

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 5 March 2026 11:00 – 13:00

Minutes

Microsoft Teams

Committee Attendees

Dame Kate Barker (Chair)
Eva Aizpura
Professor Paul Allin
Helen Boaden
James Brooks
Sarah Cumbers
Mary Gregory
Ed Humpherson
Phyllis MacFarlane
Sarah Moore

ONS Attendees

James Benford
June Bowman
Neil Townsend
Francesca Gaunt
Hellen Miller-Bakewell
Lara Phelan
Osama Rahman
Darren Tierney
Jen Woolford

Apologies

Professor Paul Boyle

Secretariat

Kate Beeslee
Oluchi Enunwa
Jo-Anna Hagen

1. Welcome, Previous Minutes and Actions

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed the Committee to the meeting and formally thanked Guy for his contribution to the committee, noting that he had to step down following his recent appointment at Royal Statistical Society (RSS). The Committee discussed the circulation of papers ahead of publication.
- 1.2. Members noted that the minutes for the December meeting should be amended to reflect that Sarah Cumbers and Eva Aizpura had attended. The Secretariat would ensure the version on the Authority website was corrected promptly.
- 1.3. The Committee agreed that the blog titled “Renewed momentum?” by Ed Humpherson should be circulated to members.

Action 01/26: Secretariat to circulate Ed’s blog to members.

Action 02/26: Secretariat to correct attendance in December minutes on the website to include Sarah Cumbers and Eva Aizpura. Business Planning and ONS Prioritisation Update

2. Research on Official Statistics and Personal Decisions

- 2.1. Helen Miller Bakewell introduced the Office for Statistics Regulation’s (OSR) research programme, noting that it aimed to deepen the understanding of how statistics can best serve the public good. Francesca Gaunt presented OSR’s research on how members of the public used official statistics when making personal decisions [Statistics in Personal Decision-Making – Office for Statistics Regulation](#)
- 2.2. The research recommended improving the relevance of official statistics by increasing local granularity, enabling personalisation and data visualisation, and allowing meaningful comparisons that reflected lived experience. Wider recommendations centred on strengthening the trustworthiness of official statistics and official statistics producers through greater transparency, supporting third-party fact-checking, and building credibility and relatability.
- 2.3. The Committee heard that the research had informed several ongoing OSR workstreams, including a recently published study by a PhD student on trust in official statistics, work exploring the unique value of official statistics, and early exploratory work on potential evidence gaps.
- 2.4. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - i. members recognised the importance of the research in demonstrating that statistics are used widely outside government decision making, including for everyday individual decisions, and that trust strongly influences usage;
 - ii. it was noted that public trust is especially significant in the current political environment, and that having a reliable, trusted set of official statistics is essential for public confidence;
 - iii. members asked how the recommendations would be translated into practice, highlighting that implementation is often the most challenging aspect of research programmes;
 - iv. the team described its approach to implementation engaging both internal colleagues and producers across the Government Statistical Service (GSS) including a recent workshop with the GSS Presentation Champions Network;
 - v. OSR would consider which recommendations might inform future guidance, building on previous work such as guidance on dashboards for official statistics producers;
 - vi. members emphasised the importance of producers recognising their duty to create statistics that serve the public, noting that this message required continued reinforcement across the statistical system;

- vii. members noted that, even where resources are limited, demonstrating openness to engagement and feedback can have symbolic and practical value in strengthening public confidence; and
 - viii. It was reported that producers had generally been enthusiastic about the recommendations, though trade-offs were necessary to ensure proportionate implementation.
- 2.5. The Chair thanked the team for the presentation, noting that the research provided important insight into how official statistics can better serve the public and support trust in the statistical system.

3. Business Planning and ONS Prioritisation Update

- 3.1. Darren Tierney briefed the Committee on the current pressures within the Office for National Statistics (ONS), he explained that ONS had completed a short-term, in-year prioritisation exercise to decompress immediate pressures. More strategically, ONS was now developing a three year business plan - its first for several years which should allow the organisation to sequence activity sensibly and avoid repeated mid-year reallocation of resources.
- 3.2. ONS's core mandatory priorities over the next three years were outlined as: delivery of the Census, continuation of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), investment in the Statistical Business Register, and the delivery of recovery plans for economic, population, and survey statistics.
- 3.3. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
- i. the Committee stressed the importance of addressing legacy systems and accumulated technical debt, observing that reliance on unfinished or parallel systems posed operational and financial risks;
 - ii. It was noted that some quality issues stemmed from managerial and oversight shortcomings. Members emphasised the need for stronger internal challenge and clearer accountability for major programmes;
 - iii. members welcomed signs of cultural improvement within ONS, including increased openness, stronger internal scrutiny, and more robust discussions before matters reached the Authority Board;
 - iv. members highlighted that user engagement should not focus solely on government users. Wider engagement with local authorities, academics, civil society organisations, smaller businesses, and the general public remained essential;
 - v. the Committee discussed the challenge of balancing strategic ambition with deliverability. Members supported ambition but stressed that restoring the quality of core statistics must remain the priority;
 - vi. it was suggested that strengthening specialist capability particularly in programme management, digital delivery, and data engineering would support resilience and reduce the likelihood of recurrence of past issues;
 - vii. members supported the development of interim Assembly style engagement events to maintain visibility, transparency, and public confidence between full Assembly cycles;
 - viii. the Committee acknowledged that the incoming National Statistician would likely wish to shape elements of the longer term strategy. However, members welcomed ONS's intention to continue consulting widely during the transition period; and
 - ix. Members noted the value of recent workshops, including an RSS/OSR roundtable, and welcomed plans for wider engagement with a broader user ecosystem throughout. A summary of findings would be shared with the New Statistician.
- 3.4. Members were updated on plans for interim engagement activity relating to the Statistics Assembly.

Action 03/26: Sarah Moore to share summary of user engagement (RSS/OSR workshop and wider stakeholder conversations) with the incoming National Statistician.

4. Census Update – Topic Consultation

- 4.1. Jennet Woolford introduced the update on the Census 2031 Topic Consultation. She noted that the census process must be robust, inclusive, and supported by extensive engagement with local authorities, population groups, delivery partners and wider users. Jennet highlighted the importance of ensuring that everyone can complete the questionnaire and that the data collected meets strong user need.
- 4.2. The Committee heard that the Census Strategy had been published the previous day, and that an update on the topic consultation would be published in the spring, followed by detailed reports later this year. Members noted the value of recent engagement activity, including roundtables held with the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and ongoing ONS/Population Census and Social Statistics (PCSS) user engagement plans.
- 4.3. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - i. members asked whether there were identifiable gaps in the user community and how ONS was maintaining dialogue throughout the sequencing and decision making process;
 - ii. members welcomed the transparency of the published criteria used to assess consultation responses, noting the importance of balancing user need with considerations such as respondent burden;
 - iii. the Committee emphasised the importance of maintaining clear communication about next steps to support user understanding of how topics will be assessed and decisions taken;
 - iv. Members discussed the need to consider broader political and societal risks, international challenges to census operations and agreed that the landscape had become more fragile;
 - v. the Committee discussed the work of the Board's Population Statistics System subgroup, which includes Non Executive Directors, external experts, and representatives from the Government Digital Service. Members welcomed the assurance this provided;
 - vi. members highlighted the importance of user engagement as a mechanism for discovering unexpected insights, noting that such "unknown unknowns" are often the most valuable outcomes of consultation; and
 - vii. the Committee noted that discussions on some future census design decisions may need to await the appointment of the new National Statistician.
- 4.4. The Chair thanked Jennet and colleagues for the update and looked forward to hearing more about the findings from user engagement at a future meeting.

5. Economics Statistics Plan – User Engagement

- 5.1. James Benford introduced the update on user engagement relating to the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP). He summarised progress on key elements of the plan, including the restoration of Labour Force Survey (LFS) sample sizes, progress towards the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), developments in scanner data, and changes to migration statistics.
- 5.2. Members heard that ONS had reinforced traditional engagement channels, including expert groups for prices, national accounts, migration and the labour market, and had established a close steering group with HM Treasury, the Bank of England, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), and the Cabinet Office and was also exploring ways

to engage more widely through thematic sessions, roundtables, and structured briefings.

- 5.3. Members discussed the update. The following points were raised in discussion:
- i. members encouraged ONS to continue with the steps it was taking to ensure a broad scope of perspectives in its strategic discussions;
 - ii. the need to balance the views of major economic institutions with those of other users, noting that the current structure with a steering group of major economic institutions was important for restoring trust but should not be the sole basis for engagement;
 - iii. members asked how ONS would maintain a wider dialogue throughout the prioritisation process, including how quarterly updates could be used to support transparency and invite feedback;
 - iv. The ONS plans to publish a quarterly progress report, with the next update due in mid-April, and use this to update on priorities. The prioritisation process would be continuous and careful sequencing was needed to protect delivery confidence. A 'waiting room' would be used to be clear on the priorities not currently been taken forward;
 - v. members discussed the importance of clarity around methodological changes and the ONS discussed the example of scanner data and how differences between old and new approaches were being communicated;
 - vi. members welcomed the increased transparency and openness in ONS's engagement, noting a positive change in tone and responsiveness over the past six months; and
 - vii. to improve accessibility, members suggested using RAG ratings, dashboards, and visual summaries in quarterly updates, rather than relying on dense narrative reports.
- 5.4. The Committee showed appreciation for the increased transparency and ongoing improvements to user engagement

6. Any Other Business

- 6.1. The Committee considered future horizon-scanning and agreed to invite a range of external speakers to help inform longer-term thinking about user needs and developments affecting the statistical system. Members highlighted the value of hearing from experts whose work focuses on unmet statistical needs, poverty data gaps, and the role of statistics within wider social and political change. Potential contributors included academic specialists, representatives from the voluntary sector, and those working on improving access to and use of public data.
- 6.2. Members agreed to approach suggested speakers and explore availability for upcoming meetings, ensuring clarity that these sessions are intended to deepen understanding of user needs rather than to expand ONS's immediate workload.
- 6.3. The Committee agreed that potential speakers should be approached by offering all upcoming meeting dates and determining availability. The Chair thanked members for their contributions and brought the meeting to a close.
- 6.4. The next meeting was due to take place via teams on 3 June 2026.

Action 04/26: Secretariat to approach proposed speakers and offer all dates to them.

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agenda
Thursday 5 March 2026, 11:00-13:00
Microsoft Teams

Chair: Dame Kate Barker

Apologies: Professor Paul Boyle

Timing	Agenda item	
1 11:00-11:10 (10 mins)	Welcome, previous minutes and actions	Meeting of 03.12.2025 Dame Kate Barker
2 11:10-11:35 (25 mins)	Research on Official Statistics and Personal Decisions	Presentation Ed Humpherson Helen Miller-Bakewell
3 11:35-11:55 (20 mins)	Business Planning and ONS Prioritisation Update	Oral Update Sarah Moore Darren Tierney
4 11:55-12:25 (30 mins)	Census Update – Topic Consultation	NSEUAC(26)01 Lara Phelan Jen Woolford
5 12:25-12:55 (30 mins)	Economic Statistics Plan – User Engagement	NSEUAC(26)02 James Benford Osama Rahman
6 12:55-13:00 (5 mins)	Any other business & Forward agenda	Dame Kate Barker

Next Meeting: Wednesday 3 June, London

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(26)01

User engagement on Census 2031

Purpose

1. At the request of the Chair, this discussion paper provides a summary on how users are being engaged throughout the census process, including key engagement points, recognising that we are at beginning of the Census 2031 programme.

Recommendations

2. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to:
 - i. note the recent engagement and future points for engagement;
 - ii. discuss and advise on engagement channels and any opportunities or gaps; and
 - iii. advise how the Office for National Statistics (ONS) best engages with the committee throughout the Census Programme.

Background

3. A census is the largest statistical exercise undertaken by ONS. It is a once-a-decade opportunity to provide users with the detailed statistics they need. It is critical that we maximise the value of the data and statistics the census collects and disseminates, that users have confidence in the census outputs and everyone can access the statistics in transparent and equitable ways.
4. Achieving this requires extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders over many years. The wide range of stakeholders and the objectives of the engagement at different points of the census life cycle mean that we need a range of engagement approaches and channels.
5. This paper provides an overview of our stakeholder types and engagement channels, with a focus on the users of census data and outputs.
6. Given the importance of engaging stakeholders throughout the census lifecycle, a dedicated engagement workstream has been established within the Census 2031 programme. This workstream will cover England & Wales, and we will work closely with Welsh Government in the planning and delivery of census engagement. Collaboration with National Records of Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency will aim to align engagement across the UK.
7. Census engagement will be considered alongside other ONS engagement to ensure joined up stakeholder conversations.

Our audience

8. The census programme has myriad stakeholders, all of whom we engage with on a regular basis throughout the census lifecycle. These include:
 - i. users of census statistics;
 - ii. census respondents: to the test, rehearsal, census and and post-census surveys (for example the Census Coverage Survey);
 - iii. civil society and the third sector who will be instrumental in supporting the ONS to maximise the coverage and inclusivity of the Census;
 - iv. delivery partners; and
 - v. suppliers.

9. This paper focusses on engagement with the users of census statistics and data. The user community ranges from expert users, often with deep knowledge of census and considerable expertise to contribute, through to secondary users of census data and citizen users. Depending on their interests, stakeholders will have varying levels of engagement across the programme lifecycle, so programme phasing will be a key consideration of the engagement approach.

Our engagement aims

10. Our user engagement aims to collect information on a range of user requirements. These include:
- i. census topics and the uses made of census data, to help us make prioritisation decisions on the content of the questionnaire and evaluate the benefits delivered by a census;
 - ii. detailed subject matter requirements to help with the design of census questions and classifications;
 - iii. quality requirements, to inform the statistical design of the census and quality reporting needs; and
 - iv. how users want to interface with the census, to inform our dissemination approaches, from interactive on-line dissemination to microdata products.
11. In addition, our engagement seeks to build user confidence in our census methods and statistics.

Our engagement channels

12. User engagement will take place through a range of approaches including ONS led advisory committees and working groups, and formal consultations and via participation in third-party user forums and events.
13. Key channels to note are:
- i. a formal public consultation to inform the topics to take forward into question development;
 - ii. dedicated theme groups working with expert users on the design of questions, classifications and derived variables;
 - iii. user groups including Central and Local Information Partnership (CLIP), Census Advisory Groups, and professional bodies including Royal Statistical Society and British Society for Population Studies;
 - iv. regular updates, including blogs, videos and podcasts, keeping users informed of progress and opportunities to engage;
 - v. methodological assurance through academic papers and presentations at UK and international academic conferences to build user confidence in our methods; and
 - vi. partner and third-party events. Where appropriate, ONS will participate in recognised user groups or user focused events.

Recent engagement

14. Over the last six months, ONS has:
- i. undertaken a public topic consultation which closed on 4 February 2026. To ensure wide awareness of the consultations, the communications and engagement approach included running webinars, issuing press notices in English and Welsh, posting on social media, delivering PR, and participating in third-party events;
 - ii. presented census plans at the British Society for Population Studies, Royal Statistical Society and UK Census Data conferences;
 - iii. provided updates at the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee and the Market Research Society Census and GeoDem Group;
 - iv. held several interactive topic focused events last year, one with academics, local authorities, government departments and other users, to explore how ONS could

- increase the utilisation of admin data to support census operations and minimise the burden on the public; and
- v. participated in a Royal Statistical Society roundtable, where the Office for Statistics Regulation and expert users were invited to share their views on a series of key questions, including how the proposed 2031 Census design meet user needs, particularly for sub-national populations and smaller population sub-groups and, what the major methodological challenges and opportunities are in developing administrative and alternative data sources to complement the census.
15. In addition, a consultation on an updated harmonised standard for ethnicity was run in parallel by the Government Statistical Service. Our expectation is that the relevant census question will align with the new harmonised standard in England and Wales.

Next steps

16. ONS will publish a Census 2031 Strategy on the ONS website in March. Understanding and meeting user needs is central to this strategy, and the design of the Census operation, processing, outputs and dissemination will be driven by our understanding of user needs.
17. The topic consultation was highly successful, with a large number of responses from a wide range of users. Over the coming months we will be evaluating responses and will publish an update on the topic consultation in the spring, followed by detailed reports in late summer.
18. Research and engagement with users will inform proposals for census questionnaire content to be set out in the Census White Paper.
19. Decisions on design and census questions will have been made in the time for the Census Rehearsal, informed by user feedback and testing in real-world conditions.

Conclusion

20. Census 2031 planning is now well underway. The design, operation, processing and outputs from the Census will be driven by user needs and maximising the impact of Census outputs.
21. Detailed engagement plans are being developed and will be overseen by a dedicated communication and engagement workstream within the Census Programme
22. We are committed to engaging with, and understanding, the full range of user needs and will seek opportunities to engage with both established and potential new users of Census statistics.
23. We welcome any advice and support on our user engagement plans that can help us to achieve these objectives.

Jen Woolford, Social, Local and Census Statistics, ONS, 24 February 2026

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
NATIONAL STATISTICIAN'S EXPERT USER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NSEUAC(26)02

Economic Statistics Plan Update, March 2026

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the progress with the Economic Statistics Plan (ESP) and how we are engaging users on it.

Recommendations

2. Members of the National Statistician's Expert User Advisory Committee (NSEUAC) are invited to offer their views on:
 - i. priorities for improving economic statistics; and
 - ii. how to build on and improve our approach to engaging users.

Background

3. The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) [Plan for Economic Statistics](#) was published on 26 June 2025 alongside the Devereux Review and [Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan](#) (SIEP).
4. ESP represents an ambitious series of change which is highly integrated with areas across ONS including several elements of the SIEP and methodology and technology improvements.

Discussion

Structure for delivery

5. Following James Benford's appointment as Director General, the Economic, Social and Environmental Group (ESEG) has been restructured to form Surveys and Economic Statistics (SES). This brings together economic statistics, social and business surveys and methodology into a new group under James' leadership, allowing more effective working and prioritisation across the end-to-end process to produce statistics.
6. The ONS is currently undergoing multi-year business planning to sequence all improvement work to ensure it is realistic and focuses first on the most urgent quality issues. Once business planning has concluded, we plan to integrate the ESP and SIEP into a single plan to further support the recovery of economic statistics.

Progress so far

7. With several ESP milestones completed and delivery in progress across other actions, the quality and trustworthiness of our statistics have improved.
8. In September 2025 the 'three-month on three-month' measure was adopted as the headline figure for monthly GDP release, in response to user feedback.
9. In October 2025 we resumed publication of the Producer Price Index improving the quality and correcting the error which led to suspension of the Index in April 2025.
10. The Blue Book and Pink Book were published in October 2025 with the successful implementation of improved source data on research and development, and improvements to the way we measure activities of large multinational companies in the pharmaceutical sector.

11. In November 2025 we published an update to methods for migration to replace the International Passenger Survey (IPS) with more accurate administrative data.
12. In January, we announced the final 'go' decision for the introduction of supermarket scanner data into consumer inflation statistics. This new data source brings a big step change in the quality and way we measure inflation, representing a huge milestone for the ESP
13. Improvements are also underway through the delivery SIEP milestones:
 - i. The face-to-face interviewer community has expanded by 16percent allowing achieved sample sizes for the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to be restored similar to pre-pandemic levels;
 - ii. The Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) Core Survey was successfully launched in July 2025, and Supported Completion went live in October 2025; and
 - iii. Electronic data collection for the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) has been expanded.
14. The Business Prices survey has moved online, with business surveys now incorporating HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) Corporation Tax data for better sampling.

Steps being taken through business planning

15. Whilst recovery is underway, challenges still exist to meeting the planned milestones. A range of improvements are being made involving data, methods, technology and processes. Underlying systems and processes need to be improved, along with further embedding continuous quality improvement to reduce errors and drive efficiency.
16. Given the scale of our commitments, including double running the existing and TLFS, delivering a new statistical business register (SBR), preparing for the new international macroeconomic standards and delivering Census 2031, we are taking deliberate decisions about sequencing through the introduction of a "waiting room" to control flow and priority of work. Where necessary, this means pausing or slowing some planned activity to safeguard the quality and delivery of our most critical existing workstreams: the delivery of the Transformed Labour Force Survey, a new Statistical Business Register and new International Macroeconomic Statistical Standards. We will publish our priorities, including what improvement initiatives we are placing in the waiting room, in April with the next quarterly update on the Survey and Economic Statistics plans.
17. On 12 November 2025 the ONS pledged to [reduce annual outputs by 10 per cent](#) in 2026, prioritising quality over quantity. Pausing or slowing some planned activity will allow us to safeguard the delivery of our most critical existing workstreams by diverting resources to support recovery in these key areas. In February 2026 a [letter was sent to the Authority interim chair](#) to confirm the actions required to reduce outputs by 10 per cent:
 - i. Reducing the ONS's involvement in health surveys – no longer running the Health Survey for England and the Mental Health of Children and Young People Survey
 - ii. Pausing our quarterly greenhouse gas emissions (residence basis) statistics, along with any future developments to our subnational clustering.
 - iii. Stopping the development of subnational estimates of tourism spending and Tourism Direct Gross Value Added, and any further developments of Health, Wellbeing and Place research
 - iv. Scaling back activity related to wellbeing statistics, along with refocusing our Beyond GDP statistics development work to focus on understanding the impact of AI
 - v. As part of the development of our new website, we will also improve and consolidate our publications to focus on what audiences need most, delivered in a streamlined way

18. In the letter, we also announced the continuation of the Annual Population Survey (APS) to reflect feedback from users on the importance of the survey for local and regional insight. There will be a lower level of resource to enable us to bolster the Living Costs and Food Survey – a key contributor to GDP and other economic statistics.

User engagement approaches and progress

19. Our user engagement approach is designed to ensure transparency, sustained dialogue, and meaningful user input into the development and delivery of the ESP and SIEP.
20. We have established an external steering group with representatives from Cabinet Office, Bank of England (BoE), HM Treasury (HMT) and Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) chaired by James Benford, providing strategic oversight and independent challenge on delivery. This is complemented by quarterly public updates, including the detailed [update](#) published in December 2025 (with the next one planned for April 2026), and regular blogs offering open updates on progress and addressing challenges directly.
21. We are maintaining momentum through a range of established channels:
- i. National Statistician's Advisory Panels on consumer prices (technical and stakeholder) labour market statistics and National Accounts to bring structured user insight and independent challenge into design and prioritisation;
 - ii. at a SES team level, there are a range of technical committees or groups with external representation, and almost all hold regular user events which typically combine briefing and engagement;
 - iii. most teams have regular (often monthly) engagement with key government departments and, for some areas, the Bank of England;
 - iv. extensive engagement and communications to keep users informed of methodological and operational development with the Transformed Labour Force Survey and to understand user needs (content and quality) to feed into plans and decisions;
 - v. *the bi-monthly ONS Economic Forum which provides a platform for communicating progress and gathering user feedback, attracting a broad audience of analysts and economists from across sectors — including academia, business, the City, local government, think tanks, and other key stakeholder groups; and*
 - vi. regular targeted stakeholder bulletins and newsletters highlighting economic statistics developments e.g. monthly economic insights and updates [c16,500 subscribers] and a quarterly economic update that reaches a broader audience interested in economic statistics [60,000 subscribers].
22. To ensure we listen to a wide variety of users, we have recently undertaken specific engagement activities, including:
23. business user workshop to understand sector specific data needs, delivered in partnership with Better Statistics, which convened a roundtable discussion with a range of groups representing businesses across the UK;
24. a collaborative open event hosted by National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) attended by a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from the City, academia, business, and other key sectors; and
25. joint roundtable on user engagement hosted by Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and OSR with representation from academia, research, charity sector, not for profit organisations as well as other statistics users.
26. We are working to deliver additional user engagement activity in 2026 to provide further opportunities for independent advice, constructive challenge, and reflection from the wider user community including businesses, think-tanks and academia. This engagement activity aims to provide greater opportunity for users to input into our designs and direction. The proposed panels would help build strategic relationships that improve priority setting and deepen understanding of key economic issues. We are also

looking at enhanced stakeholder engagement events and technical briefing for key economic commentators and influencers to accompany our headline economic releases to deepen understanding of our statistics and to seek feedback on our priorities.

27. We are committed to ensuring we understand and consider needs of all users. Inevitably users will have differing priorities and views and we need to work within financial and technical constraints. This means we will not be able to meet all user needs but we will be clear and transparent on what we have heard from users and how we have factored that into decision making.

Conclusion

28. Delivery of the ESP continues to make progress, with several major milestones recently completed. A multi-year business planning process is underway which will be critical to carefully sequencing our work to ensure delivery of the ESP, whilst maintaining a quality over quantity approach for the office as a whole.
29. User engagement continues to be a central pillar of our work, with structured activity – including the external steering group, targeted stakeholder communications, sector specific workshops and further focus on interactive events where we can listen to views and respond. This ensures transparency, independent challenge, and meaningful input into the development of the ESP and SIEP. The paper has outlined both the progress achieved through these channels and our plans to expand engagement further in 2026.

Katy Stewart, Strategic Innovation and Analysis, Neil Townsend, Communications and Digital Publishing and Lisa Evans, Economic Statistics Improvement, ONS, 11 February 2026