emissions data, on 17 October
 - ii. latest quarterly emissions statistics (modelled) for quarter 2 of 2024 on 6 November; and

- iii. latest NCAs, mostly with data for 2022, on 8 November 2024.
- 7. Importantly, At the time of writing, the 2025/26 ONS business planning process is ongoing, and the 2026/27 and 2027/28 Spending Review commission is pending. The remainder of this paper therefore discusses potential developments, subject to funding decisions related to these wider processes. Areas of future development of UK SEEA are below.

Building confidence through securing official statistics status

- 8. While the ONS is a SEEA leader globally, this field evolves continually, and we plan long-term development of our methodology following international best practice. Subject to resourcing outcomes, we are now in a position to advance our NCAs from statistics in development to official statistics status during 2025/26, in line with our 2022 [roadmap](#). This involves methodological improvements, e.g. to estimate services such as recreation and tourism, and future proofing by continuing our work to embed reproducible analytical pipelines (RAPs) and increase resilience of our data pipelines. Furthermore, we aim to further increase the impact the NCAs policy development impact by targeting key user needs, such as expanding service coverage, e.g. valuing flood defence, and further increasing granularity, following the introduction of nation breakdowns in the UK Natural Capital Accounts (2023).
- 9. Similarly, on the Environmental Accounts we are working towards securing official statistics status for our modelled quarterly greenhouse gas emissions estimates in our next release planned for early 2025. These differ from the territorial emissions measure used for monitoring net zero by 2050 and we regularly update [our explainer article](#) about the different UK emissions measures. We are looking to increase impact through continued work on quarterly emissions and timing of releases and reviewing the Environmental Goods and Service Sectors. We are also looking at developing our environmental taxes work, looking at environmental subsidies, and produced deflated versions of our measures.

Increasing Timeliness and Granularity

- 10. Given the range and complexity of data sources required to produce SEEA accounts leads to a significant time lag in delay, we have focused on increasing frequency of the Environmental Accounts through modelled quarterly data (see above) and for our NCAs improving their spatial granularity.
- 11. Having previously produced bespoke Scotland and England NCAs, since our 2023 release we now publish all UK nation breakdowns annually. We are aware of demand from local and combined authorities and other organisations for even greater spatial granularity to support their policies. Elements of the NCA, such as air pollution and greenhouse gas regulating services, are already available at local authority level, and our intention is to extend this to urban heat regulating services, and to publish recreation services at a regional level.

SEEA Central Framework review

- 12. In Spring 2025, the UN Statistics Commission is expected to approve a revision to the current SEEA-CF adopted in 2012, to ensure it remains responsive to emerging demands for integrated environmental and economic data, targeting adoption in 2028. Potential work areas include: linkages with SEEA-EA, consistency with the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA) revision and

harmonization with updates to other relevant international frameworks and classifications, strengthening policy links and links with the social domain.

13. The ONS is likely to be involved in the review process, potentially as co-lead of one of the teams, likely one focusing on issues including: classification of environmental activity; climate mitigation (net zero) and adaptation expenditure; environmentally damaging subsidies; incorporating sustainable finance into an accounting framework; and potentially extending 'environmental activities' beyond environmental protection and resource management.

Depletion in the National Accounts

14. SNA2025 will likely include a measure of depletion of natural resources on national balance sheets, through net economic measures, rather than the more widely used gross measures.
15. This comes with significant methodological challenges, it is our ambition to adapt the NCAs to quantify and productionise estimates of depletion of renewable resources – fish stocks, timber, renewable energy – and estimate the costs of restoring environmental damage due to human activity, and productionise oil, gas and minerals depletion measures, building [on previous research](#). This will require long-term capacity and capability development and investment.

Communication

16. SEEA accounts can sometimes seem complex and inaccessible. In recent years, we have increased our communications activity, simplifying our publications and engaging broader audiences with an article focused on [health benefits from recreation data](#) and the National Statistician's [Countryfile op ed](#), as well as bringing statistics from the Environmental Goods and Services Sector (in our Environmental Accounts) and the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy together to create [experimental estimates of green jobs](#).
17. There are communication challenges. For example, a high NCA valuation does not necessarily equate to good for nature as, for example, falling air pollution levels lead to a lower valuation of removal of such pollution. But such challenges exist for more widely used metrics such as Gross Domestic Product. New [inclusive wealth measures](#) go beyond GDP, bringing natural and human capital into a more holistic measure of economic welfare (as proposed in the Dasgupta Review), to help inform decision-makers.
18. Our measures highlight the impact of economic activity now and into the future, and potential trade-offs and synergies between resource use, depletion and regeneration and economic growth. This work would also enhance the UK's position at the forefront on environmental economic accounting internationally.

Conclusion

19. SEEA accounts are likely to see increasing traction, including though wider international adoption. With appropriate capacity and capability, the ONS can continue to lead on this work and ensure the environment is properly reflected in decision making.

Ian Townsend, Deputy Director, Sonia Carrera and Neil Wilson, Environment Division, ONS, 2 December 2024

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)20

Integrated Data Service: Update

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the progress of the Integrated Data Programme (IDP), responsible for the delivery of the Integrated Data Service (IDS).

Recommendations

2. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
 - i. note the Service Update and the progress that has been made with high-value analytical projects and indexed datasets; and
 - ii. note the positive outcome from the first phase of the 2025 Spending Review (SR).

Background

3. The IDP continues to make good progress and is delivering against the baselined plan agreed at the Integrated Data Programme Board.

Discussion

Programme Update

4. Since the previous IDS update to NSEUAC in September, strong progress has been made by the programme regarding use cases, with the IDS having recently onboarded multiple high-value analytical projects.
5. These projects make use of data already available within the IDS (as well as in-demand data to be brought into the IDS over the coming months) to inform the delivery of the government's central missions and realise key benefits of the service. Examples of these high-value analytical projects are listed in the Service Update below (paragraphs nine to 12).
6. Additionally, the IDS has achieved a positive outcome from the first phase of the 2025 Spending Review (SR25), which will enable the IDP to continue into the financial year 2025/2026.
7. The IDP is in the process of defining its scope for 2025/26, and the subsequent two financial years, to feed into the second phase of the SR process in January; this will include setting out how the IDS will work with the National Data Library (NDL).
8. Further to this point, the IDS is building on its strong relationship with the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) in ongoing, strategic engagements to agree the specific definition of the NDL.

Service Update

9. Healthcare and Labour Markets:

- i. analysis of healthcare interventions and employment outcomes, which was published by the Office for National Statistics on 23 October¹, is due to enter a second, exploratory phase in the IDS, with the aim of identifying future opportunities for analysis using linked health data; and
 - ii. the analysis and findings into the employment outcomes for patients of bariatric surgery supported the National Health Service in securing funding in the most recent SR settlement of approximately £230 million.
10. Enhancing Approaches to Night-Time Economy Classifications:
 - i. analysts from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the ONS, with the support of Greater Manchester (GMCA) and West Midlands (WMCA) combined authorities, are using government survey data and commercial telecommunications data to critically evaluate existing approaches to night-time economy classifications.
11. Exploratory analysis into child and fuel poverty:
 - i. the ONS is leading exploratory analysis to assess the potential use of linked administrative and survey data in the IDS to analyse child and fuel poverty, with the aim of providing new insights to policy makers; and
 - ii. phase one of the analysis focusses on Census 2011 and Census 2021 data, with work ongoing to add cross-government users and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Indicator (RTI) data.
12. Understanding the Quality of Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS Versus Labour Force Survey (LFS):
 - i. ONS analysts are also leading exploratory analysis into the viability of comparing HMRC PAYE RTI data with LFS and TLFS data, with the project seeking to evaluate the quality of the linkage between the LFS and the TLFS.

Conclusion

13. The IDP is making particularly strong progress regarding analytical use cases and will continue to prioritise the onboarding of high-value analysis and in-demand data in the IDS.
14. The IDS achieved a positive outcome from the first phase of SR25. As part of the spending conditions from phase one of the SR25 settlement, the IDP is preparing a set of options around future models for the IDS for the financial year 2025/2026. This options appraisal will be submitted as part of an Outline Business Case that also sets out high-level ambitions for future funding from the financial year 2026/27 onwards, which will be considered in phase two of SR25 in spring 2025.

Pete Benton, Senior Responsible Owner of the Integrated Data Service

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/theimpactofbariatricsurgeryonmonthlyemployeeepayandemployeeestatusenlandapril2014todecember2022>

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(24)21

Update on the UK Statistics Assembly Plans

Purpose

1. This paper is to update the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) on plans for the UK Statistics Assembly. This paper gives an update to the Committee on developments since its October meeting (see paper NSEUAC(24)14).

Timing

2. As plans are progressing quickly for the Assembly, an additional verbal update may be provided at this meeting to cover developments since the production of this paper.

Recommendations

3. Members of NSEUAC are invited to:
 - i. note the progress towards the UK Statistics Assembly; and
 - ii. provide advice to assist planning and delivery of the Assembly.

Background

4. Recommendation 1 from Professor Lievesley's Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority was for the Authority to lead the establishment and delivery of a statistics assembly.
5. Since the release of the report, the UK Statistics Authority, and the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) have been working together to develop plans for the Assembly. Additionally, a delivery group is advising on the design and planning of the Assembly. It includes representatives from the official statistics system and a range of external organisations, including the RSS and members of NSEUAC. We have also been keeping Professor Denise Lievesley CBE informed of plans as well as presenting them to the Authority Board in November; both endorsed our progress.
6. The Assembly will take place on Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 10 Union Street in central London.

Discussion

Attendance

7. On 28 November, we had 500 attendees registered to attend (360 of which are attending in person) from a broad range of sectors. We continue to promote the event to stakeholders in all sectors and monitor registrations with the aim of securing a diverse attendance which is not dominated by any one sector or interest.

Format of event

8. We are designing the Assembly to be as inclusive and participatory as possible, through seeking input ahead as well as during the day itself. The agenda for the

day aims to provide maximum opportunity for listening to views, with a short introductory plenary session and then up to 15 breakout group discussions across the day informed by the key topics raised in the call for contributions, which closed in early November. We were encouraged with the number (62), quality and range of responses received. Members should note that by the time of the meeting this list will have been refined based on feedback from the Delivery Group, UK Statistics Authority and Government Statistical Service (GSS).

9. To support focused discussions with achievable asks, the breakout groups will seek to answer a deliberative question. Each group will have a facilitator who will be briefed to bring in pre-identified viewpoints and framing of trade-offs but allow most of the time for contributions and discussion. Relevant GSS experts will add context but not lead the deliberations.
10. The last part of the event is designed to ensure attendees leave the day with a high-level understanding of what the Assembly has discussed and a clear understanding that the findings will follow in an advisory report written by NSEUAC. These sessions will be in plenary and provide summaries of the themes and points of note across the sessions.

Principles to frame discussions around understanding need and value

11. To provide a consistent framework around the Assembly discussions and aid structure of NSEUAC's report, we have set out some principles to support assessment of need and value of different UK statistics. These are:
 - i. extent of impact for public good: from limited to extensive and coverage (e.g. to whole population or specific smaller groups);
 - ii. timescale for public benefit: immediate, medium or long term;
 - iii. type of user benefitted: academia, business, civil society, public sector;
 - iv. advances the modern statistical system: in the immediate, medium or long term; and
 - v. feasibility and capability for production by producer type: official statistics system, non-official (e.g. via private, charity or academic sectors).

Report

12. Following discussion with the NSEUAC Chair, the aim is to produce a draft advisory report for consideration at the February Authority Board, ahead of publication. The report will set out the financial context, advise on what the official system should prioritise for delivery in the coming years (and what it should not) and advise on where those outside government could align for public good. Authority staff will support the NSEUAC in writing this report as required and provide comprehensive notes from the day.

Neil Townsend, Communications and Digital Publishing Directorate, ONS, 2 December 2024