

# **UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

## **Committee for Official Statistics**

### **Minutes**

**Tuesday 13 July 2010**

#### **Present**

##### **Members**

Professor Sir Roger Jowell (Chair)  
Mr Richard Alldritt  
Professor Angela Dale  
Ms Moira Gibb  
Professor David Rhind  
Sir Michael Scholar

##### **Other Attendees**

Mr Jason Bradbury (for item 7)  
Mr Peter Helm (for item 2)  
Mr Graham Jenkinson (for item 4)  
Mr Richard Laux  
Ms Caron Walker (for Ms Jil Matheson)

##### **Secretariat**

Mr Rob Bumpstead  
Ms Amanda Charles

##### **Apologies**

Dr Colette Bowe  
Professor David Hand  
Mr Duncan MacNiven  
Ms Jil Matheson

##### **Declarations of Interest**

None

## **1 Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 6 May 2010 were agreed as a correct record.
- 1.2 Under matters arising, the Chair of the Authority updated the Committee on a recent meeting with the Minister for the Cabinet Office (further to his letter to the Prime Minister regarding the governance of official statistics, noted at paragraph 4.1 of the minutes). At this meeting the Authority's position on pre-release access to statistics, the 2011 Census and the release of public sector employment figures were discussed.

## **2 Agriculture and Environment Theme Group Update [SA(COS)(10)14]**

- 2.1 Mr Helm, statistical Head of Profession at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Chair of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Agriculture and Environment Theme Group, presented a paper which set out the plans and priorities of this Theme.
- 2.2 Climate change and ensuring the availability of information for the associated policy needs posed the most significant challenge in the environmental sphere. The Committee heard that DEFRA were leading a stock-taking exercise to determine what information exists and who it is produced by.
- 2.3 In the agricultural domain, European Union (EU) requirements posed a significant and possibly disproportionate burden. For example the agricultural census covers 120,000 farms in England although they reflect only a relatively small proportion of GDP. This compares with the 80,000 or so businesses sampled by Office for National Statistics (ONS) for their economic statistics. There is support from other countries to simplify requirements in agricultural statistics, but less support within the European Commission itself.
- 2.4 Users are being consulted as part of the review of priorities taking place across this theme. It was noted that there may be efficiency gains in a more joined-up UK approach to data collection.

## **3 The Evolution of Monitoring [SA(COS)(10)15]**

- 3.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which proposed refinements to the operation of the Authority's monitoring function, including a proposal to only conduct one major Monitoring Review at a time, complemented by a regular, flexible, programme of briefing notes.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed that whilst in-depth Monitoring Reviews were important there was a role for more shorter Notes. It was noted that some of the topics proposed for these briefings overlapped with the role of the National Statistician and there may be scope for complementary National Statistician briefing notes.
- 3.3 It was agreed that the proposals for the evolution of monitoring should be considered by the Authority Board, and that for each proposed topic the intended audience should be described (e.g. producers, users)

## **4 A National Address Register: Addressing and Changes at Ordnance Survey [SA(COS)(10)16]**

- 4.1 Mr Jenkinson presented a paper which updated the Committee on prospects for a National Address Register. High level discussions have been taking place and while some issues over funding and Intellectual Property Rights remain to be resolved, there was now a greater degree of optimism about the likelihood of the establishment and maintenance of a single national address register.

- 4.2 The statistical benefits of a single address register include more accurate and effective sampling for household surveys. The wider public and commercial benefits were also noted. The possibility of privacy concerns arising was discussed, despite the register not containing any confidential information. It was unclear whether access to the register would be restricted and/or priced.
- 4.3 The Committee heard that ONS have been involved in quality assuring existing address registers.
- 4.4 It was noted that Ordnance Survey was now releasing more of its information and that this was considered to be a positive step.

## **5 UK Statistics Authority Policy on Devolved Statistics [SA(COS)(10)17]**

- 5.1 Mr Alldritt presented a paper which set out proposals for an Authority policy regarding UK comparability in statistics.
- 5.2 The meeting heard that in principle the GSS did support UK consistency and comparability, however this was sometimes precluded by the existence of different statutory frameworks. There were also resource implications to achieve comparability. In each case user needs and relative priority should be considered.
- 5.3 The Committee agreed that it should receive a report from the relevant GSS Theme Group on their consideration of the development of a comparable subset of childhood obesity figures. It was also agreed that there should be a Monitoring Note mapping out the issue more generally. The use of international standards and definitions should be promoted to help achieve UK and international comparability.
- 5.4 The meeting also heard that the Inter-Administration Committee (IAC) were due to discuss comparability issues again the following week. It was agreed that a report from the IAC would also be received by the next meeting of the Committee for Official Statistics.

**Action: The National Statistician's Office to provide a paper on the potential for comparable childhood obesity figures for the 5 October Committee meeting**

## **6 Policy Developments**

- 6.1 Mr Bumpstead summarised the main coalition policies which are anticipated to impact on the work of the Government Statistical Service and provided a synopsis of GSS activity in these areas since the coalition document was published.

## **7 Official Statistics e-Dissemination Strategy [SA(COS)(10)18]**

- 7.1 Mr Bradbury presented a paper on the official statistics e-dissemination strategy. A draft strategy would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the policy environment was rapidly changing and that competing demands for expertise and resource mean external partnerships for e-dissemination must be sought.

## **8 Any Other Business**

- 8.1 There was no other business. The Committee would meet next on Tuesday 5 October at 10:30am in London.

## **Committee for Official Statistics**

### ***Agenda***

***Tuesday, 13 July, 2010***

***Board Room, Statistics House, London, 10:30 - 13:00***

**Chair: Professor Sir Roger Jowell**

**Apologies: Mr Duncan McNiven, Ms Jil Matheson, Professor David Hand,  
Dr Colette Bowe**

1	Apologies, Minutes and Matters Arising  Declarations of interest	Meeting of 060510
2	Agriculture and Environment Theme Group Update	SA(COS)(10)14  Mr Peter Helm
3	The Evolution of Monitoring	SA(COS)(10)15  Mr Richard Alldritt
4	A National Address Register: Addressing and Changes at Ordnance Survey	SA(COS)(10)16  Mr Graham Jenkinson
5	UK Statistics Authority Policy on Devolved Statistics	SA(COS)(10)17  Mr Richard Alldritt
6	Policy Developments	Oral Report  Secretariat
7	Official Statistics e-Dissemination Strategy	SA(COS)(10)18  Mr Jason Bradbury
8	Any other business	

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, 5 October, 2010**

**Statistics House, London, 10:30 - 13:00**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**Committee for Official Statistics**

SA(COS)(10)14

***GSS Agriculture and Environment Theme Group Update***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents a note on the plans and priorities of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Agriculture and Environment Theme Group.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to note the current plans and activities being undertaken within the Agriculture and Environment Theme.

**Discussion**

3. The Committee for Official Statistics agreed at its 6 May meeting that it would like to hear from Theme Leaders at future Committee meetings, regarding plans and priorities in their respective topic areas. This paper provides a brief update on the current plans and activities being undertaken within the Agriculture and Environment Theme. This Theme Group is chaired by Peter Helm, Statistical Head of Profession at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
4. The Agriculture and Environment Theme Group (AETG) has two sub-groups whose work is co-ordinated by Peter Helm (Chair of AETG):
  - i. Agriculture (which has a rotating chair - currently Marc Thomas of DEFRA), and;
  - ii. Environment (chaired by John Custance of DEFRA).
5. Each sub-group includes representatives from the Devolved Administrations (DAs) and (in the case of the environment sub-group) a number of DEFRA and DA Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs). AETG includes the sub-group chairs, DA representatives and two senior Arm's Length Body (ALB) representatives to provide external challenge.
6. A good spirit of co-operation has existed for many years on the agriculture side, helped by the close working to address the UK's response to EU statistical issues. There is joint consideration of many issues though the solutions may not be the same across all the UK countries. A UK administrative data system (from which the statistical analyses are produced) is in place on the fisheries side, with examples of UK-wide statistical survey collections. AETG expects that this spirit will continue on the environment side, though it is a much newer group. A number of ALBs have responsibility for matters in more than one country and good cooperation is therefore essential in such cases.
7. It will be necessary to watch that there is a consistent and manageable approach in relation to the definition of official statistics covered by ALBs. Different departments are taking different approaches and moving at different speeds. Irrespective of 'official statistics' status, we are keen to cover the full range of statistics as far as we can.
8. There are five key issues emerging (or likely to emerge).
  - i. A more strategic focus - AETG needs to become much more strategic with key targets identified, and plans linked to the annual business planning cycle. A workshop on effective user engagement (including communication) will be held in the Autumn.
  - ii. Climate change - The Environment sub-group is undertaking a stocktake of what

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information is currently collected and what is needed. Climate change data is being made more accessible via the DECC website. An Inter-Departmental Working Group is being set up to direct future work.

- iii. Influencing Europe - EU requirements, which are already seen as excessive, are growing and reflect new needs. The response to Sir Michael Scholar's letter to the Agricultural Commissioner was - while helpful in some respects - very light on the detail of specific uses. Some support for our position was obtained at a recent DG-Agri Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Simplification Experts Group meeting. Issues are being pursued through the statistical, policy and economists' networks. Further consideration needs to be given to getting more support from other member states.
- iv. Review of priorities in the light of the Spending Review - All departments expect to be faced with significant pressures. A hard look is being taken at priorities and areas for savings. It will be important for the cross-UK teams to continue to work together on this. We are intending to consult key users on their priorities over the summer. Ministers have decided to drop the hardcopy publication of 'Sustainable Development Indicators in Your Pocket' (SDIYP) and rely on Internet access.
- v. Learning lessons from Assessments - This is something AETG is keen to support across Themes. With the exception of fisheries (where a Statistics Authority review is scheduled for early 2011) the current programmes for each country have been drawn up separately, leading to common surveys being reviewed at different times; this does not seem a sensible approach.

**Peter Helm, Agriculture and Environment Theme Chair, July 2010**

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**Committee for Official Statistics**

SA(COS)(10)15

***The Evolution of Monitoring***

**Purpose**

1. This paper describes how the Authority's monitoring function has been operating and invites the views of the Committee for Official Statistics on how it could be further developed.

**Timing**

2. We would like to refine these proposals and bring a revised paper to the Authority Board in July 2010.

**Recommendations**

3. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to agree that the Monitoring and Assessment team should:
  - i. normally plan to have around one Monitoring Report in production at any given time (paragraph 11);
  - ii. complement Monitoring Reports with a series of Monitoring Notes that are somewhat shorter than Monitoring Reports but longer than current Notes (paragraphs 11 and 12), and;
  - iii. experiment with the use of round table discussions as an additional means of addressing statutory monitoring requirements (paragraphs 13 and 14).
4. Members of the Committee are also invited to comment on the suggested priorities for Monitoring Notes (paragraph 18).

**Discussion**

5. Monitoring represents a separate strand of the Authority's independent scrutiny function that is distinct from assessment against the *Code of Practice*. It provides the Authority with a means of putting on record its views on any matter that might impinge on public trust in official statistics.
6. At present, the Authority has two main outlets for its monitoring activities, Monitoring Reports and Monitoring and Assessment Notes. In addition, the Authority maintains an 'issues log' on its website as a public record of matters which have been drawn to its attention.
7. Monitoring Reports are comprehensive research exercises that are overseen by a formal project board and are developed in close consultation with producers, users and relevant experts. They are designed to provide authoritative views on particular topics based on in-depth explorations of the issues. To date, the Authority has published seven Monitoring Reports. Work has recently started on a further Monitoring Report on environmental statistics. **Annex A** provides an overview of how Monitoring Reports have developed over the two and a half years since the Authority was first established and provides a brief summary of each of the Reports.
8. Monitoring Reports have proved an effective means for the Authority to fulfil its statutory obligation to report and publish its views on matters that impinge on public confidence in official statistics. Particular achievements include the following.
  - i. The Migration report allowed the Authority to put on record its views that it could take decades before the longer term aspiration for high quality migration statistics could

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- be realised and emphasise the importance of maintaining a national address register beyond the 2011 Census.
- ii. The Pre-Release access report allowed the Authority to put on record its considered views on the rules that should govern pre-release access to statistical reports.
  - iii. The Strengthening User Engagement report provided an opportunity for the Authority to explain the importance it attaches to effective user engagement as a precursor to realising the value of official statistics, and to make recommendations aimed at strengthening the user voice.
9. The management arrangements for producing Monitoring Reports have worked well and contributed to the credibility and authority of the final Reports and their recommendations. However, the process of establishing a project board, commissioning external research and carrying out extensive consultation exercises is resource intensive and time consuming.
10. The Authority has published Monitoring and Assessment Notes in response to concerns raised in relation to a particular series or statistical issue. They have complemented Monitoring Reports by providing a means for the Authority to give a rapid response to a particular issue as it arises. To date, the Authority has published nine such Notes on its website. Further information on how Monitoring and Assessment Notes have developed and a summary of each Note that has been produced is attached in **Annex B**.
11. Monitoring and Assessment Notes have proved an effective means of drawing attention to issues of concern in relation to official statistics and have also helped to raise public awareness of the role of the Authority in providing an independent voice on official statistics. Key achievements from Monitoring and Assessment Notes over the last two and a half years include the following.
- i. The Knife Crime Statistics Monitoring and Assessment Note resulted in a hearing of the Public Administration Select Committee. Following that, the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell issued new guidance to the Civil Service regarding good practice in relation to official statistics and the role of government statisticians.
  - ii. The Gender Pay Gap Monitoring and Assessment Note led to discussions between the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Government Equalities Office (GEO) on the most appropriate way to present figures on the gender pay gap. ONS subsequently published a position paper that fully took on board the views expressed in the Note.
  - iii. The Emerging Findings from Assessments in 2009 Monitoring and Assessment Note highlighted important findings from the early rounds of assessment on the need for producers to do more to engage with users and to improve the quality of commentary that accompanies statistical reports.
12. In the light of our experience so far, we see a case for adjusting the current balance of effort devoted to Monitoring Reports and to Monitoring and Assessment Notes. We consider that the Monitoring and Assessment team should continue to produce Monitoring Reports on selected topics, but recommend that we plan on the basis of not normally having more than one Monitoring Report in production at any given time. This would free up some resources to produce what we might call Monitoring Notes, something that would be shorter than a typical Monitoring Report but longer than a typical Monitoring and Assessment Note. Monitoring Notes would not need to have a full project board to oversee their production, but would provide the option to investigate an issue in somewhat greater depth than most current Monitoring and Assessment Notes. The Note on the Gender Pay Gap has many of the characteristics of what a new Monitoring Note might look like.



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13. The new series of Monitoring Notes would replace the current series of Monitoring and Assessment Notes. Monitoring Reports and Monitoring Notes would then be two distinct outputs, each with its own programme published on the website. We would retain the ability to produce extra Monitoring Notes at short notice, in response to any emerging developments that may be of concern to the Authority.
14. In addition, we see value in experimenting with 'round table' discussions. This would entail a round table discussion of a particular topic by a group of relevant stakeholders, including experts, users and producers, as appropriate. Round table discussions can provide an effective means of getting quickly to the heart of certain matters, establishing common ground and the controversial issues.
15. The precise format of a round table discussion can vary, but typically, it would proceed along the following lines. Once a suitable topic had been identified, the Monitoring and Assessment team would prepare a paper as a basis for discussion. Selected discussants would be invited to participate in the discussion which would be chaired by a Non Executive Director. The discussion would provide a basis for the Monitoring and Assessment team to update the discussion paper and to seek written comments from discussants prior to publishing the paper on the Authority website along with a record of the discussion. On occasions, it may make sense to invite third parties to provide a paper for discussion; or more than one discussion paper could be commissioned.
16. Monitoring Reports have tended to be planned well ahead, whereas Monitoring and Assessment Notes have tended to be produced at short notice in response to an issue arising. At present, work is in hand on the following three topics, which could be released as the first outputs from the new series of Monitoring Notes, to replace the current series of Monitoring and Assessment Notes:
  - i. emerging findings from the Assessments published in January to June 2010, and we expect 'emerging findings' will become regular six monthly outputs;
  - ii. the use made of official statistics (intended to help producers of official statistics to identify the types of use made, or potentially made, of their statistics), and;
  - iii. the availability of statistics about the housing market (on which work has recently started).
17. We see value in developing a forward programme of Monitoring Notes to address a range of issues. The Monitoring and Assessment team has developed a long list of potential topics for a forward programme of Monitoring and Assessment Notes and Monitoring Notes. The list is attached at **Annex C** and has been organised under the following generic headings:
  - i. Code interpretation, and good/best practice;
  - ii. specific measurement/statistical issues, and;
  - iii. quality issues.
18. In practice not all of these ideas are necessarily suitable for publication, while others might more appropriately be taken forward by, or in partnership with, the National Statistician's Office. But they give a flavour of the range of topics that might form the basis of Notes.
19. We suggest that the following ideas drawn from the long list could form a suitable core of topics to be produced over the next six months, to complement any proposals that arise in the course of events:
  - i. who produces official statistics about health? (paragraph 6.1 in Annex C);
  - ii. exceptions made to the 24 hour maximum pre-release access period (paragraph 7)

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- iii. promoting comparability of official statistics within the UK (paragraph 9)
- iv. summary of the assessments of transport statistics (paragraph 10.2)
- v. the availability of statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies (paragraph 11)
- vi. statistical aspects of the publication of school level examination results (paragraph 12)

**Monitoring and Assessment Team, July 2010**

### **List of Annexes**

- Annex A Monitoring Reports produced since April 2008**
- Annex B Monitoring and Assessment Notes produced since April 2008**
- Annex C Long list of potential Monitoring Notes**

## **Annex A      Monitoring Reports produced since April 2008**

Monitoring Reports are comprehensive reviews. The reports are typically produced with the involvement of external experts and user interests but reflect the Authority's independent views. Reviews are normally overseen by a project board chaired by a Non-Executive Director from the Authority Board. Membership of the project board also includes representatives from producers and users of the statistics being investigated. Reports are generally developed through extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders and are often supplemented by the gathering of evidence commissioned from consultants. Typically, the emerging findings are published first as an interim report. An open meeting is then convened to gather views on the interim report which informs the final published report.

To date, the Authority has published seven Monitoring Reports. The first three were published in 2008-09 and concerned the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and priorities for assessing official statistics that had not yet been designated as National Statistics. Four further reports were published in 2009-10 concerning migration statistics, barriers to trust in crime statistics, pre-release access to official statistics and strengthening user engagement. Further information on each of these reports is set out below. This Annex concludes by mentioning other planned Monitoring Reports that have not been progressed for various reasons.

1. *Code of Practice for Official Statistics: A Consultation Document*; report published July 2008  
This report was the consultation document on the draft Code of Practice for Official Statistics and the statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment.
2. *Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Report on the Consultation and the Principles and Procedures for Assessment*; report published January 2009  
This report presents the final text of both the Code itself and the Statement of Principles and procedures.
3. *Priorities for Designation as National Statistics*; report published January 2009  
This report was the Authority's first review of official statistics that have not yet been designated as 'National Statistics'. It identified an initial list of around 340 sets of statistics and from this list identified 11 sets of statistics as priorities for assessment against the new Code. Further work is needed to compile a more complete list of undesignated official statistics and this work is being led by the National Statistician's Office.
4. *Migration Statistics: The Way Ahead?* Interim report published April 2009, final report published July 2009  
This report reviewed progress in implementing plans to improve UK migration statistics. The report drew on information gathered through interviews with a range of users, a review of the current developments within the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme, and a commissioned review of migration statistics literature prepared by the University of Leeds. There was also an open meeting to discuss the interim report and this helped to inform the final report.

The Authority's review concluded that the cross-government programme is doing much useful work to deliver specific improvements in the short to medium term. However, the longer term goal – for high quality migration statistics derived from an integrated statistical system that draws on administrative and survey/census data – will take some considerable time to realise, perhaps decades. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has put in place an action plan to address the review's recommendations. The review also highlighted the importance of creating a national address register and this was the

subject of extensive correspondence with Ministers and others.

5. *Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics - England and Wales*; interim report published in December 2009 and final report published in May 2010

In May 2010 the Authority published *Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics*. Distrust of crime statistics has been a recurring theme, with three major reviews in the last ten years. The aim of the Authority's review was to identify the barriers to trust, examine the steps taken to overcome those barriers and to make recommendations as appropriate.

The report proposed that the National Statistician, supported as appropriate by departmental statisticians, should publish a regular commentary on trends and patterns in crime, and lead a review of statistical publications on crime and criminal justice - focusing on the use made of the data and on the need to present a more 'joined-up' picture of crime and the response of criminal justice agencies. It also recommended that the Home Office should set up a standing non-executive board to oversee the production of crime statistics and to provide public assurance of their impartiality and quality. Further recommendations in the report addressed the need to improve the way that crime statistics are presented, used and quoted inside and outside government.

The Home Secretary will be responding to the recommendations once she and ministerial colleagues have had a chance to consider the issues in more detail.

6. *Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics - A Review of the Statutory Arrangements*; report published in March 2010

This report formed the Authority's independent review of the statutory arrangements for pre-release access to official statistics in the four UK administrations. It recommended a number of amendments to Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders to tighten up on current arrangements. These were that:

- i. All the UK administrations should seek to amend their Pre-Release Access Orders to adopt a maximum period of pre-release access of three hours, with a shorter period as the norm;
- ii. The four UK administrations should work together to share a common understanding of the arguments surrounding pre-release access and to develop a common formulation for the Orders, beyond the adoption of the three-hour limit;
- iii. An interval of one hour should be respected, on a voluntary basis, between the release of statistics and the release of ministerial comment on those statistics, and;
- iv. Provisions in the Orders relating to the granting of pre-release access to journalists should be deleted.

The report also proposed that it would be in the interests of public confidence in official statistics if the Authority were given the lead role in determining the arrangements for pre-release access in future. The four administrations are planning to carry out their own reviews of how arrangements have worked since the various orders came into effect. These reviews are expected to inform how the Cabinet Office and the Devolved Administrations respond to the recommendations contained in the Authority's Monitoring Report.

7. *Strengthening User Engagement*; interim report published in March 2010 and final report published in June 2010

In June 2010 the Authority published *Strengthening User Engagement*. This report detailed the Authority's thinking on the importance of user engagement as a precursor to realising the value of official statistics. It looked at ways of enhancing communication between the producers of official statistics and the users, aiming to guide the future

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development of the statistical service and to help users to engage with it and make the maximum possible use of it. The review incorporated two pieces of research conducted by external contractors on the perceptions of opinion formers of official statistics and on public confidence in official statistics.

The report also included some information about user engagement among National Statistical Institutes in other countries, and discussions with users and producers across the UK. The interim report reached a number of conclusions, for example that while much user engagement does take place, it is often limited to central government users. The improvements that are needed are varied in nature. They include better understanding of the use currently made of official statistics; better communication with a wider range of users; and better exploitation of the existing consultation structures and new and emerging technologies to ensure that user engagement is effective. The recommendations in the report addressed these conclusions.

### 8. Planned Monitoring Report on Environmental statistics

At present, the Authority has firm plans for only one further Monitoring Report, on environmental statistics. This Monitoring Report will concentrate on statistics about the physical environment, particularly climate change statistics. It will consider what statistics are currently available and what further statistics will be needed to meet future needs.

Two other Monitoring Reports had been previously planned.

### 9. The communication of measurements of inflation (and consumer prices)

This planned Monitoring Report was to consider the effectiveness of the ways in which measures of inflation are communicated to the general public. It was first announced in July 2008 but was deferred in successive years. The Board will revisit plans for this Monitoring Report in the light of the outcome of the current assessment of consumer price indices which started in April 2010.

### 10. Arrangements for longer term planning for statistics to meet society's needs

This planned Monitoring Report was to consider the shape of the UK's future statistical requirements, to review current plans to address future requirements and to draw conclusions about the adequacy of those plans. Plans for this report were first announced in June 2008 and further details were announced in October 2008. The need for the report was superseded when the National Statistician launched a new system for statistical planning, in discussion with statistical Heads of Profession, to improve the planning mechanism and integrate regular 'horizon scans'.

## **Annex B      Monitoring and Assessment Notes produced since April 2008**

The Authority publishes Monitoring and Assessment Notes in response to concerns raised in relation to a particular series or statistical issue. In considering whether a Note should be published the Authority considers the significance and topicality of the issue, the link between the issue concerned and trust in the statistical service, and whether there are messages from the issue that could relate to other statistical producers or products.

The Authority has published nine Monitoring and Assessment Notes on its website, five in 2008-09 and four in 2009-10. Further notes are planned for the current year covering (a) emerging findings from the assessments published in the period January to June 2010, (b) the use made of official statistics (intended to help producers of official statistics to identify the types of use made, or potentially made, of their statistics), and (c) the availability of statistics about the housing market. Further information on each of the published Monitoring and Assessment Notes is summarised below.

1. Volatility of the Retail Sales Index (October 2008)  
This note considered unexpectedly large estimates of month-on-month changes being reported by ONS for the volume of retail sales in Great Britain. It recommended that ONS improve the way in which these statistics are presented and that the release be accompanied by additional guidance for users.
2. UK Consistency of Hospital Waiting Times (November 2008)  
This note considered the comparability of hospital admission waiting times data produced by the relevant statistical offices in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It identified good practice in improving the comparability of the data, which had previously been identified as a problem by a Statistics Commission report in 2004.
3. Knife Crime Statistics – A Review Against the Code of Practice (January 2009)  
This note looked at a Home Office Knife Crime Fact Sheet in relation to the Code. The findings were considered at a Hearing of the Public Administration Select Committee. Following that, the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell issued new guidance to the Civil Service regarding good practice in relation to official statistics and the role of government statisticians.
4. Presentation of Statistics in First Releases and Elsewhere (January 2009)  
This note described the criteria to be used by the Monitoring and Assessment team in assessing the presentation of official statistics against principle 8 of the Code on frankness and accessibility.
5. ONS News Release on UK Born and non-UK Born Employment (March 2009)  
This note reviewed an ONS release against the Code. It was produced following criticism of the decision to bring forward the release, given the level of public interest in the topic. The note supported the decision to bring forward the release but noted that the revised release date should have been pre-announced. It also identified ways in which the presentation of these statistics in the release could be improved. These issues were the subject of a Hearing of the Public Administration Select Committee.
6. Gender Pay Gap (June 2009)  
The Gender Pay Gap Note investigated why the ONS and the Government Equalities Office (GEO) used different headline figures to present the difference between men's and women's pay. Both estimates were based on the same source data, the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The Note also explored options for presenting the gender pay gap in an impartial and objective way. As a result of the Authority's intervention, discussions between ONS and GEO have taken place, to discern the most

appropriate way to present figures on the gender pay gap. ONS has since published a position paper on how ONS statistical bulletins will present differences in men's and women's pay.

7. Discussion of Trends in Violent Crime (February 2010)

The Trends in Violent Crime Note was published as a response to concerns about the way in which comparisons were being made using police recorded crime data between the late 1990's and 2008/09. The Authority regards comparison of this data as requiring appropriate qualification, because the data were affected by the introduction of the National Crime Recoding Standard in 2002/03 (which led to an increase in recorded crime for definitional reasons).

8. Findings of the 2009 Assessment Programme (March 2010)

The Note on Findings of the 2009 Assessment Programme provided a summary of the main areas of good practice and areas for improvement which were identified during the 27 assessments carried out during 2009. An early version of the Note was the basis for discussion between assessors and producers. The findings themselves have been described in the earlier section on Assessment. The Note was well-received by producers of official statistics, who regard it as both a helpful summary and an indication of the main areas requiring cross-cutting improvement.

9. Scotland's Major Population Surveys (March 2010)

The Note on Scotland's Major Population Surveys summarised the main areas of good practice and areas for improvement which the Authority identified during the separate assessments of the four surveys (Household, Health, House Condition, and Crime and Justice). Highlighting these areas was intended to help other producers of official statistics. Areas of good practice included specific examples from the surveys, such as web pages with details of uses and user views, and innovative approaches to providing statistical data in formats which allow further analysis by users. The areas for improvement included pre-announcing the publication dates of statistical releases, and consistently reporting progress against Scottish Government targets.

## **Annex C      Long list of potential Monitoring Notes**

### **Code interpretation, and good/best practice**

1. Common themes arising from organisational Written Evidence for Assessment (WEfA)  
To include a review of the documents that producers are sending us with their organisational WEfAs - user statements, confidentiality policies, revisions policies, compliance costs, statements of administrative sources - so we can say which are good and which can be improved. The outcome would be some guidance for producers on what to include in these documents, and material for the National Statistician to consider pursuing with statistical Heads of Profession (HoPs) generally.
2. Archiving and the preservation of statistical data  
Archiving - what statistics should be archived where? (what are the relevant national archive(s) as required in legislation?) Whether archiving places enough confidentiality restrictions on future access, and how this relates to confidentiality requirements made of producers. One possible format would be to identify current relevant activities in this area including preservation of web-publications and associated background by relevant national libraries, and the work of the Data Archive. But - is this essentially a managerial task which might be more appropriately undertaken by the National Statistician's Office?
3. Statements of Administrative Sources (SoASs)  
The extent to which we think these comply with protocol 3 of the Code. What are we looking for in SoASs? Is there evidence of unrealised potential uses of administrative data?
4. Use of related sources to add value to the set of statistics being released  
We have identified as good practice the Ministry of Justice's explanation of similarities and differences between the differing sources of data on mortgage possessions and arrears. ONS analytical articles on retail sales also compare the official data with British Retail Consortium data. We could look for other examples, also of instances where other data sources might be included, but aren't, and offer advice.
5. Comprehensiveness  
The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) only report on what comes within its remit under legislation so doesn't count air, sea or traffic accidents or deaths. We could look for other examples, and offer advice.
6. Accessibility/navigation/signposting
  - 6.1 Who produces statistics on, for example, education, health and other topics. This would highlight the range of producers, and the difficulty this can cause for users and potential users.
  - 6.2 Access to microdata for research purposes - we included a brief case study on this for the User Engagement report but we could look at it in more detail – all about adding value to statistics.
  - 6.3 Accessibility to departments' statistical websites.
  - 6.4 The characteristics of a 'good' National Statistics Institute website.
  - 6.5 Implications of ensuring publications meet disability and accessibility codes. For example, the Ministry of Justice issue of being prevented from including tables of data in 'Women in the Criminal Justice System' as each number would have to be recorded in spoken version of publication.
  - 6.6 Accessibility to (and quality of) consistent very detailed local data.



## SA(COS)(10)15 - The Evolution of Monitoring

7. Exceptions to the 24 hour maximum Pre-Release Access (PRA)  
Why did the 'responsible' person decide that it was appropriate to grant (i) no PRA, or (ii) PRA for less than the (UK Order's) 24 hour maximum? This might help us develop guidelines for HoPs in making their judgements.
8. Potential uses of the statistics (Principle 8.1 of Code)  
Why we think it is important for producers to be thinking about 'potential uses'. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would highlight any examples of producers having done so, and might include some examples of our own, to stimulate producers.
9. What do we mean by 'promoting comparability within the UK'?  
What assumptions can we legitimately make, in the absence of a stated user need, about the desirability of comparable UK statistics? What should be the Authority's considerations in making judgements about four nation comparability, in assessments? See also the relevant paper [SA(COS)(10)17] on the agenda of this meeting.
10. Assessment summaries
  - 10.1 Next Emerging Findings note – summarising reports 28 to 50, roughly those published between January and June 2010.
  - 10.2 Transport statistics - there are five transport assessments due to begin in the next couple of months, covering all UK countries. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would provide a useful overview from these assessments, focusing on issues such as: who produces the statistics, variation in practices (e.g. user engagement), examples of good practice, areas for improvement, comparability between the different countries' statistics, harmonisation initiatives, uses of the statistics.
  - 10.3 Similarly, three Assessment reports on the statistics produced by the Information Services Division of NHS Scotland were published in April, and another is under preparation.

### **Specific measurement/statistical issues**

11. The availability of statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies  
Statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies are of considerable interest to MPs, and constituents and a wide range of social and political commentators. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would provide an opportunity to review what statistics are currently available and whether there are any significant gaps. It would also provide an opportunity to review how well these statistics are presented and how well they meet user needs.
12. School level examination results  
The assessments of school statistics in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have shown that producers of these statistics tend not to publish datasets of school-level examination results. A draft Monitoring and Assessment Note was prepared in the context of producing the four Assessment reports, as a vehicle to review current practice, describe producer concerns and to set out the Authority's position on what is required by the Code of Practice - this may merit publication later in the year, as an illustration of the wider principle of 'making statistics available in as much detail as is reliable and practicable'.
13. Numbers of children living in poverty  
Different definitions exist for poverty and child poverty. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would provide an opportunity to describe what statistics exist on child poverty by different geographies and for the UK as a whole, and to make comparisons with corresponding statistics produced internationally.

14. Issues around measuring numbers of home-schooled children across the UK  
Practices for producing statistics on children educated at home differ across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would provide an opportunity to review what statistics are available across the four administrations, the extent to which these are produced on a comparable basis and the extent to which current practices meet user needs.

#### **Quality issues**

15. Declining household survey response rates - evidence, ameliorative action, implications for quality  
Response rates for household surveys have been declining for over a decade. This impacts on accuracy since achieved sample sizes are reducing, but could also introduce bias (and different levels of bias) into statistics because the characteristics of achieved samples may change. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would explore some of the potential issues, including how statistics based on declining surveys should be produced and explained, and encourage appropriate research in order to understand the nature of the phenomenon and to develop solutions to the problem.
16. Communicating statistical quality to the non-expert  
The Code requires quality measures to be published. Sampling errors are often calculated and presented alongside survey estimates. However in some cases, sampling errors are difficult to calculate; non-sampling errors likewise. Furthermore, detailed estimates of sampling errors may not be appropriate for every use of statistics. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would explore best practice in presenting statistical quality clearly and simply, enabling users to use the statistics appropriately. It would also explore options for presenting quality measures in the absence of accurate quantification of those errors.
17. Statistical implications of the target culture  
Many statistics relate to the measurement of progress against a government target. With that comes the risk of gaming, where behaviours are perversely changed to try to ensure that the target is met, potentially at the expense of behaviours that might be of wider good for the economy, society etc. Similarly, data are more likely to be mis-reported because those responsible could be incentivised to submit incorrect data in order to achieve favourable statistics and outcomes.
18. "No revisions" doesn't mean "accurate"  
Revisions analyses are often published as a measure of statistical quality. However they only tell a partial story - that of the relative accuracy of initial estimates compared with later ones, rather than of absolute accuracy. Statistics subject to small revisions may still be imprecise or biased because for example the target population may not be covered appropriately. Low revisions, such as for estimates of the output measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), could inadvertently ascribe too high a level of accuracy to series of unknown quality, and may be unhelpful to users.
19. The influence of European and other international statistical requirements on the work of the UK statistical system.  
The EU makes a range of demands on statistical producers in member states. Some of these demands would (or should) be met by producers for the state's own requirements. However, some would not. A Monitoring and Assessment Note would explore the extent to which European and other international demands pull scarce resources away from meeting national needs, and what may be done within the UK statistical system as a whole to address this, for example, by taking a stronger lead in setting international requirements.

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**Committee for Official Statistics**

SA(COS)(10)16

***A National Address Register:  
Addressing and Changes at Ordnance Survey***

**Purpose**

1. This paper updates the Committee for Official Statistics on prospects for a National Address Register and progress on addressing since the issue was last discussed at the Committee's May 2009 meeting.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee are invited to note the recent developments in addressing, and changes at Ordnance Survey.

**Discussion**

3. When addressing was discussed by the Committee last year a new Ordnance Survey (OS) business strategy had just been launched and the documents published with the launch promised a further consultation on the addressing issues.
4. Following the meeting Sir Michael Scholar wrote to John Healey, the then Minister of State for Housing at the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), on 8 July. Several other people wrote over the following couple of weeks and / or issued press statements supporting points made in the letter. Sir Michael's letter plus a selection of these are in **Annex A**. There was a delay before CLG's duty Minister, Lord McKenzie, replied on 23 September (**Annex B**) with similar letters to the other key people who had written in.
5. At the end of October the Ministerial Group on Population and Migration Statistics discussed addresses using a Cabinet Office paper, which summarised the history including extracts from Sir Michael's letter, during their meeting. The Ministers recognised the importance of the issue and asked the Location Council, chaired by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), to take over the policy lead on finding a solution from CLG. (The Location Council leads the implementation of the UK Location Strategy including compliance with the EU Directive on an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE).)
6. Against this backdrop serious and constructive discussions began as noted in Lord McKenzie's letter  
*"the Improvement and Development Agency, who are supportive of a single national address register, are now discussing this with Ordnance Survey."*
7. Reports have been emerging that the talks are making significant progress. A number of provisional dates for completion have been missed but the general view is that, as the discussions are proving productive, they should be allowed to run their course. The latest report at the June Location Council meeting was that the discussions are at a critical point dealing with the commercial sensitivities involved with the emerging solution; announcements are expected soon now probably within a month.
8. Although the delays are frustrating the apparently collaborative nature of the discussions is a good sign as there has previously been a history of tensions between the parties over the associated Intellectual Property Rights and funding issues. The collaborative

## SA(COS)(10)16 - A National Address Register

work led by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in generating the Census Address Register may have helped in demonstrating what is possible and the high level pressure for a solution stimulated by Sir Michael and others including Ministers is also likely to have added a focus on finding solutions which overcome the previous blockages. The Chair of the Location Council appears to have been pressing the parties towards a solution.

9. During the recent Cabinet Office Review of the Census programme, ONS was asked what might be required of Ministers, looking ahead, in order to deliver the alternative model described in the Beyond 2011 business case based on administrative and survey sources. The likelihood of success would be greatly enhanced by the availability of:
  - i. a population or address register updated on an on-going basis;
  - ii. enshrining access to administrative sources for statistical purposes in law, and;
  - iii. full Ministerial support, preferably through a cross-departmental Ministerial group.
10. Recent news is that Francis Maude has requested briefing on the address register. He has asked the Cabinet Office to brief him on why the address register being built for the Census cannot be used for other purposes. ONS is assisting the Cabinet Office in the briefing. This might be a useful development if the above discussions do not make the expected progress, as Francis Maude might be able to push things along.
11. Since April 2009 there have been a series of very significant changes made to the way that OS operates and makes its information available. The main steps have been as follows:
  - i. (April 2009) Following a public consultation, launch of a new business strategy. The two main immediate outward facing changes involved the launch of an enhanced free OS OpenSpace service to allow experimentation with digital information and the creation of a commercial trading entity to make the most of OS products and their brand name. There was a promise of a reform of licensing and initiatives to reduce costs.
  - ii. (December 2009) The Prime Minister announces the intention to make further changes *"And from April next year Ordnance Survey will open up information about administrative boundaries, postcode areas and mid-scale mapping."* This unexpectedly early announcement was linked to other initiatives linked with freeing up data to empower the citizen linked strongly with the work that Sir Tim Berners-Lee had been leading on Making Public Data Public. The announcement was followed by a further public consultation on the detail.
  - iii. (April 2010) Implementation of the changes and the launch by OS of 'OS Open Data' providing free access to a range of OS products with minimal restrictions on their use. These changes have been widely welcomed. Comments have mainly been that people would have liked even more including their profitable maps bought by the public.
  - iv. (April 2011) Negotiations are underway to provide all OS products (but not services) free to users in the public sector from next year - an announcement confirming this is expected imminently.
12. OS remains a trading fund. Thus the costs of freeing up their data are being paid for by CLG. The April 2010 changes were paid for through collecting contributions from key government departments (excluding ONS). The April 2011 changes will be paid for through the 2010 Spending Review.
13. Our users are already benefiting from the changes. For example the Output Area boundaries used for the Census and Neighbourhood Statistics, which involve some OS Intellectual Property Rights which used to be chargeable and restricted, are now freed up

## **SA(COS)(10)16 - A National Address Register**

for re-use. Also we have introduced a slim free version of the National Statistics Postcode Directory based on the free OS products.

**Graham Jenkinson, Statistical Framework Division, ONS, July 2010**

### **List of Annexes**

- Annex A Letter from the Chair of the Statistics Authority to the Minister of State for Housing, and related correspondence and press notices, July 2009**
- Annex B Letter from Lord McKenzie of Luton to Sir Michael Scholar, September 2009**

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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Rt. Hon. John Healey MP  
Minister of State for Housing  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
SW1E 5DU

8 July 2009

Dear Minister

**ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL ADDRESS REGISTER**

The statistical needs for a regularly updated address register are well established. It would greatly increase the value of the population Census and also make more achievable current proposals to replace future, very costly, censuses with other approaches to gathering the information required. It would also give much needed support to more accurate population estimates and also to other household data in non-census years. Without an address register we will never have continuously up-to-date knowledge of the size and distribution of the population.

I am therefore writing to you and other Ministers with an interest in the issue to set out why, in the view of the UK Statistics Authority, action is required.

The debate across government about a single national address register has gone back and forth in recent years. However, the need for such a register has continued to grow. The Statistics Authority believes that despite the pressures on public expenditure, indeed because of them, it is now time for the Government to take urgent action to create a single definitive register.

In a statement in the House of Commons in 2003, the then Minister for Local and Regional Government said that his department agreed with the need for an 'accurate address register'. However, the subsequent initiative, called the National Spatial Address Infrastructure (NSAI), failed to deliver. A DCLG press release in June 2007 stated that 'government departments are able to deliver their business without the NSAI'. It added that 'considering the competing demands on departmental resources, we have concluded that we should not carry out any further work on the NSAI at this time'.

In evidence to the House of Commons Treasury Committee's inquiry *Counting the Population* in 2008, a Treasury Minister made clear that competing intellectual property rights were at the heart of the obstacles to the NSAI. The Committee concluded:

"We heard repeated references to the necessity of establishing the register yet were surprised to hear that no business case had been published. We recommend that such a case is prepared engaging all potential beneficiaries. It is unclear whether leadership weakness, lack of legislative means or the financial obligations of the

## Annex A - SA(COS)(10)16 - A National Address Register

trading fund status have contributed most to the failure. We recommend that the Government consult the Statistics Authority and others to remove any outstanding obstacles to the production of an address register.”

In its response, the Government said again that government departments are able to deliver their business without a national address register but went on to add that the Government would consider the possible wider use of the work ONS is doing to create an address register for the 2011 Census and the process and responsibilities for maintaining the data once collected.

This position was revisited most recently in the 2009 Power of Information Taskforce Report which argued that:

“The government should create a freely available single definitive address and postcode database available for the UK. Once created it should be made freely available for (re)use and maintained by the Ordnance Survey, Royal Mail and Local Government. This could be seeded by the census.”

The main reason behind the decision that ONS should invest a substantial budget in the development of a special one-off register of addresses was that it needed it for the Census: the existing sources of address data were some way short of the comprehensive and accurate coverage that was required for Census purposes.

The ONS work will lead to an improvement in national address information but unless the Government takes steps to build on it, the register will almost immediately become out of date again. ONS is not in a position to maintain a register for the longer term; it is not resourced to do so, nor is it part of its core business to maintain such a register. The necessary raw information comes from the Royal Mail, Ordnance Survey and local government administrative records. It is these sources that would need to be more effectively exploited by the Government Departments and Agencies whose core business this ought to be.

It seems likely that the development of a single comprehensive register would involve non-trivial costs. However, we are confident that there would also be substantial benefits in terms of the more efficient management of public services (e.g. the use for collecting local taxation, use by the emergency services, etc), as well as in the efficiency of many commercial activities, such as the operation of utility companies.

Government departments may be able to manage somehow without an address register. But there is no doubt that they would find it cheaper, quicker and easier to deliver their business with an address register, and that is the fundamental consideration here.

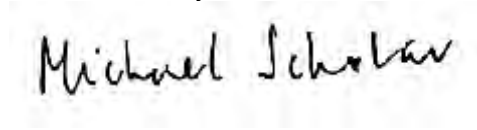
At the very least, a full and up-to-date business case needs to be developed, as the Treasury Committee recommended, such that all parties can see costs and benefits of an address register set alongside one another. In this, full recognition should be given to the aggregate benefit to local government, public services and the commercial sector in having reliable and comprehensive addressing information, and on the savings in time and effort currently spent on coping with less reliable information from multiple sources. As noted above, there would also be large and real benefits to statistical and analytical work, with improved population and migration statistics, local resource allocations and for policy and operational decision-making.

If we in the Statistics Authority are able to assist with the implementation of such a register, we will be glad to do so.

Annex A - SA(COS)(10)16 - A National Address Register

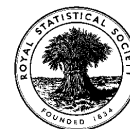
I am copying this letter to Angela Smith MP, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office; Phil Woolas MP, Minister of State for Borders and Immigration; Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury; Ian Pearson MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury; and Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'M' and a long, sweeping 'S'.

**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**





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### **Does the house next door really exist?**

*English Government may never know but the Scottish will.*

The UK does not have a central register of addresses despite the fact that successive government committees and enquiries have stated that there is a vital national need. So the move this week by Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, to write in strong terms to John Healey, the Minister of State for Housing, is warmly welcomed by the country's leading independent body for statistics, the Royal Statistical Society, and its affiliated body the Statistics User Forum.

An accurate register of addresses is a vital piece of information that underpins the nation's knowledge around a range of issues such as how public services are managed, including local taxation and emergency services. Importantly, Sir Michael also publishes a report today that revealed how slow the UK Government has been at improving how we monitor migration. Again, a key finding of that report was the lack of a national address register hampering how we collect migration data.

The prompt for this move is the possible squandering of taxpayers' money and an embarrassing wasted opportunity. 2011 will see the next and possibly last national census in the UK. Because the Government does not have an accurate address register, the Office for National Statistics, which conducts the census, has to purchase data from three public bodies - the Post Office, Ordnance Survey and Local Government - to create one. The estimated cost for this is £12 million. The bad news is that, unlike Scotland, there are no plans to continue and use the Census address register for public benefit beyond the census, mostly because of intellectual property issues with the contributing public bodies. Keith Dugmore of the Forum's Demographic User Group, when asked about his recent written submission to the Public Administration Select Committee's hearing on the 2011 census, said:

"Because public bodies seek to defend their intellectual property, this definitive register will only be available for census work. Not even the ONS, let alone other public bodies, can use it for other purposes and it will not be updated. I urge Ministers finally to resolve this issue in the public interest."

Keith Dugmore (Demographic User Group)

If Government will not invest and then adequately update a national address register, undertaking any census in future years will be severely hampered. So too will any plans to replace the Census by less expensive methods. Again this is bad news for the taxpayer as the 2011 census is expected to cost £482 million. Jill Leyland Vice President of the Royal Statistical Society succinctly summed up the situation:

"We are appalled that the address list for the census in England and Wales cannot be used for other purposes and will not be updated. This is a huge waste of public money and we strongly urge ministers to act on Sir Michael's recommendations."

Jill Leyland (Vice President of the Royal Statistical Society)

## Annex A - SA(COS)(10)16 - A National Address Register

### Notes:

Earlier this week, the UK Statistics Authority wrote to the Minister of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, John Healey MP, regarding the establishment of a National Address Register. The letter is published on the Authority's website at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>

Today the UK Statistics Authority published its report on migration statistics on its website:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/index.html>

Recent submissions from the Royal Statistical Society and its affiliated organisations to the Public Administration Select Committee's hearing on the 2011 census, held on June 23, commented on this failure to create definitive address lists for England and Wales. They can be found on the PASC website:

<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/Memosforweb1.pdf>

The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) is the UK's only professional and learned society devoted to the interests of statistics and statisticians. It is also one of the most influential and prestigious statistical societies in the world with over 7000 members.

[www.rss.org.uk](http://www.rss.org.uk)

The Statistics User Forum is the successor to the long-established Statistics User Council and was set up to make sure that the needs and views of the statistical user community are properly taken into account. Members of user groups that are affiliated to the Royal Statistical Society can also take up linked associate membership of the Society.

<http://www.rss.org.uk/main.asp?page=1607>

Contact: Martin Dougherty, RSS Executive Director, 07966 942337, 0207614 3912, [m.dougherty@rss.org.uk](mailto:m.dougherty@rss.org.uk)

- ENDS -



## Public Administration Select Committee

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Rt. Hon. John Healey MP  
Minister of State for Housing  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

14 July 2009

*Dear John,*

The Public Administration Committee is the Commons select committee responsible for oversight of official statistics. We held an evidence session last month with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the 2011 Census. It emerged in the session that there is no single authoritative source of national address information. As a result, the ONS will only be able to create a sufficiently accurate address register for the Census by buying address information from other public sector bodies at a substantial cost to the public purse (around £12 million), and spending further sums cross-checking and updating the information. Once the Census is completed, this updated, comprehensive address register will not be available as a public resource, nor will it be maintained. This seems to us to be a scandalous waste of public money caused by the way in which different public sector organisations have been set up to see each other as competitors, rather than to cooperate for the common good.

I am therefore writing on behalf of the Committee to support Sir Michael Scholar's call for a single definitive regularly updated national address register.

It is certain that such a register will cost money. It is equally certain that not having such a register is already costing money, and will continue to do so in future years. There would be clear benefits in having a register. This is why, as Sir Michael says, a business case needs to be developed, not only to set the costs and benefits of an address register alongside one another, but also to capture the costs (and benefits, if any) of doing nothing.

I am copying this letter to Sir Michael, as well as to all those copied in to his letter of 8 July.

*Wright*  
*(02)*

Dr Tony Wright MP  
Chair of the Committee



**Press Release 20 July 2009**

**Major companies applaud Commons Committee's support for a new definitive national address register**

The Demographics User Group (DUG), which represents several of Britain's major companies, has expressed its strong satisfaction with the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee's support for the UK Statistics Authority's call for a single regularly updated national address register.

In a letter (14 July) to John Healey (Minister of State for Housing), The Committee's Chair, Dr Tony Wright, stated:

*"We held an evidence session last month with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the 2011 Census. It emerged in the session that there is no single authoritative source of national address information. As a result, the ONS will only be able to create a sufficiently accurate address register for the Census by buying address information from other public sector bodies at a substantial cost to the public purse (around £12 million), and spending further sums cross-checking and updating the information. Once the Census is completed, this updated, comprehensive address register will not be available as a public resource, nor will it be maintained. This seems to us to be a scandalous waste of public money caused by the way in which different public sector organisations have been set up to see each other as competitors, rather than to cooperate for the common good. I am therefore writing on behalf of the Committee to support Sir Michael Scholar's call for a single definitive regularly updated national address register."*

Keith Dugmore, Director of DUG, said

"This strong Parliamentary statement on the need for a definitive address register must be respected and turned into action. The use of a single address register by everyone – including government, commercial companies, and emergency services – would eliminate much inefficiency and confusion, and is obviously in the public interest. It will save money and time and could save lives. The government should grasp this opportunity now, and ensure that address lists held by Ordnance Survey, Royal Mail, and Local Government are used to create a single universal register for the public good."

---

**Notes for Editors:**

Dr Tony Wright's letter is available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/johnhealey.pdf>

On 25 June PASC held a hearing on the Census, where Gordon Prentice MP questioned the head of ONS about the address register:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmpubadm/c742-i/c74202.htm>

On 8 July the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar, wrote to the Minister of State for Housing, John Healey, supporting the case for establishing a national address register.

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>

The Demographics User Group represents to government the needs of several large commercial users of its demographic datasets, including statistics, lists, and map information. DUG's member companies are: Abbey; Barclays; Boots; Co-operative Group; E.ON; John Lewis; Marks & Spencer; Sainsbury's; Tesco; The Children's Mutual; and Whitbread.

Enquiries: Keith Dugmore (Tel: 020 7834 0966; Mob: 07976 750094; Email: [dugmore@demographic.co.uk](mailto:dugmore@demographic.co.uk))



Your ref:  
Our ref:

28 July 2009

Rt. Hon. John Healey MP  
Minister of State for Housing and Planning  
Department of Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

**UK Statistics Authority  
London**

**- 3 AUG 2009**

**Received**

Dear John,

### **Address Management**

You have recently received letters from Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, and Dr Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee on the topic of a national address register. I am writing to you to express the interest of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), and local government more widely, in finding a route to provide a single national address register as a public good. This policy is advocated by the Local Government Association (LGA) and IDeA, and has been reflected in LGA and IDeA evidence to various Select Committees in recent years. We have also promoted this policy through programmes such as that to implement the European Union Directive INSPIRE, and the Government sponsored *Place Matters: A Location Strategy for the UK*.

Under the remit of its wholly owned subsidiary – Local Government Information House (LGIH) – IDeA has worked to provide an accurate and current dataset of all addresses in England and Wales in the form of the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG). This information is compiled in partnership with local authorities who have a statutory duty to create addresses, and maintained on our behalf by a private sector partner – Intelligent Addressing. This data is shared amongst local authorities, police and fire services, and national parks at no charge. We also provide the data to other organisations that request it under a chargeable licence. We work and share the data with several government departments, and other public sector bodies. These include the Office of National Statistics where the information is one of the key datasets being used to support the 2011 Census project which is currently in preparation.

Sir Michael's letter gives a brief review of the conflicts of interest that have hampered the development of a single national address register. These interested parties include Royal Mail, Ordnance Survey (OS) and ourselves. We are currently working with OS to try to resolve our differences.

Local authorities are the customers in one of OS's largest contracts for mapping services under an agreement managed by IDeA. We have been in discussions at Chair and Board level to secure a more partnership oriented approach. We have made it a touchstone of our discussions that disputes around address data cannot be allowed to remain in any new arrangements. The changes from both parties required to achieve this are significant, and could include changes to OS licensing terms, to the processes of creating and collating address data, and the definition of OS's Public Task. Both parties

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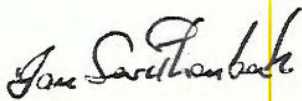
## Annex A - SA(COS)(10)16 - A National Address Register

have committed to an open and positive dialogue to seek solutions. These discussions are due to reach a conclusion by October this year.

It is clear to both parties that a resolution to Address Management requires the active involvement and co-operation of other bodies, and ultimately the support and sponsorship within government that Sir Michael's letter alludes to. The public good requirement for a single national address register, with a strong business case to justify it, is a timely suggestion. I would be very willing to meet you, and, if appropriate colleagues from other government departments, to explore the issue further.

I am copying this letter to Sir Rob Margetts CBE, Non-Executive Chair of OS to keep him informed of our interest, and to the initiators of this correspondence - Sir Michael Scholar, and Dr Tony Wright MP. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Ian Swithenbank CBE  
Chairman  
Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)

cc: Sir Rob Margetts CBE, Non-Executive Chair of Ordnance Survey  
Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority  
Dr Tony Wright MP, Chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee



Sir Rob Margetts CBE  
Chairman

**Ordnance Survey**  
Romsey Road  
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Website: [www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk)

Rt. Hon. John Healey PC MP  
Minister of State for Housing  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
LONDON  
SW1E 5DU

4<sup>th</sup> August 2009

Dear Minister,

## **SINGLE NATIONAL ADDRESS REGISTER**

I have read with interest copies of correspondence sent to you by Sir Michael Scholar KCB, Dr Tony Wright MP and Councillor Ian Swithenbank CBE, concerning proposals for the establishment of a single national address register.

As you may know, Ordnance Survey has been closely involved in the collection and dissemination of address information through its national mapping activities for over 100 years. In the past twenty years, Ordnance Survey has established a range of digital addressing products developed from the mapping information, which now underpin many location based applications and other address databases, within both public and private sectors.

In addition, Ordnance Survey has been an active participant in the many initiatives over the past two decades which have been concerned with developing and promoting consistent and definitive addressing for Great Britain. This involvement ranges from work undertaken in the mid

.../...



1990s to support the establishment of British Standards for data, through the pioneering work of 'Project Acacia' earlier in this decade, to the attempts made under the auspices of the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to create a National Spatial Address Infrastructure (NSAI). More recently, Ordnance Survey has been an active participant in the National Address Steering Group convened by Cabinet Office under the leadership of Ms Alexis Cleveland.

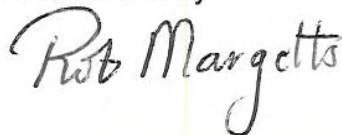
Ordnance Survey also recognises that moves towards a single national address register and, more importantly, towards establishing this as a maintained dataset must fully take into account the funding of the costs associated with creating and maintaining a definitive, authoritative and comprehensive database. Equally importantly, any viable solution must recognise the various roles and commercial or other interests of the key players involved, including Local Government and Royal Mail, together with their commercial partners, as well as Ordnance Survey.

Ordnance Survey remains committed to working with others to seek mutually satisfactory solutions to these problems, and is encouraged by the progress already made in the discussions which have been taking place with senior officials representing the Local Government Association, to which Councillor Swithenbank alludes in his letter.

Vanessa Lawrence and I are also very willing to meet with you, and/or to join in discussions with other parties to this correspondence as necessary, in order to progress the issues. In the meantime, I have asked Vanessa to provide you with a more detailed briefing on some of the history and wider issues surrounding these matters.

I am copying this letter to Sir Michael Scholar, Dr. Wright MP and Councillor Swithenbank.

Yours sincerely



cc Sir Michael Scholar KCB – Chair, UK Statistics Authority  
Dr Tony Wright MP – Chairman, Public Administration Select Committee  
Councillor Ian Swithenbank CBE – Chairman, Improvement and Development Agency  
Vanessa Lawrence CB – Director General and Chief Executive, Ordnance Survey  
Charlie Villar – Shareholder Executive





Sir Michael Scholar KCB  
UK Statistics Authority  
Statistics House  
Islington  
London  
EC1R 1UW

**Lord McKenzie of Luton**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

**Department for Communities and Local Government**

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Our Ref: JH/LM/020498/09

23 SEP 2009

*Dear Sir Michael*

**ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL ADDRESS REGISTER**

Thank you for your letter of 8 July to the Rt Hon John Healey MP. Your letter has been passed to me for reply.

As you note, this Department concluded in June 2007 that it would not carry out any further work on a National Spatial Address Infrastructure. This position has not changed.

I am pleased that ONS has made good progress to ensure a high quality address register for the census. It will be important to consider what long term lessons can be learned from this work. As you say, the potential uses of an address register do of course go much wider than purely statistical applications.

I also note that the Improvement and Development Agency, who are supportive of a single national address register, are now discussing this with Ordnance Survey. This matter is being led at the most senior level in these organisations and discussions are due to conclude by October this year. We will, together with Cabinet Office, take stock in the light of these positive developments.

I am copying to Angela Smith MP, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office; Phil Woolas MP, Minister of State for Borders and Immigration; Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury; Ian Pearson MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury; and Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee.

UK Statistics Authority  
London

29 SEP 2009

Received

*Yours Sincerely*  
*Bill McKenzie*

**BILL MCKENZIE**



**Lord McKenzie of Luton**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

**Department for Communities and Local Government**

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Our Ref: LM/023178/09

Rosie Paskins  
Association of Regional Observatories  
Regeneration East Midlands  
Unit 8, Provident Works  
Newdigate Street  
Nottingham  
NG7 4FD

23 SEP 2009

*Dear Rosie*

Thank you for your letter of 24 August to the Rt Hon John Healey MP, supporting the case for a continuously maintained National Address Register. I have been asked to reply.

✓ I have responded to Sir Michael Scholar and I attach a copy of my response.

I am copying this letter to Sir Rob Margetts CBE, Non-Executive Chair of OS; Sir Michael Scholar KCB, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority; and Dr Tony Wright MP, Chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Bill McKenzie*

**BILL MCKENZIE**





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Our Ref: JH/LM/021030/09

23 SEP 2009

*Dear Councillor Swithenbank,*

**ADDRESS MANAGEMENT**

Thank you for your letter of 28 July to the Rt Hon John Healey MP. Your letter has been passed to me for reply.

I have now replied to Sir Michael Scholar and attach a copy of my response.

I note that you are supportive of a single national address register and are now discussing this with Ordnance Survey. I hope that you are able to reach a successful conclusion.

I am copying this letter to Sir Rob Margetts CBE, Non-Executive Chair of Ordnance  
✓ Survey; Sir Michael Scholar KCB, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority; and Dr Tony Wright MP, Chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee.

*Yours Sincerely*  
*Bill McKenzie*

**BILL MCKENZIE**



**Lord McKenzie of Luton**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

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Our Ref: LM/021750/09

Sir Rob Margetts CBE  
Ordnance Survey  
c/o MatlinPatterson  
7th Floor, Buchanan House  
3 St James's Square  
London  
SW1Y 4JU

23 SEP 2009

Dear Sir [Signature]

Thank you for your letter of 4 August to the Rt Hon John Healey MP, considering proposals for the establishment of a single national address register. I have been asked to reply.

✓ I have replied to Sir Michael Scholar and I attach a copy of my response. I have also copied you in on correspondence on this matter from Councillor Ian Swithenbank, Chairman of the Improvement and Development Agency.

I note that you are supportive of a single national address register and are discussing this with the Improvement and Development Agency. I hope that you are able to reach a successful conclusion.

✓ I am copying this letter to Councillor Ian Swithenbank, Chairman of the IDeA; Sir Michael Scholar KCB, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority; and Dr Tony Wright MP, Chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee.

Yours sincerely  
[Signature]

**BILL MCKENZIE**

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### Committee for Official Statistics

SA(COS)(10)17

### ***UK Statistics Authority Policy on Devolved Statistics***

#### **Purpose**

1. The Authority's current position on promoting comparability of statistics across the four UK administrations raises some questions about the criteria that should be considered in deciding when to make an intervention. This paper illustrates the general issues of principle with a specific, and real, example based on an Assessment Report and the follow-up to it.

#### **Recommendations**

2. Members of the Committee for Official Statistics are invited to:
  - i. consider the issues raised in this paper and the Authority's position with respect to promoting UK comparability of devolved statistics, and;
  - ii. decide whether this matter should be discussed by the Authority Board and, if so, what advice to offer the Board.

#### **Discussion**

3. There are provisions in the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* which define and make special provision for statistics that are the responsibility of the devolved administrations. The *Act* introduces and defines, in section 66, the term 'devolved statistics'. The Statistics Authority respects those definitions and the related arrangements and works within them.
4. However, the Authority also has a role to pursue consistency in statistical practice where it believes that would be in the public interest. Section 7(4) of the *Act* includes an obligation to promote the coherence of official statistics and section 9(3) empowers the Authority to give guidance and advice on matters of definition.
5. The *Code of Practice for Official Statistics* places a related obligation on all producers to "Promote comparability within the UK and internationally by, for example, adopting common standards, concepts, sampling frames, questions, definitions, statistical units and classifications (including common geographic referencing and coding standards)". This is a statutory obligation in relation to all statistics published as National Statistics.
6. Other parts of the *Code* are germane too. For example, the *Code* emphasises the importance of meeting user needs: we take this to refer to the needs of potential and future users too. And it emphasises the need to balance quality (in this case, relevance) against costs, taking account of the expected uses of the statistics. In an era of pressure on public spending we fully recognise that it is not straightforward to make judgements about the allocation of resources to meet needs that might not currently be clearly articulated. Further, we recognise that these judgements might tend to favour statistical changes which tend to reduce the degree of consistency between statistics produced across the UK.
7. For existing regular statistical products, there are essentially two defensible positions that the Authority might take on how far it should go in promoting consistency.
  - i. The Authority might argue that any proposed change from the status quo in any administration had to be supported by a business case, normally prepared by producers, based on the needs of existing and potential users of the statistics. And

## SA(COS)(10)17 - UK Statistics Authority Policy on Devolved Statistics

that such business cases would need to be considered by the Authority before it would itself make a case for greater, or less, consistency of practice, or;

- ii. The Authority could instead argue that some cases of inconsistent current practice were so clear-cut and lacking in evident justification as to be indefensible, and that, in such cases, the four administrations should seek a resolution that will deliver a consistent set of statistics in all four administrations.
8. The arguments in respect of new statistical work that has not yet been established in one or more of the four administrations are slightly different, but such cases are few and can be considered as they arise.
9. A particular case illustrates the arguments. Assessment Report 18, published in November 2009, related to the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) in England, produced by the NHS Information Centre (NHS IC). Paragraph 4.11 of the Report says:

*The methods underpinning the NCMP are consistent with international best practice for the measurement of child Body Mass Index (BMI). The data are standardised using the reference group adopted by the Health Survey for England, which provides an external comparison of the results. The NCMP Report makes no reference to child obesity in other parts of the UK. We suggest that NHS IC refers to the geographic patterns in childhood obesity presented in their report 'Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet', and on the website. We further suggest that NHS IC work with the other UK administrations to produce a sub-set of comparable UK-wide data on obesity in children.*
10. The Assessment Committee of the Statistics Authority considered the suggestion that there should be a sub-set of UK-wide comparable data on obesity in children and concluded that it would be appropriate to write to Ministers making the argument. This was considered and agreed at the Authority Board meeting on 20 November 2009. Some further background on these statistics is given in **Annex A** of this paper (the position is more complex than it might first appear).
11. Clearly, in this case, no formal business case for change was offered or considered. However, in discussion at the time, a distinction was drawn between statistics that relate to matters on which there is devolved policy – for example, health, education and criminal justice statistics – where devolved policy may differ and thus require distinct statistics to support it; and statistics on matters where, despite possible policy differences, the requirement for statistical information to inform the public and policy makers would seem to be the same. Matters such as public health or the environment could be seen to be in this category. Having consistent data for the four administrations would have the added benefit of allowing direct comparison of the impact of different policy initiatives.
12. Informal soundings with the relevant government statisticians indicated strong opposition to the matter of childhood obesity being raised by the Authority with Ministers. Their suggestion instead was that the matter should be referred to the relevant Government Statistical Service (GSS) Theme Group. It was argued that the reasons for the differing coverage, methods and definitions between the administrations would need to be understood and the feasibility of producing comparable statistics would need to be explored. Whilst that is true, it is not clear that it should come before the matter of principle is raised with Ministers. However, it was also argued that no business case for change had been offered by the Authority, indicating that from the GSS perspective the burden of evidence rested on the Authority not the devolved administrations.

## SA(COS)(10)17 - UK Statistics Authority Policy on Devolved Statistics

13. The Committee may wish to consider which of the policies at i) or ii) it thinks the Authority should follow and what the implications are for the specific case of child obesity statistics.

**Richard Alldritt, Head of Assessment, July 2010**

### **List of Annexes**

**Annex A      Background on Childhood Obesity Statistics**

## **Annex A      Background on Childhood Obesity Statistics**

1. The main differences in practice between the four administrations in producing these figures are in the data collection methods, the time periods used, the age of the children, and the reference standards applied in the calculation of the child body mass index.
2. Data on child obesity are produced in two ways: through the various health surveys in each administration; and via child health programmes (with the routine measurement of the height and weight of school children in selected ages). While the surveys use similar approaches in each administration, recording the measurements of children aged between two and 15, they are not held in the same years. The surveys in England and Wales have each been run annually since 1995 and 1997 respectively, while Scotland was run in 1998, 2003 and 2008, and Northern Ireland in 1997, 2001 and 2005/06.
3. The child health measurement programmes also vary across the UK.
  - England has a comprehensive programme measuring the height and weight of children aged four to five and 10 to 11 each year – the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) run by the NHS Information Centre.
  - in Scotland, annual child obesity statistics are derived from height and weight measurements collected at routine child health reviews for children in Primary 1 (aged four to six years) by eleven NHS boards, covering around 62 per cent of these children across the country.
  - The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland extracts height and weight data provided by the Health and Social Services Boards for children aged between 54 and 66 months on the date of their measurements.
  - The National Public Health Service in Wales has a pilot project for collating childhood height and weight data for all children in reception and year 6. Until the successful completion of that project, childhood Body Mass Index (BMI) is monitored using the Welsh Health Survey.

Children's height and weight change at different rates at each age. The internationally accepted practice is to standardise children's BMI using the growth charts for a reference group. In England, Wales and Scotland the 1990 UK Growth Reference Standards are applied. In contrast the Northern Ireland administration uses the International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) standard, established by the World Health Organisation to enable international comparison of child obesity, and matches the practice in Ireland. However, Northern Ireland has also made its 2005/06 data available on the UK reference standard. Similarly, the Welsh Health Survey high level child obesity results for 2008 were also released on the IOTF standard.

International comparisons with the UK and each administration would be supported if child obesity data were always made available on the IOTF standard, as well as using the UK standard, for data from both the health surveys and measurement programmes. The data produced by applying the two standards are not comparable so clear guidance should accompany the figures to ensure the appropriate interpretation by users.



**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

**Committee for Official Statistics**

SA(COS)(10)19

***An update on Official Statistics e-Dissemination Strategy  
(previously referred to as web-dissemination strategy)***

**Purpose**

1. This paper reports progress in creating an e-dissemination strategy for Official Statistics.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is invited to note the work under way to prepare an e-dissemination strategy for Official Statistics, including the plan to bring a draft strategy to the next meeting. This is a further update to the paper presented at the May meeting.

**Discussion**

3. The emerging need for an e-dissemination strategy was addressed in the paper presented to the COS meeting in May.
4. To further understand the landscape, we have since researched existing policy, reports and strategies, considered reviews of government services, held discussions with Heads of Profession and researched individual departments' dissemination practices, along with those of our international peers. We have also sought to explore a range of developing technologies that could be employed to improve dissemination of Official Statistics, for example, researching potential partners including Google, the BBC, Wolfram and Gapminder.
5. Following discussions at the last COS meeting, and Colette Bowe's suggestion of a meeting with Kip Meek of Ingenious Consulting, Jil Matheson, Jason Bradbury, Simon Field and Paul Auckbarally met with Kip on 25 June. Kip is an expert in facilitating partnering arrangements in the technological/communications field. Discussions centred on our desire for a future e-dissemination strategy that is sustainable and clear on the role of producers. There was also recognition of users' need for different types of product and the ongoing need for analysis and commentary in helping guide users through disparate pieces of data.
6. Also of growing importance to our strategy is the Government's Transparency Agenda. Under the Governance of a new Transparency Board, a series of public data principles make it clear that key public datasets should be published using open data standards via a single easy to use online access point (data.gov.uk). The published working definition of "Public Data" states that "*Public Data is the objective, factual, non-personal data on which public services run and are assessed, and on which policy decisions are based, or which is collected or generated in the course of public service delivery.*" Therefore, whilst this does not cover statistics based on personal data, there may be implications for those official statistics producers who utilise non-personal data, particularly where drawn from administrative sources.
7. We recognise the importance of stakeholder buy-in and acceptance of any resulting strategy, and are engaging with a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that they are aware and involved throughout the evidence gathering and decision making process. For example, we are currently collating responses to a questionnaire we sent to members of the Statistics Users Forum.

## SA(COS)(10)18 - Official Statistics e-Dissemination Strategy

8. Our strategic framework so far has focused on how users are able to find, view, analyse and download Official Statistics. Using this approach, we have highlighted seven key strategic questions:
  - i. How should Official Statistics and the underlying data be made accessible to users in an electronic form?
  - ii. Should we utilise a portal approach to e-dissemination or seek to have a single site housing all Official Statistics?
  - iii. What is the future relationship between data.gov.uk and the Publication Hub?
  - iv. How much provenance should we maintain over our online statistics? Should we seek to dominate the landscape with our websites and applications and try to keep up with the public demand, or should we focus on making data available to users so that they can create their own 'mashups' and applications that meet their own demand?
  - v. To what extent should we seek external partnerships for our e-dissemination? This is linked to the question of provenance.
  - vi. Have we got the resource balance right between collection, analysis and dissemination, and how can that balance be reached in a climate of resource reductions?
  - vii. Should we utilise social media as a means of expanding our e-dissemination ability, or should it be used solely, if at all, as a communications technique.
9. We are about to debate these strategic questions with the GSS Presentation and Dissemination Committee and will continue to consult with HoPs, Theme Leaders, the RSS and the user community through the Statistics Users Forum.
10. We aim to have an interim strategy, with recommendations on these questions to present to the October COS meeting, with a view to producing a final strategy by November.
11. Research and discussion with key stakeholders has led to the identification of some critical questions on how we see the future delivery of Official Statistics. There are strategic choices to be made in order to agree on an e-dissemination strategy for Official Statistics. Continuous stakeholder involvement will be necessary in order to reach a shared GSS understanding and commitment to our future strategy.

**Jason Bradbury and Alison Byers, National Statistician's Office, July 2010**