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**Darren Tierney** | Permanent Secretary

Simon Hoare MP  
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

*Sent via email only*

12 February 2026

Dear Simon,

I wanted to provide an update on our progress and plans, which I committed to in my first letter to the Committee of 17 September 2025<sup>1</sup>.

Upon joining the organisation, I set out my four key priorities for the Office for National Statistics (ONS):

1. Implement the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP) and Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan (SIEP)
2. Create a culture that delivers for the organisation and for our people
3. Transform our digital estate, and move away from legacy technology
4. Prepare for the delivery of the 2031 Census

Since I last updated you on our progress, I have continued to take the difficult decisions needed to ensure we can deliver these priorities and reestablish the ONS as the proud, trusted institution it should be. This includes an overhaul of the leadership and structure of the organisation, reducing or stopping lower priority activity, and building a People Plan that can deliver a transformed organisational culture. I have taken many of these decisions to put in place an environment that enhances delivery and performance, and I am confident that we're now seeing green shoots of recovery in our day-to-day statistical production.

As explained in my letter of 11 November<sup>2</sup>, we are renewing our focus on priority economic and population statistics. We are also prioritising resourcing our recovery plans, with a focus on attracting those with the skills needed, including increasing people working on the ESP and SIEP. As such, as an Executive Committee (ExCo), we have made the difficult but necessary decisions to prioritise our resource and funding, and will be reducing our suite of activity across our health, international,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/49710/documents/266440/default/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/50395/documents/272671/default/>

subnational and local portfolio, in addition to some lower priority economic statistics outputs. This includes working with key stakeholders to review the status and funding of these statistics, and pivoting activity to focus on work that contributes to our organisational priorities.

### **Improvements to our economic statistics**

In 2025, we started to make real progress with regards to improving some of our economic statistics, including house price statistics now being less prone to revision, restoring our producer price index statistics, reframing our monthly GDP statistics to remove the focus from the volatile monthly change, and restoring the achieved sample sizes for the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to levels similar to those seen pre-pandemic. On the latter, I am pleased that the Bank of England and the Office for Budget Responsibility have publicly recognised these increased LFS sample sizes and are regaining confidence in these estimates.

Across 2026, I am confident we can continue this momentum:

- In March, we will introduce supermarket scanner data into our headline inflation statistics, which will allow us to go from 25,000 price points collected from price collectors to 300 million price points directly from checkouts, providing a more comprehensive measure of grocery prices.
- In April, we hope to introduce further developments to the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) such as ‘data rotation’, to make the survey faster and improve data quality.
- We will build on the success of ‘ClassifAI’ and roll out AI technology across our survey operations. This will include deploying ClassifAI to the Business Register Employment Survey, allowing further automation of previously arduous processes.
- We are focusing on strengthening our relationships with businesses, reducing the burden of our business surveys, and improving our business register with the new Statistical Business Register.

### **Enhancing our population and migration statistics**

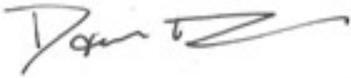
Last year, we reached some crucial milestones in improving our suite of population, migration and social statistics:

- In October 2025, after a period of development, our Domestic Abuse statistics were evaluated as meeting the rigorous standards to become “Accredited Official Statistics”.
- Since November 2025, we have reduced our reliance on the International Passenger Survey (IPS), moving to an administrative data approach, utilising data from the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions, to produce estimates of migration into and out of the United Kingdom.

In 2026, a key priority will be the continued preparations for the 2031 Census, which will be a 'digital first' census, and build on the success of 2021. The 2031 Census will introduce targeted improvements that make the best use of administrative data and modern technology, including the potential (and appropriate) use of AI, delivering operational efficiency and better meeting user needs, whilst enabling participation for those who are digitally excluded.

I look forward to delivering against our priorities and continuing to improve the quality of our core economic and population statistics in 2026 and warmly welcome your engagement as the ONS continues along its recovery.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darren Tierney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Darren Tierney**