

Statistics Commission



Report No. 36

Counting on Success

The 2011 Census – Managing the Risks

November 2007

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**Incorporating: Review of Consultation Process
by Demographic Decisions Ltd**

Statistics Commission
Artillery House
11-19 Artillery Row
London SW1P 1RT
020 7273 8008
www.statscom.org.uk

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Foreword

By the chairman of the Statistics Commission

The Census underpins the allocation of billions of pounds in funding for public services and is the foundation of many economic and social statistics. These in turn influence policy across government and investment decisions in the commercial sector. And despite the growth in new databases in recent years, the Census still offers a source of consistent small-area data that is better than any other. It gives us both a unique insight into the society in which we live and a social benchmark that will be of relevance for many decades to come. The Census is thus of fundamental importance to policy, good government, the economy and democracy. In a very practical sense, we are all counting on success in 2011.

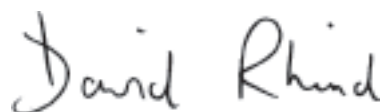
A national census is however a huge task. The following comments are contained in advice issued by the United Nations: *“The traditional census is among the most complex and massive peacetime exercises a nation undertakes. It requires mapping the entire country; mobilizing and training an army of enumerators; conducting a massive public campaign; canvassing all households; collecting individual information; compiling vast amounts of completed questionnaires; analyzing and disseminating the data. ...In addition, successfully conducting a census becomes a matter of national pride for many countries.”*

The cost of the 2011 Census seems likely to be of the order of £500 million. That will make it the most expensive statistical project ever undertaken in this country. The cost per head is in line with some countries known for their good statistical systems, such as Australia and Canada, but lower than in the United States. Whilst it is reassuring to know that costs are in line with international norms, the arguments for finding a cheaper and more flexible alternative get ever stronger as the total cost rises. We conclude in this report that an early start should be made to ensure that the 2011 Census will be the last of its kind. Consideration should also be given to collecting some of the census data through a continuous survey as is now done in the United States.

That a 2011 Census is needed seems to be widely accepted both inside and outside government and this is also the view of the Statistics Commission. In part, the case for spending so much money on a single statistical project turns on the fact that no other source of population information will be good enough by 2011 to replace the count that is the central product of the Census. But also, the 2011 Census will be the standard against which new ways of estimating the population in the future will be judged. In that sense, the next Census should be seen as laying the ground for new approaches to measuring the population and their characteristics.

More generally, our conclusions and recommendations point to the 2011 Census being a major focus for the work of the new Statistics Board, established under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, over the next four to five years. The Census alone will consume something like 40 per cent of the Statistics Board's budget for the first five years of its existence. In particular, we hope the Board will manage both to build consensus about how success should be judged and ensure resources are best deployed to achieve that success.

The recommendations in this report are those of the Statistics Commission. I would however like to acknowledge the contribution of officials in the Office for National Statistics and the census offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the invaluable support of the consultants and panel of experts who advised us at different stages.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Rhind". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Chairman, Statistics Commission

November 2007

Section 1: Introduction and Recommendations

Introduction

1. In February 2007, the Statistics Commission published an interim report *Preparing for the 2011 Census*. That report drew attention to some of the risks and challenges that the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the other census offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland, will face in seeking to deliver a 2011 Census that is widely seen to have been a success. This final report develops the arguments and recommendations further and sets them in the context of the new governance structure for official statistics established under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. It also argues for a different approach to counting the population after 2011 – but one which is best initiated now.
2. Censuses in the UK, as elsewhere, are by their nature problematic and vulnerable to disruption. The last Census was beset by budgetary pressures, public protests, problems with enumeration in hard-to-count areas, poor quality address lists and other technical difficulties. In Scotland there were Parliamentary changes to questions on ethnic group after agreement of the corresponding questions for England and Wales and, throughout the UK, foot and mouth disease constrained enumeration in rural areas. Jointly and separately, these difficulties threatened to throw plans off course and, in some respects, did lead to less reliable results than government and other users required.
3. As part of the initial review prior to our interim report, we commissioned a review from Demographic Decisions Ltd on the public consultations undertaken by the census offices, in the period up to 2007, in preparation for 2011 (**Annex 1**), and we held a meeting of twenty experts from academia, the private sector, local and central government. The group agreed that the 2011 Census is likely to be the most challenging one for many decades: contributory reasons are the high rate of population mobility and migration, the levels of illegal residency, changing household structures, increase in the number of second homes, growing reluctance to complete official questionnaires, and the growth of inaccessible homes (for example due to security gates) in already hard-to-count areas. A report on the seminar is at **Annex 2**.
4. The benefits of the Census can be difficult to gauge fully. Ultimately the data produced from the Census adds value where it provides a sound evidence base for action. In **Annex 3** we review the uses made of census data in managing public services.

5. The interim report highlighted some aspects of the preparations for 2011 on which more could be done by government to assure success. In this report we have refined our interim conclusions though not changed them substantially. We have however taken account of reaction to the interim report, including observations in a letter from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (**Annex 4**). The House of Commons Treasury Committee took evidence¹ on the topic shortly after publication of our interim report and we have considered carefully the points made in discussion at that time.
6. A timeline identifying key events leading up to 2011 is presented in Section 3. Notable points are:
 - The planning period is long – over seven years before Census day.
 - Many decisions have to be taken quite early.
 - As for the 2001 Census, initial outputs are scheduled to be published 18 months after Census day.
 - Taking a census is, in varying degrees, the responsibility of all four UK administrations but the position is different in each.

Recommendations

7. The conclusions in our interim report were addressed variously to government, Parliament, and the census offices. In this report we have recast them to focus in the main on the UK-wide scrutiny role of the new Statistics Board. Census funding represents around 40 per cent of the Board's budget between 2007-08 and 2011-12, and might therefore be expected to be a major item on the Statistics Board's agenda throughout that period.
8. Bearing in mind the points made above and the further evidence of the research that is presented in this report, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The Statistics Board should engage all interested parties, including Parliament and the devolved administrations, in building a consensus on how success will be judged for the 2011 Census and publicising the outcome. The success criteria must be meaningful and tractable for those planning the Census. Meeting the needs of all users equally is not a realistic goal. We make some suggestions later in this section.

¹ *Preparations for the 2011 Census, Oral and Written Evidence*, Wednesday 21 February 2007, Treasury Sub-Committee, 9 May 2007
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmtreasy/326/7022101.htm>

Recommendation 2: The delivery of robust population estimates, nationally and for local areas, should be seen as the single most important criterion against which the Census should be judged. However, in practice, the robustness of census population estimates cannot be measured directly; and commentators will be heavily influenced by whether the census estimates are consistent with expectations prior to the Census. It is therefore important that those expectations are well-informed and for this it will be necessary to have robust measures of population movements – that is both international and internal migration – ahead of 2011. Unless we know about patterns of migration in the years before the Census, there is a real risk that the Census will not be seen to have been a success even if it does deliver good estimates.

With these points in mind, the Statistics Board will need to work with government departments to ensure sufficient priority is given to improving migration estimates over the next few years. However, time is already short for any substantive improvements to these estimates ahead of the Census results. It may therefore be necessary to accept that there is already a problem facing the credibility of census estimates in some geographical areas. The best way to handle this may be to pinpoint those areas in which the Census results are likely to prove controversial and consider, with the local stakeholders and interest groups, what further steps might be taken locally.

Recommendation 3: Without a good quality national address register, all the Census risks are amplified. The development of such a register in England and Wales must remain a priority but it now seems unlikely that there will be significant progress ahead of 2011. The Census test carried out in 2007 will, when the results are published in autumn 2007, provide some objective evidence on the adequacy of the two existing sources – the Address Point product from Ordnance Survey and the National Land and Property Gazetteer managed by the Local Government Information House on behalf of local government. Attempts to reconcile these sources in recent years have not been successful – for reasons associated with intellectual property rights rather than technical challenges. We thus remain concerned that the work of Census enumeration will be hampered, though perhaps less so than it was in 2001 since there have been improvements in address lists since then. In the absence of a comprehensive solution that will serve the needs of Census enumeration, our recommendation is simply that the Statistics Board should give high priority to this issue, assess the scale of the problem in the light of the latest evidence, and mitigate the weaknesses in existing sources as best it can.

Recommendation 4: The Statistics Board should actively seek to promote understanding of the risks facing the 2011 Census; and do so across all levels of government and public administration in the UK. It should identify and emphasise the scope for many organisations inside and outside government to help contain those risks. This is no small task. As this report illustrates, the risks come in many forms, from the practical to the political, and from the predictable to the uncertain. One high risk is that some special interest groups will use criticism of the Census as a vehicle to gain publicity for their own causes. Those groups – which may include lobbies, political parties or media voices – need to be identified and engaged, in the period from now up to the event, in constructive discussion about the worth of the Census. The Statistics Board will need to discuss with Ministers and political parties the best way to do this. The dialogue must be well under way by the time of the White Paper stage in autumn 2008, not simply in the final months before the Census.

Recommendation 5: Census offices have already carried out consultation but should continue to engage with users to better understand their evolving requirements for census data. There is an added benefit in keeping this dialogue alive. Users and other external stakeholders – rather than government officials – are the best people to deliver positive messages about the value of the Census to the news media and the public and to allay unfounded fears about the intentions behind the Census, or the use that will be made of the personal information collected.

Recommendation 6: The Statistics Board will have to ensure that within the broad sweep of work of the statistical services across the UK, the Census is given sufficient priority, the risks are effectively managed, and the pace of development is not faster than the census offices can handle – recognising that a census cannot be postponed. Other priorities may have to be put back to make this a reality.

Recommendation 7: At the same time, the Board should find capacity to look beyond 2011 and begin to lay the ground now for new approaches to measuring the population and its characteristics. 2011 should be recognised as the last Census of the current kind, partly to make the best use of administrative systems already existing in government, partly because of the increasing difficulty in employing traditional enumeration methods, and not least because of the costs involved. We fully recognise that there are difficulties in establishing a reliable population register and that public opinion may be cautious about accepting that registers will only be used for public benefit. Nonetheless, such registers have replaced censuses elsewhere and the development of computerised administrative records in the UK has already moved on rapidly in recent years and looks as if it will continue to do so. We think that high-level discussion about what will replace, or at least supplement, the Census in the future should be taken forward in parallel to work relating to 2011. Leaving this issue until after the 2011 Census is completed could require another Census in 2021 at a cost well in excess of the £500 million bill for 2011. The US approach (see Section 2) of adopting a continuous survey to partly replace the Census also deserves serious consideration.

Previous Statistics Commission recommendations

9. The current review follows earlier research by the Statistics Commission on census-related matters and the current recommendations draw in part on the earlier reports. Our 2004 report *Census and population estimates*² made a number of recommendations including:
 - a) Government departments, local authorities and other public bodies should commit to work closely together in the planning and the execution of the 2011 round of censuses.
 - b) Targeted studies or surveys should be pursued in selected areas ahead of 2011 with a view to improving population estimates for the most problematic areas.
 - c) Improvement of the quality of migration data should be addressed urgently by the Home Office and the Office for National Statistics together.
 - d) The creation of a robust and continuously updated national address register should be a priority for government.
 - e) Government departments should assess more systematically and publish their own requirements in relation to the Census.
10. These recommendations pointed to ways to reduce particular risks ahead of 2011. Whilst there has undoubtedly been some progress on specific points, the issues are

² *Census and Population Estimates and The 2001 Census in Westminster: Final Report*, Report No. 22, Statistics Commission, 2004 <http://www.statscom.org.uk/uploads/files/reports/Census%20Report%20Final%2022.pdf>

mostly still relevant and are reflected in our current recommendations. Looking at each issue in turn:

- a) Where public bodies have committed to work together to make the 2011 Census a success, the commitment has mostly been informal and unspecific. We would have liked to have seen greater recognition that the Census, as a project, needs the active support of *all* central government departments, *all* the devolved administrations, *all* local authorities and many other bodies in the public sector. We suspect that many public bodies continue to see themselves purely as customers for the Census, not as sharing in the responsibility for its success.
- b) Targeted studies have been pursued in some areas but more with a view to identifying future and generalisable improvements rather than to revise the population estimates in the most problematic areas. The need to make best use of limited resources was the primary reason for this but it means that there are still outstanding and unresolved problems with population estimates in some of the hard-to-count areas.
- c) The scope to improve the quality of estimates of international and internal migration was reviewed by an ONS-led inter-departmental task force which reported in December 2006. However, we believe it may now be unrealistic to expect substantive progress ahead of 2011.
- d) Various initiatives to produce a single and definitive address register for England and Wales have so far failed. The absence of a reliable list of addresses poses real problems for the 2011 Census.
- e) There is little evidence available to us that government departments have thoroughly researched their own data requirements although we understand that ONS is engaging them on this topic.

Having noted that these recommendations are still, in large part, outstanding, we must also recognise that it was never going to be easy to make a lot of progress with them. In the case of an address register for example, ministers did make a substantial attempt to resolve the current problems³ but legal and other practical considerations eventually resulted in an admission of defeat.⁴ The history of these issues has informed the recommendations in the current report.

³ Statement by Nick Raynsford MP about improving national address information, *House of Commons Written Answers* for 10 Nov 2003.
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/vo031110/text/31110w40.htm#31110w40.html_sbhd1

⁴ *Statement on the National Spatial Address Infrastructure (NSAI)*, Statement by Department of Communities and Local Government, 1 June 2007
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/geographicinformationinitiatives/nationalspatialaddress/statement/>

What is success?

11. It will be important to establish wide consensus about how the success of the 2011 Census will be judged. We do not think such consensus was ever adequately reached for 2001, leaving uncertainty and division about whether to regard the final product as good enough. We see this as something that could now be settled ahead of 2011 and which would help all those involved to focus on agreed goals. At our expert seminar (Annex 2) views on what would constitute success were varied, but all participants agreed on the importance of reaching a consensus.
12. We made this point in our interim report. The Government's response⁵ was positive, and we understand that the Census White Paper, scheduled for autumn 2008, will include proposals on how the success of the Census should be judged. In that context, ONS will be having discussions with a wide range of stakeholders. We have also recommended elsewhere that government needs to improve statistical planning across Whitehall departments and the devolved administrations.⁶ Agreeing success criteria for the Census may prove a useful test of the planning arrangements.
13. In proposing a consensus approach, we recognise that the success, or otherwise, of a census will always be partly a matter of perspective. Some local authorities regarded the 2001 Census as having failed because local Census results were at odds with their own estimates. Other bodies have other priorities and seeking to please everyone is not realistic. However, it may be possible to agree some criteria on the following lines:
 - I. **Robust population estimates** – Census population estimates are widely accepted as robust enough for specified purposes.
 - II. **All Census questions are 'effective'** – no major failure relating to an individual Census question (that is to say, all questions are well understood and there is a good response to each).
 - III. **No harmful political campaigns** – political or media campaigns against the Census are not serious enough to have any substantive impact on the estimates or on public perceptions of the value of the Census.
 - IV. **Plans cope with external events** – terrorism alerts, public health emergencies and floods are examples of unpredictable events which could disrupt the Census and undermine the credibility of the results. The ability of the Census processes to recover in the event of such an occurrence is an important consideration.

⁵ Letter from Financial Secretary to the Treasury in response to Commission interim report, 13 March 2007, reproduced in Annex 4 of this report.

⁶ *The Use Made of Official Statistics*, Report No. 33, Statistics Commission, 2007
<http://www.statscom.org.uk/uploads/files/reports/Report%2033%20Use%20Made%20March%202007.pdf>

- V. **Consistency with other data** – Census results must be sufficiently consistent with population estimates made before the Census to avoid loss of confidence. This applies in particular to local area population estimates.
 - VI. **The Census results are produced in a timely and easily useable form** – the 2001 Census results were released over a period between 2002 and 2006. Some users may demand the 2011 results earlier than for 2001 but most will understand that a balance must be struck. The ‘one-number’ methodology, used in 2001, which required all the results to be fully reconciled and does not allow subsequent revision, has advantages for users but takes longer than the previous approach of issuing early results and then amending them where necessary. The latter approach was criticised in 1991, the last time it was used. Research suggests that ease of use of the statistics, good documentation on what they mean, availability in a detailed disaggregated form, and comparability at a high level across the UK are also important for many users.
 - VII. **No grounds for audit criticism** – all the planned work is carried out within budget, on time and is compliant with all relevant guidance on financial propriety.
14. A census which satisfied the criteria above would be one that produced timely and reliable estimates across the whole range of questions asked, met all relevant standards of propriety, avoided major disruption or reputation damage and did not surprise the experts. We would suggest that a more refined set of indicators on these lines should be agreed to give both government and the census offices a clearer target.

15. Recommendation 1 above follows directly from these considerations.

Section 2: Identifying and managing the risks

16. This section identifies various types of risk to the Census. In relation to each we look at the approach being taken to containing and managing those risks and consider whether more might reasonably be done. First though, we address some broader aspects of risk and look at the well-established control mechanisms that apply to any major public sector project.

Understanding risk in relation to the Census

17. Risk is unavoidable and avoidance is not the goal. The goal must rather be to take appropriate risks where there is real benefit to be obtained but to manage and minimise the risk of negative consequences. Innovation in terms of census methods is essential but brings new risks. Those risks must be weighed up carefully and minimised by thorough testing of the new processes. As the Census has developed over the years, new questions and processes have been introduced, for example using new technologies, contracting out elements of the work, and moving towards online completion. Risk-aversion in relation to technological change may simply create different risks, for example if old established methods of enumeration prove no longer adequate in a changing environment.
18. Problems affecting one census may impact the next one, or not become evident until the next one. Some problems of under-enumeration in 1991 only transpired when the 2001 Census was taken. This then affected mid-year population estimates from 1991-2000, with knock-on consequences for the planning and quality assurance of the 2001 Census. Similarly, the low number of successful prosecutions of people for failing to complete Census forms in 2001 may impact on willingness to complete forms in 2011. In some respects therefore, censuses should not be seen as wholly separate from one another despite the ten year interval.
19. Many problems that affected the 2001 Census will already have been mitigated for 2011 but horizon-scanning for new ones is essential. In the wake of the Welsh identity issue in 2001, the Treasury Sub Committee made recommendations to “ensure the most accurate picture possible is obtained of both how the Census is likely to be received and perceived”.⁷ The Statistics Commission agrees that it is essential to look closely at the ‘environment’ and the likely reception of Census arrangements in 2011. Some indication of possible problems will have been given by the Census tests in 2006 and 2007 but we do not yet have details.

⁷ *The 2001 Census in England and Wales, First Report*, Treasury Sub-Committee, 6 March 2002
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtreasy/310/31002.htm>

International perspective

20. The types of risks discussed in this report are not unique to the UK but the approach being followed varies in other countries. Plans for the United States Census in 2010 involve more use of postal and telephone completion and use of handheld computers. But of greater consequence, the US has already, ahead of 2010, moved away from use of a long census form to a short form decennial census coupled with a very large, and compulsory, continuous survey (The American Community Survey) collecting the kind of socio-economic and demographic data that would previously only have been available from the Census itself. This is a crucial change. The US Census Bureau will spend some \$11.5 billion over the ten year census cycle but a substantial part of that total will be spent on the ACS rather than on census enumeration. This substantially reduces the risks associated with the Census itself as well as giving regular and relatively up-to-date, and potentially better quality, statistical data for each of the over 3000 US counties. The US approach can be characterised as using the Census Bureau budget over the ten year cycle more efficiently and with lower risk rather than seeking a dramatic cost reduction. As well as looking at the scope for savings associated with more use of population register data, the UK government should also consider emulating this shift from a decennial 'big bang' to gathering similar information on a continuous basis.
21. Introducing new approaches carries risks in every country: the Netherlands carried out a 'virtual census' in 2001 using the central population register combined with survey data.⁸ The benefits included the large cost saving and avoiding problems of non-response. The disadvantages were that the information available was more limited and related only to samples. In France, a new 'rolling census' has been adopted.⁹ This involves a risk to data quality and relevance. In 2006, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa introduced some online completion¹⁰ – but again this approach carried a new set of risks. In Canada, political objections impacted on willingness to complete the census forms in 2006.¹¹ There is no perfect solution; a degree of innovation and experimentation is widely regarded as a normal part of the census process.

8 *The Dutch Virtual Census 2001: A New Approach by Combining Different Sources*, Nordholt, E.S., Statistics Netherlands, Invited paper to Statistical Commission and United Nations Commission for Europe (UNECE), Conference of European Statisticians – *Seminar on New Methods for Population Censuses*, Geneva, 22 Nov 2004 <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2004/11/censussem/wp.4.e.pdf>

9 *The New French Population Census*, Desplanques, G, Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE), Invited paper to Statistical Commission and United Nations Commission for Europe (UNECE) Conference of European Statisticians – *Work Session on Population and Housing Censuses*, Ohrid, 21-23 May 2003 <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2003/05/census/wp.12.e.pdf>

10 *E-Census Gains Traction*, Guest K, ITWeb, South Africa, 28 May 2007 <http://www.itweb.co.za/sections/internet/2007/0705281032.asp?S=IT%20in%20Government&A=ITG&O=FRGN>

11 *Census faces attack from blog rumours*, Riga, A, National Post, Canada, 8 May 2006 <http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=09adc99b-e3e5-418c-a274-296d8abed7bf&rfp=dta>

A taxonomy of risk

22. The Treasury's definition of risk is "uncertainty of outcome, whether positive opportunity or negative threat, of actions and events. It is the combinations of likelihood and impact, including perceived importance".¹² Our own use of the word in relation to the Census is simpler. We mean risk that the Census might not be seen to have been a success by the standards we have suggested in Section 1. That interpretation leads us to group risks under the following headings, discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of the report:

Political – censuses everywhere attract political or lobbying campaigns, including newspaper campaigns, which are not directly to do with the aims of the Census but which can reduce public willingness to co-operate. It may be a campaign about national identity in parts of the UK, about identity cards, privacy, or about council taxes. Such campaigns are hard to anticipate but it may be possible to reduce their impact by careful and long-running advance publicity and contact with key groups.

Planning/Contractual – the risk that some aspect of the census operation might be inadequately designed, leading to problems in implementation – for example, the terms under which a contractor is engaged might make it too costly to accommodate needed changes. Though this is a large category of risk, it is also perhaps the best understood and most tractable.

Operational – the risk that processes or procedures might fail to work adequately despite being well-designed, eg due to human error or oversight – for example an individual might fail to check progress at a critical time, missing an emerging problem and thus failing to trigger corrective action.

Contextual – under this heading, even if the Census itself was faultless, a problem with other statistics (or inconsistency between the results from the different census offices) might undermine confidence in the Census results. An example would be where the annual population estimates for an area had been overestimated before the Census (as happened in some areas before 2001) and then, when the Census results emerged, it was the Census itself that was called in to question. Such risks are a threat to the *perceived value* of the Census and thus to willingness to use census information in decision-making.

External – events unconnected with the Census, such as a major health emergency or natural disaster, might affect capacity to carry out the fieldwork or processing. The foot and mouth outbreak was one such example which occurred in the course of fieldwork in 2001.

¹² *Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts, The Orange Book*, HM Treasury, 2004 <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk./media/3/5/FE66035B-BCDC-D4B3-11057A7707D2521F.pdf>

Responsibility for mitigating risks

23. The United Nations Statistical Commission states that carrying out a census “should be seen as a national task involving all stakeholders”. Furthermore, it “must be designed in partnership with all political actors so as to obtain their involvement in the census process”.¹³
24. At our seminar discussion (Annex 2), ownership of risks was generally perceived to rest with census offices but it was acknowledged that those offices must work in partnership with other organisations, including local authorities, central government departments, with international colleagues, and with specialist users via the consultations.
25. We concluded in our interim report that many organisations both inside and outside government had a role in helping to mitigate risk. It is not however evident to us that the government has translated this into a practical strategy. For the most part, published material on strategies to mitigate the risks do not seem to involve external organisations.

Existing controls

26. Whilst we have real concerns about viewing risk as a matter largely or exclusively for the census offices, there are a number of administrative controls on the operation of the Census that play a part in mitigating some risks. We identify below some of those controls:
 - **Statistical standards** – censuses carried out in the European Union follow European guidelines. For 2011, there may be specific European regulations setting down some common requirements for the next round of censuses. The UK Census must also comply with the National Statistics Code of Practice¹⁴ which includes principles for consultation and the protection of confidentiality.
 - **Financial and regulatory controls** – these include government procurement guidance for large-scale public projects and risk management guidelines.
 - **Statutory requirements**¹⁵ – the Census is taken in Britain under the Census Act 1920 and in Northern Ireland under the Census Act 1969. Secondary legislation, in the form of a Census Order, prescribes the date, areas, enumeration base and question items; and Census Regulations prescribe detailed arrangements such as geography, appointments and duties of field staff, delivery and collection of forms, and security procedures (for England and Wales).

¹³ *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*, United Nations Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, United Nations Statistical Commission, 38th session, Feb-Mar 2007 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc07/BG-Census.pdf>

¹⁴ *Proposals for a Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, Statistics Commission, 2 October 2007 <http://www.statscom.org.uk/uploads/files/reports/Report%2035%20Proposals%20for%20a%20Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>

¹⁵ See Section 9 for further details about statutory requirements.

There will be separate secondary legislation in Scotland and for Northern Ireland. The National Assembly for Wales is being consulted about the (England and Wales) Census Order, and a Transfer of Functions Order has given the Welsh Assembly the power to make secondary legislation for the Census Regulations for 2011. The draft Census Order is expected to be laid before the respective legislatures around November 2009; the Regulations around March 2010.

In addition, the Census is required to comply with other legislation such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (for evidence collected as part of the prosecution process for non-completion of a Census questionnaire), the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

- **Audit, scrutiny and evaluation** – the National Audit Office (NAO) and other authorities audit, scrutinise or evaluate census processes. Their recommendations are expected to be taken on board either immediately or in planning the next Census.
- **Risk management processes used by census offices** – ONS and the census offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland each have specific governance arrangements and a Risk Management Strategy in place for the 2011 Census. ONS published a list of risks in relation to the 2011 Census design in 2004 but a full risk register for the Census project is not publicly available. We understand this is because it addresses risks relating to commercial contracts. ONS is using the Prince2 project management method – itself designed to ensure risks are well managed. Details about the ONS risk management process are outlined in its Annual Report. All risks are logged on a register and corporate risks are discussed at ONS Board meetings. Delivery of the Census is included on its corporate risk register.¹⁶ The General Register Office for Scotland has made its Census risk register available to us. This includes an assessment of risk likelihood and impact, level of monitoring, business areas affected, planned action, progress and the date of next review.

The census offices also use consultation with stakeholders as a tool for managing certain risks – seeking to ensure that the outputs will meet requirements and be fit for purpose, within the constraints of resources and timescales.

¹⁶ *Annual Report and Accounts 2006/2007*, Office for National Statistics, July 2007
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about_ns/ONS/downloads/ONS_annual_report_2006-07.pdf

27. We would argue that all four UK administrations need to follow the advice of the United Nations Statistical Commission (paragraph 23 above) and see the Census as a national task involving all stakeholders. This is as important in the management of risk as it is in determining the content of the Census. Public bodies should not be allowed to treat the Census simply as someone else's task. There is role for all of them in containing risk and delivering a successful census. As an example of the need to share responsibility, the introduction of the community charge ('poll tax') in 1991 led to public suspicion of the Census and problems with enumeration. Government cannot be expected to stop for a census but it must consider in a joined up way what it can do to create a positive climate and avoid ill-timed initiatives.
28. There will likely be some resistance to the view that all parts of a government have a role to play. In the United States, the Census Bureau prompted an angry reaction with its suggestion that immigration agents should suspend enforcement raids during the 2010 Census so that they could better count illegal immigrants.¹⁷ This story illustrates the point that government cannot just assume that the census offices will be able to manage regardless of what other parts of the administration are doing in the run-up to the Census.

¹⁷ *No Immigration Raids in 2010 Census?*, ABCmoney, 16 Aug 2007
<http://www.abcmoney.co.uk/news/162007119884.htm>

Section 3: Timetable for the Census

29. In this section we present a timeline identifying the key events leading up to 2011 including planning, consultation and partnerships, contracting, recruitment, funding and legislation. The planning period is long, even longer than for 2001 as many actions have been initiated earlier. The legislative timetable is fixed and has to be taken into account in planning all other preparations. As for the 2001 Census, initial outputs are scheduled to be published 18 months after Census day.
30. Taking a census is, in varying degrees, the responsibility of all four UK administrations but the position is different in each. The preparations are not necessarily synchronised and some differences are shown in the table. For example, consultation began at different times and the Census test in Scotland occurred one year before the tests in England and Wales or Northern Ireland.
31. This timeline also facilitates a time-dependent view of risks. For example, as at 2007, the risks to the contractual processes are of more immediate concern than those posed by foot and mouth disease, but the balance may well change as the Census approaches. Some other risks are relatively constant throughout the planning period.
32. There are a number of new approaches designed for the 2011 Census and these present new risks and require rigorous testing. Preparations for these are indicated in the timeline.

Table 1. Timetable for the planning and delivery of the Census

(Note – the information has been compiled from a range of sources and may not be fully up-to-date, particularly where decisions or actions have been put back.)

2002
Review of the need for a Census 2006 in England and Wales
2003
ONS Census strategic development review on alternatives to a census published
2004
Proposed design for Census 2011 and strategic aims and key research in England and Wales published
Scotland consultation begins
2005
UK harmonisation agreed
Scotland consultation and proposals for 2006 test questions
ONS begins consultation
Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) notice of services and systems contract to be procured by the three census offices.
2006
April: Census test 2006 in Scotland
Contract for recruitment, pay and training of field staff to be awarded by May 2006
Recruitment of team leaders and address checkers; address checking begins
Contract for suppliers of systems and services scheduled to be awarded by September
Quality assurance strategy agreed by the UK census offices
England and Wales Census test questionnaire (2007) published 31 October 2006
Transfer of functions order for Wales

Table 1. Timetable for the planning and delivery of the Census (*cont.*)

2007
UK statistical disclosure control policy agreed
Enumerator recruitment starts (January)
Internet questionnaire agreed (February)
Decision on Census funding
2006 (Scotland) test evaluation reported (April)
13 May 2007: Census test (England & Wales)
2008
2007 test evaluation reported (Spring)
Draft White Paper to respective Ministers for comment
Postal question test (February)
Field staff recruitment for rehearsal starts (August)
Rehearsal and final 2011 questionnaire finalised (Summer)
Ministers' approval of White Papers (Autumn)
White Paper proposals (Wales) debated by Welsh national assembly (by end year)
2009
UK agreement of statistical disclosure control methods begins (April)
Spring: Census rehearsal – England and Wales, Scotland
Draft Census Order laid before respective parliaments (November)

Table 1. Timetable for the planning and delivery of the Census (cont.)

2010
Draft Census Order approved by Parliament (January)
Census Order made in Council (February)
Regulations made by respective Ministers (March)
England Regulations and Welsh Regulations come into force (May)
Census field staff recruitment starts (August)
Printing of forms (September onwards)
Address check (September-October)
2011
Recruitment of enumerators (January-March)
Spring: Census Day
2012
First results reported (Autumn)
2013
Main outputs completed
2014
General Report (Spring)
2013 – 2015 Further results produced

Sources of timetable information: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency publications.

Section 4: The Political Risks

33. Censuses everywhere have the potential to attract political or lobbying campaigns which can reduce public willingness to co-operate with enumeration. Such campaigns may be about national identity in parts of the UK, about identity cards, privacy, council taxes – or treat the Census simply as a convenient hook on which to hang any other cause or concern. These campaigns can be hard to anticipate but it may be possible to reduce their impact on enumeration by careful advance publicity and early engagement with key groups.
34. In 2001, a campaign to discredit the religion question encouraged people to state they belonged to the ‘Jedi’ religion. This was a trivial example which nonetheless affected the results. More substantively, the Census became the target of campaigners who wanted ‘Welsh’ recognised as an option under the ethnic group question and encouraged people to destroy Census forms when this was not included. This campaign was prompted by a late decision in the Scottish Parliament to change the corresponding question on the form in Scotland, illustrating how one political initiative can spark another and whilst the first may not damage enumeration, a consequent one might. In another example, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) targeted the Census in their campaign to change the Disability Discrimination Act.
35. With the growth in internet use and the growing potential for public campaigns to gather momentum quickly, this is an area of risk that the Statistics Commission is particularly concerned about. Media comment on ‘the surveillance society’, identity cards and fears about threats to confidentiality associated with electronic data handling in the public services (for example the computerisation of NHS records) suggests there is already some degree of public concern about the protection of personal privacy. Privacy campaigners may latch on to the Census simply because it asks a lot of questions of individuals.
36. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
 - The Census White Papers that will be published in October 2008 will formalise the policy position and be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.
 - Each office will produce a communication strategy.
 - Early contact has been made with legislatures in each of the four countries.
 - Census offices are carrying out consultation with stakeholders – both special interest groups and census users.

- Census offices are paying attention to risks relating to migration, disabilities, race issues, sexuality, identity cards, privacy and data sharing.
- ONS is preparing to implement the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

Statistics Commission view

37. There is no simple method of preventing campaigns against the Census but there are pre-emptive steps that might be considered by government and Parliament. One characteristic common to most anti-census campaigns is denial of the importance of the Census to the interests of ordinary people. On past experience, government statisticians, on their own, are unlikely to be able to get that message through to political bodies and the general public. It is a message that needs to be carefully enunciated and strongly and frequently communicated. The first step is likely to be for government to refine, adopt and publicise a clear statement of why the Census matters to the man or woman in the street.
38. The Statistics Commission would like to see all four administrations publicly recognise the value of the Census early on in the planning process and use their authority to build wide acceptance that the Census must not be treated as a political football or be seen as an opportunity to flex devolved powers. The elaborate Parliamentary approval processes required ahead of 2011 present an opportunity for proper political debate at an appropriate stage – which may help maintain cross-party support and the opportunity to convey positive messages about the Census.
39. 2011 will be the first Census where all the devolved administrations have been in a position to engage actively in the planning and preparation stage. Any changes in administration or ministers inevitably increase the risk of a late change of policy towards the Census. Cross-party support needs to be sought actively to reduce this risk.
40. Our recommendations include (recommendation 4 in Section 1) that the Statistics Board should actively seek to promote understanding of the challenges and risks facing the 2011 Census; and do so across all levels of government and public administration in the UK. It should identify and emphasise the scope for many organisations inside and outside government to help contain those risks. The Statistics Board will need to discuss with Ministers and political parties the best way to do this.

Section 5: The Planning and Contractural Risks

41. The planning and contractual risks are considered in this section under these sub-headings:

- Planning
- Funding
- Contracts
- Partnership arrangements
- Consultation
- Communication
- Concepts of population
- Post-out, post-back and online completion
- Security of information
- Quality assurance
- Harmonisation between census offices

Planning

42. To start with a historical perspective, the planning of the 2001 Census was criticised for starting too late¹⁸ and there were some planning slip-ups (for example an amendment to the Census Act failed to be included in the legislative programme for 1999/2000 and had to be introduced as a private members' bill instead). In response, planning for the 2011 Census began earlier. The composite timeline in Section 3 lists the key milestones in preparations for 2011.

43. One overarching risk is that the planning *system* for 2011 – rather than any specific plan – might prove inadequate. In the context of the 2001 Census, the National Audit Office criticised the strategies for managing non-compliance in the information systems to manage field staff and the approach to forecasting the patterns of returns from each area.¹⁹ Also, there is some evidence that not all the lessons from the

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics - *Outsourcing the 2001 Census*, National Audit Office, 2002
http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/01-02/01021211.pdf

¹⁹ *ibid.*

Census rehearsal in 1999 were taken on board for 2001, and that there were difficulties because aspects of the fieldwork management strategy did not allow for local flexibility and responsibility.²⁰

44. In relation to 2011, the online completion option will not be tested until the Census rehearsal in 2009; if the results of this rehearsal indicate the need for large-scale changes, there is a risk that there may not be sufficient time for further rigorous testing. Such contingencies need to be fully accommodated in the planning system.
45. In planning for 2011, census offices will also need to make allowance for a range of societal changes, such as:
 - Possibly heightened awareness of cultural and religious identities which may affect the success of questions on ethnicity and religion.
 - Stronger national and regional identities which may affect compliance generally as well as willingness to complete questions about language and identity.
 - Changing household structures which may affect how households need to be counted.
 - The increase in migration, particularly short-term migration, which will affect how the population is best counted, will increase language-related problems in enumeration and will certainly complicate the enumeration process overall.
 - Growing public concerns about surveillance and identity theft; and mistrust of government in general. Any of these things may impede enumeration.
46. Another risk is that planning for Census 2011 will not take sufficient account of the need to lay the ground for future census activity. As censuses grow in cost, as enumeration becomes more difficult and as administrative data sources become more widely used, there is wide agreement that the means of counting population will in future need to change. The 2011 Census results will be the benchmark against which new ways of estimating the population in the future will be judged. In that sense, this Census has to lay the ground for new approaches to measuring the population and their characteristics. It needs to be designed with that in mind. In practice this means starting to plan now, at the highest levels in government, for the greater exploitation of administrative databases in future.
47. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address these planning risks:
 - Census offices began planning for Census 2011 earlier than for 2001.

²⁰ *Census Fieldwork in the UK – the Bedrock for a Decade of Social Analysis*, Simpson L, and Brown M, Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, University of Manchester, 2007 (forthcoming; an early version is published at: <http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/publications/occasion/occ22.pdf>)

- ONS published an information paper on strategic aims (June 2004).
- ONS has undertaken a cost-benefit analysis of options for the Census design.
- ONS has revised its governance structure following a review of Census organisational management by Ernst and Young.
- ONS has identified management capacity as risk on its corporate risk register.
- Census offices have budgeted for sufficient staff to be recruited.
- There is a more formal role for the Welsh Assembly in planning Census 2011.
- Census offices are carrying out wider consultation than for 2011.
- ONS plans to produce a strategy for dealing with wilful non-response.
- Census offices have consulted on topics for possible inclusion.
- Census offices are redeveloping questions and testing new questions.
- ONS carried out a review of alternative enumeration methods for 2011.

Statistics Commission view

48. The Statistics Board will need to review whether there is sufficient robustness and flexibility in the planning system to deal with the kind of unforeseen occurrences and complications discussed in paragraphs 43-45 above. In practice, this may mean having some slack in the timetables and ensuring that the management structure and budget are not so stretched that they cannot respond to the unexpected.
49. The Board will also need to find capacity to look beyond 2011 and begin to lay the ground now for new approaches to measuring the population and its characteristics. 2011 should be recognised as the last Census of the current kind, partly to make the best use of administrative systems already existing in government, partly because of the increasing difficulty in employing traditional enumeration methods, and not least because of the costs involved. We fully recognise that there are difficulties in establishing a reliable population register and that public opinion may be cautious about accepting that registers will only be used for public benefit. Nonetheless, such registers have replaced censuses elsewhere and the development of computerised administrative records in the UK has already moved on rapidly in recent years and looks as if it will continue to do so. We think that high-level discussion about what will replace, or at least supplement, the Census in the future should be taken forward in parallel to work relating to 2011. Leaving this issue until after the 2011 Census is completed could require another Census in 2021 at a cost well in excess of the £500 million bill for 2011. The US approach (see Section 2) of adopting a continuous survey to partly replace the Census also deserves serious consideration.

Funding

50. Perhaps the most fundamental planning requirement is provision of sufficient funding, at an early enough stage, to allow all other planning processes to proceed smoothly. ONS noted in its General Report on the 2001 Census that recruitment of enumerators was “hindered by rates of pay that were widely regarded as being too low”. Initial decisions on funding in relation to such matters need to be taken several years in advance of the Census and well before full information on costs is established.
51. For 2001, the Census Access Project – which ensured that all standard outputs were free to users – was funded by a government scheme called the *Invest to Save Budget*. The principle of disseminating free outputs was confirmed by the Treasury in 2006.²¹ Though welcome, this creates a risk for 2011, in that the equivalent costs will need to have been included in the total budget since the *Invest to Save Budget* is no longer available.
52. We have been informed that the census offices have taken the following step to address these risks:
 - The Treasury has allocated £1.2 billion to the Statistics Board for the five year period 2008 to 2013; this includes funding for all aspects of the Census. We do not have a breakdown of spending plans.

Statistics Commission view

53. Whilst we have welcomed the announcement of a five-year funding settlement for the Statistics Board of £1.2 billion, we have concluded that no judgement on the adequacy of that settlement, for Census or other statistical work, can be made from the information that is now publicly available. The Statistics Commission has asked the National Statistician (letter of 23 April 2007) for indicative budgets for ONS major programmes of work, covering both the recent past and the forward years, so that interested parties can form a view on the pressures ONS is facing and the possible implications for Census risks. In October 2007 a breakdown of ONS costs for major programmes of work was published, but did not show Census costs as a separate item.

Contracts

54. Transferring risks by contracting out large elements of the work carries risk in itself. There is of course past experience from previous censuses to build on; though the long interval between them means that much of the specific expertise is lost or outdated by the next time. Outsourcing is essential where the census offices do not

²¹ *Independence for Statistics – The Government Response*, HM Treasury, November 2006
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk./media/F/A/ons_government_response.pdf

maintain sufficient in-house capacity – and this is likely to apply in many areas from system design to public relations. ONS stresses the importance of transferring risk to other parties through commercial contracts but there will also be quite substantial risks associated with the specification and management of such contracts.

55. The National Audit Office made recommendations in 2002 to improve the contracting process in the future. For example, that ONS should ensure that key assumptions underpinning contract terms and service performance are rigorously assessed, and also improve the service level agreement with the Post Office for the posting out and back of forms.
56. In selecting a contractor there may also be a risk related to the contractor's public image or reputation. For example, the Green Party advocated boycotting the Census test 2007 as a way of protesting about the business interests of one of the Census contractors.²²
57. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
 - ONS has set up a dedicated procurement team.
 - Payroll services are being procured earlier than for 2011 to ensure the system is fully tested, including at the rehearsal stage.
 - ONS will negotiate a new service level agreement with the Post Office to include central post-back (rather than to regional offices as in 2001).
 - As recommended by the National Audit Office, all key census services and supporting systems will be fully tested at the rehearsal stage.

Statistics Commission view

58. We understand that ONS is procuring most contracts on a UK-wide basis and we welcome the establishment of a dedicated procurement team which should help to make the specification and details of the contracting more efficient, and compliant with relevant legislation and guidelines.

Partnership arrangements

59. Census offices are entering into partnerships with local authorities and various national organisations. This will help ensure effective enumeration and acceptance of the outputs. Local authority partnerships cover: address register development; assistance in targeting delivery methods; developing community liaison contacts;

²² *Be Careful Who You Share Your Details With*, Berry, S, *New Statesman*, 8 May 2007
<http://www.newstatesman.com/200705080005>

recruitment and logistics; and local publicity. ONS lists the benefits of these partnership arrangements as access to local knowledge, resources, procedures and structures, and increased local authority support for the reliability of resulting outputs. It lists the risks as including: variable quality enumeration, inconsistencies in practices, a conflict of interests, and a public perception of a risk to confidentiality of, for example, the address data exchanged between local authorities and the census office.²³

60. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- Census offices are engaging with local authorities and ONS has agreed an Action Plan 2005-2011.
 - The census offices have encouraged local authorities to appoint formal census liaison managers to work as agents on their behalf.
 - ONS has set up a local authorities steering group, has tested local authorities' engagement in 2007 and will engage with local authority chief executives.
 - ONS plans to publish a Stakeholder Management and Communications Strategy in autumn 2007.

Statistics Commission view

61. We welcome the efforts made by ONS to engage local authorities in Census planning, though we are aware that some local authorities are dissatisfied with the interaction. The effectiveness of the partnership arrangements will be tested during the 2007 test and 2009 rehearsal. We reiterate the relevant recommendation in our 2003 report that government departments, local authorities and other public bodies should commit to work closely together in the planning and the execution of the 2011 Census. Partnership with local authorities will enable the census offices to obtain the best understanding of the characteristics of local areas, and decide where best to target census resources; and it may prove essential to the future exploitation of locally held administrative records for statistical purposes.

Consultation

62. The Cabinet Office points out that one of the difficulties with consultation on big issues that are broken down into "bite-sized chunks" for consultation purposes is that it "can obscure the totality of the costs, benefits and impacts associated with a

²³ 2011 Census Local Authority Liaison – Action Plan, ONS, July 2006
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/pdfs/LAAActionPlan.pdf>

particular proposal. Also, it might be thought that this approach suits the Government department's resources rather than the users' needs."²⁴

63. The main consultations on the content of the 2011 Census questionnaires have already taken place – some five years before the Census. There is clearly some risk that the findings of the consultation may become outdated by the time Census results are published in 2013, which could lead to a reduction in the value of the Census. In addition, there are large numbers of smaller scale users whose needs are important in aggregate but difficult to pin down many years before the Census.
64. We commissioned Demographic Decisions Ltd to undertake a review of the consultation being undertaken by the census offices in preparation for 2011 (Annex 1). The review suggests that:
- The consultations have been relatively successful in capturing the opinions of specialist users, particularly in public sector organisations, but have had less success in attracting the views of local authority chief executives, business users or the media.
 - The nature of consultations differs between the census offices; a topic-based approach designed to understand the uses of census information was adopted in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, three formal waves of consultation were carried out, each covering a wide range of aspects. The review concluded that the Scottish approach probably helped users to have a better sense of involvement and commitment. In addition, the substantially smaller scale of the operations in Scotland and Northern Ireland has resulted in their census offices having better-developed networks and informal contacts than does ONS. However census offices share the results of their consultations with one another so there is some mutual support.
 - Some respondents to the review believed that the consultations so far could have been better targeted and more effective; for example, the roadshow events and meetings were thought to have worked better than the templates for detailed written responses.
65. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- Census offices are carrying out wider consultation than for 2001.
 - Geography experts are being involved earlier, plus a consultation on geography. (In 2001 there were problems finding suitable staff to develop systems.)
 - ONS has been consulting and involving the Welsh Assembly Government.

²⁴ *Effective Consultation*, Cabinet Office, June 2007
<http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/documents/consultation/pdf/effectiveconsultation.pdf>

Statistics Commission view

66. We expressed concern in our interim report about whether the consultation procedures had succeeded in capturing the needs of a sufficiently wide range of users and uses. In response, the government stated that “ONS is keen to engage with all users – including small scale users, although this is not always easy”. We do not doubt that but think that more may need to be done. Our recommendation in relation to building consensus on success criteria (see Section 1) may be one way to stimulate user engagement.
67. Census offices have already carried out consultation but should *continue* to engage with users to better understand their evolving requirements for census data. To close consultation seven years before census results appear would be unwise.

Communication

68. Communicating the purpose and value of the Census is of fundamental importance to the project. There is a role for many stakeholders in contributing to, and disseminating, appropriately positive messages about the value of the Census. This can also be a key tool in addressing some of the risks outlined in this report.
69. Communication is also vital to explain the nature of the statistical products that will be available and to encourage their use – only through that use will the full value of the Census be realised as a public good. We have set out in Annex 3 some examples of how the Census is used in the public sector. Further examples are given in our report *The Use Made of Official Statistics*.²⁵
70. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- Census offices produced fact sheets for the Census tests in 2006 and 2007 to communicate the value of the Census.
 - Census offices’ publicity strategies are being planned and will be stepped up as Census day approaches.
 - ONS plans to use local authorities to communicate with local residents.
 - In Scotland, there is a project with schools to publicise and engage young people in the Census.

²⁵ *The Use Made of Official Statistics*, Report No. 33, Statistics Commission, 2007
<http://www.statscom.org.uk/uploads/files/reports/Report%2033%20Use%20Made%20March%2007.pdf>

- Census offices are undertaking and using research into the reasons for non-compliance with government surveys.

Statistics Commission view

71. In our interim report we expressed doubts about the adequacy of the steps currently being taken by the census offices to publicise the value of the 2011 Census both to public bodies and the wider public. We observed some negative media comment prompted by the Census test that might have been avoided by more effective early 'marketing'. The government's response focussed mainly on publicity to the general public which they said would take place a few months before Census day. They also recognised that support from key stakeholders should be built up beforehand and highlighted that engagement of local authorities had begun and was being trialled in the 2007 Census test.
72. We are still of the view that government may need to do more now, and throughout the period up to 2011 to make the purpose of the Census clear to the media and other opinion formers. The purpose of the Census is partly confirmatory (confirming information that may already be available) and partly exploratory (finding out new things of national interest) and both roles are valid and important. The best way to ensure positive attitudes to the Census in 2011 is to start early. We have noted that a number of effective communication strategies were employed for 2001, including collaboration with the Sun newspaper. The engagement of schools, as in Scotland, and the broader education sector may also be an important route to better understanding.
73. Users and other external stakeholders – rather than government officials – are the best people to deliver positive messages about the value of the Census to the news media and the public and to allay unfounded fears about the intentions behind the Census, or the use that will be made of the personal information collected.

Concepts of population

74. There is still some work to be done on agreeing which concepts of population to measure. The definition of 'usual residence' in 2001 was problematic. In our seminar (Annex 2), participants discussed the range of population concepts that would ideally need to be measured and commented that there was an ongoing need for debate about which definitions of population to focus on.
75. In 2003, ONS published a study, *A Demographic Statistics Service for the 21st Century*²⁶ to inform planning for 2011. This identified 15 different concepts of

²⁶ *A Demographic Statistics Service for the 21st Century*, ONS, July 2003
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/Methodology_by_theme/downloads/Demographic_Statistics_Service.pdf

population to meet a variety of uses. These are listed below. The options in terms of which population concepts to focus on are complex and need to take account of changing household patterns and changing user requirements. Increasing the number of questions on the Census form to allow more flexibility on population measures necessarily reduces space for other questions.

76. For 2011, ONS is planning on a population base of 'usual residents plus visitors on Census night' and this was trialed as part of the 2007 test.

Fifteen population concepts	
1. Usual residence <i>(the model used in 2001)</i>	8. Week-day population
2. Household population	9. Week-end population
3. Institutional population	10. Temporarily resident population
4. Out of term population	11. Working population
5. Seasonal populations	12. 'Average' population
6. <i>De facto</i> population	13. UK residents living abroad
7. Legal population	14. Non-UK residents living in the UK
	15. Bespoke service populations

77. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- In 2003, ONS published a study called *A Demographic Statistics Service for the 21st Century*.
 - Census offices trialed more specific definitions of which people to include in the Census in the Census test questionnaires.
 - Consultations with users have included consultation on the population base.

Statistics Commission view

78. We note that there is still some work to be done on agreeing which specific concepts of population it would be best to measure. The Statistics Board will want to consider the outcome of that research as this is an issue with the potential for controversy and public criticism.

Post-out, post-back and online completion

79. 2001 saw the first use of 'post-back' in a UK Census. This reduces the costs of enumeration substantially. In 2011, it is planned to use 'post-out' in England and Wales and to offer the option of online completion.
80. This new approach presents two risks. There are limited opportunities to test the processes fully, or to recover if something goes wrong; and it relies upon there being a good address list to use for the post-out. These risks are amplified by difficulties in producing accurate forecasts of the volume of returned forms (the subject of criticism by the National Audit Office in relation to 2001), and also by the trend towards reduced compliance with official surveys and the low rate of prosecutions for non-compliance in the past.
81. In Scotland, in the light of the results of the 2006 test, it has been decided that the forms for most areas will be delivered by enumerators. However, even tests and rehearsals cannot identify all the potential problems associated with an exercise on the scale of a full census. International experience can sometimes provide helpful background but in the case of online completion, international experience is mixed. Furthermore, it was not included in the 2007 tests.
82. For 2001, address lists were effectively 'frozen' three years before Census day to allow for planning of enumeration districts. In the event, some one million addresses are believed to have been missing from the lists. This is a key area for close scrutiny in relation to 2011 as the Commission pointed out in 2003. In 2006, ONS carried out an address checking exercise of 100,000 households and identified an extra 9,000. These tended to be where houses had been converted into flats but were not listed as separate dwellings. However, owing to the short timescale of the project there were many more addresses identified later. In addition, addresses in the Welsh language presented technical difficulties which will need to be overcome. Despite on-going discussions over several years, there are still issues about ownership of address databases to be resolved before development work can be done by the Royal Mail and local authorities.²⁷
83. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- Census offices will use multiple enumeration approaches including hand delivery of forms (in Scotland), sending forms out by post, and online completion.
 - In Scotland, the majority of forms will be delivered by hand.
 - Additional forms will be issued by call centre staff in England and Wales, and by field staff in Scotland.

²⁷ *Coverage of Address Registers for 2007 Census Test – Phase 1*, ONS, October 2007
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/pdfs/crr_phase1.pdf

- A unique identifier will be linked with each address before post-out and printed on the form to allow earlier tracking and a more robust tracking system.
- ONS will use new technology in the field to improve tracking.
- ONS is working with Ordnance Survey and Local Authority address providers and carried out a review of addresses in autumn 2006 which provided an estimate of the amount of work to do achieve a good quality address list.
- GROS is examining the scope for using the new Definitive National Address system in Scotland to improve the Census address list.
- Census offices are analysing the impact of post-back on response rates to individual questions.
- ONS carried out a quality review of coverage assessment methodology.
- In England and Wales, follow-up teams will be targeted on poor response areas.
- The census offices are examining the scope to use other national sources to measure under-enumeration.
- The 2006 Census test in Scotland (West Dunbartonshire) considered approaches to overcoming the difficulties in enumerating young men.

Statistics Commission view

84. The use of 'post-back' raises a new risk, identified by ONS and others, that the reduction in contact between enumerators and households may reduce response rate. Results from the test in Scotland in 2006 indicate that delivery by enumerator also achieved a higher response rate than those posted out.²⁸ Publicity and early engagement with media are among the steps being planned to contain the risks and we reiterate our recommendation in this respect to communicating positive messages about the value of the Census.
85. Notwithstanding many discussions over at least five years between central government, local government and commercial data providers, ONS has to assume that no definitive single national address register will be available. It is therefore working with both Ordnance Survey and Local Authority address providers. However, the difficulties encountered in the project work to date suggest that this is again likely to prove a problem area for 2011.

²⁸ 2006 Census Test Evaluation Report, General Register Office for Scotland, April 2007
<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files1/the-census/2006-census-test-evaluation/j8567.pdf>

86. The root cause of the inability to agree a common approach to addressing is argument about who owns the information (and can trade it). Whatever the way forward, it is expected that the Census – of itself – will lead to a substantial improvement in the quality and coverage of the various address files used. It is in the public interest that these improvements are not simply captured for exploitation by any one organisation.
87. Without a good quality national address register, all the Census risks are amplified. The development of such a register in England and Wales must remain a priority but it now seems unlikely that there will be significant progress ahead of 2011. The Census test carried out in 2007 will, when the results are published in autumn 2007, provide some objective evidence on the adequacy of the two existing sources – the Address Point product from Ordnance Survey and the National Land and Property Gazetteer managed by the Local Government Information House on behalf of local government. Attempts to reconcile these sources in recent years have not been successful – for reasons associated with intellectual property rights rather than technical challenges. We thus remain concerned that the work of Census enumeration will be hampered, though perhaps less so than it was in 2001 since there have been improvements in address lists since then. In the absence of a comprehensive solution that will serve the needs of Census enumeration, our recommendation is simply that the Statistics Board should give high priority to this issue, assess the scale of the problem in the light of the latest evidence, and mitigate the weaknesses in existing sources as best it can.

Security of information

88. Census offices are under a statutory obligation to protect the confidentiality of all data collected for census purposes but there is a risk that either computer security or physical security might fail. Even if this was on a small scale it would have serious consequences in terms of adverse publicity and subsequent loss of trust. With forms needing to travel back to the census offices, either through the post or electronically from every UK household, the security challenges are substantial. In 2001, field staff accidentally left 190 Census forms in a waste bag outside their office in east London. This occurred in a hard-to-count area, where difficulties in recruiting enumerators left overstretched staff prone to such mistakes.
89. We have not been told of the specific steps being taken by census offices to address the risks although we are aware that high priority is given to issues of physical and electronic security.

Statistics Commission view

90. To the extent that contractors are directly responsible for maintaining security there may be scope to use penalty clauses in contracts to create a strong incentive to guard security. Failures on the part of contracted-out services will however still impact on the Census and the reputation of the census offices. We noted above that mistakes occur when there is pressure on the system and we urge that resources to mitigate security risks are sufficiently focussed on the hard-to-count areas where lapses may be more likely to occur.

Quality assurance

91. In this context, quality assurance means checking the emerging census estimates against other sources of statistics to see if they are reasonable and then, where problems are identified, triggering appropriate corrective action. In 2001, processes for quality assurance did not cope adequately with the problems of poor response rates and related under-enumeration in Westminster, Manchester and some other urban areas. Once the problems were recognised, considerable time and effort were committed to resolving discrepancies. In 2003/04, 2001 population estimates for 15 local authorities were revised upwards by a total of 107,000 people.
92. Quality assurance is important at every stage of the process. Our seminar participants noted that the quality of responses to questions in 2001 was variable, and that only the questions that enumerators were required to check were well completed. They recommended that more checks should be done at the fieldwork stage. This will be more difficult in 2011 in England and Wales because of the use of post-out and post-back though online checks of consistency and feasibility of answers is possible where forms are completed online.
93. Methods for quality assurance should be transparent and their use understood by the users. The complexity of the quality assurance methods meant that ONS was criticised in 2001 for its "inability to fully disentangle estimates of emigration and estimates of non-response".²⁹
94. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
 - ONS is evaluating the application of Demographic Analysis – this includes a variety of techniques to check for the quality of the data – mainly to check its internal consistency (eg comparing numbers by age and sex) but also to check its consistency with other data sources.

²⁹ *The 2001 One Number Census and its Quality Assurance*, Simpson L, Hobcraft J and King D, Local Government Association, 2003 <http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/onenumpercensus.pdf>

- The Improving Migration and Population Estimates (IMPS) project in England and Wales is intended to improve related statistics such as migration and mid-year estimates.
- Census offices are engaging local authorities in planning for the Census.
- ONS is using additional data sources to supplement the Census Coverage Survey and adding adjustments for over-enumeration from the Census Coverage Survey.
- Census offices plan to use a range of styles and methods to communicate information about quality assurance.

Statistics Commission view

95. We have noted elsewhere that the accuracy of census population estimates is likely to be judged in practice by whether they are generally consistent with existing population measures and more generally in line with expectations and other evidence. We therefore make a recommendation below (paragraph 125) about improving migration estimates.
96. In 2001, the quality assurance methods did not readily allow for intervention in the event of problems emerging. Quality assurance methods for 2011 should be designed to trigger greater managerial intervention whenever appropriate. However, the details would need to be the subject of thorough research to ensure they were fully defensible in technical terms.
97. There is a running debate³⁰ about the case for using Demographic Analysis techniques to assess the reliability and consistency of the Census results. The United Nations Statistical Commission³¹ encourages their use as part of the overall census evaluation methodology; and it has the advantage of being relatively simple and easily understood. We think that these methods are potentially valuable tools and should be used as part of the package of quality assurance methods.
98. We also note that comparison with local authority records has considerable potential to help to evaluate Census results and hope that this will be fully exploited in co-operation between the local authorities and ONS.

30 See for example, *An Alternative View of the 2001 Census and Future Census Taking*, Redfern P, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A (2004) 167, Part 2, pp.209-228.
<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/rssa/167/2>

31 *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*, United Nations Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, United Nations Statistical Commission, 38th session, Feb-Mar 2007 (page 80).
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc07/BG-Census.pdf>

Harmonisation between census offices

99. Harmonisation of the Census outputs across the three UK census offices has a number of important potential benefits. Equally, lack of harmonisation presents a risk and a number of agreements between the administrations have already been made to address this. In this context, harmonisation means agreement between the three census authorities on matters such as the wording to be used in questions on the Census form, the selection of questions, and a number of technical matters that can affect the comparability of the final figures. The detailed decisions on these matters are in many cases still some way off but it is in this detail, such as timing of joint work or wording of questions, where some compromise on local preferences may be required to achieve a harmonised approach. Such compromises can present new risks – in losing focus on the particular needs of one part of the UK.
100. The governance structures are set up with each of the three census authorities as equal partners. However, the magnitude of the Census in England and Wales in comparison with those in Scotland and Northern Ireland inevitably means that ONS is likely to be in the strongest position in any discussion of compromise, so that the consequences are more likely to affect Scotland or Northern Ireland – assuming compromise can be reached at all. Differences in the timetables, particularly for the Census test, have already led to some difficulty because decisions needed to be taken on test questions in Scotland before test question development was completed by ONS. It can be argued though that this has some benefits since the outcome from Scottish tests was available to inform tests in England and Wales.
101. One area of potential concern is possible differences of wording of questions on ethnicity – each census office might produce valid and useful results at a local level but not on a comparable basis. Another is the varied instructions given to householders in completing the Census forms – in 2001 the Scottish form gave responsibility to the Household Reference Person to “ensure completion” of the form, while the England and Wales form instructed that person to “complete” it. Small differences in approach can affect comparability in unpredictable ways.
102. UK census offices are required to harmonise their censuses with those of other countries as set out by the United Nations.³² For example, in respect of migration, countries are required to collect data about country of birth, country of citizenship, and attempt to enumerate systematically refugees and asylum-seekers in their total counts, although some of this information can be collected via surveys or administrative records.³³

³² *Migration Statistics*, Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations Statistical Commission, 38th session, Feb-Mar 2007 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc07/2007-16e-Migration.pdf>

³³ *Taking the Census Road to Brussels*, Population Trends 128, ONS, Summer 2007 http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/PopulationTrends128.pdf

103. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:

- The *Statement of Agreement between the Registrars General*³⁴ (February 2005) aimed to increase consistency of outputs from the three UK censuses.
- *The Concordat on Statistics, 2001*,³⁵ which sets out an agreed framework for co-operation among the UK Government and devolved administrations on all matters in relation to statistics.
- White Papers are being published at the same time for each country (autumn 2008).

Statistics Commission view

104. We welcome the steps mentioned above. However, looking more broadly than the Census, we regard the current arrangements for statistical co-ordination between the four UK administrations as less effective than they might be, particularly in relation to promoting common definitions and shared data collection where these are justified. We believe there is scope to improve co-ordination without infringing the autonomy of any administration.

105. Priority should be given to impressing on all four UK administrations the value of a consistent approach to the Census where possible. There is an obvious risk of differences which, while not adversely affecting any one administration's census, could affect their comparability and thus value of the work overall. The emphasis should be on producing a census that has UK comparability at aggregate level but is able to accommodate local differences at a more detailed level. We believe Ministers and the Statistics Board should charge the heads of census offices with this explicit responsibility.

³⁴ *Statement of Agreement between the Registrars General*, Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, February 2005.
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/pdf/RGsAgreement.pdf>

³⁵ *Concordat on Statistics, in Memorandum of Understanding and Supplementary Agreements between the United Kingdom Government Scottish Ministers, the Cabinet of the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee, 2001*.
http://www.dca.gov.uk/constitution/devolution/pubs/odpm_dev_600629.pdf

Section 6: The Operational Risks

106. These risks relate to processes and procedures that have been properly and well planned but might still fail, most likely due to human error. Mistakes can occur even in well-designed procedures. In an exercise as big as the Census, employing many thousand people in enumeration and processing, error must be expected – it is more of a certainty than a risk. The key therefore is to design in the early detection and correction of any errors that are material enough to affect the Census results. It is the adequacy of the mechanisms for detection and correction that will be critical to success.
107. The Statistics Commission has expressed concern that major organisational changes being implemented in ONS, while not directly affecting the Census, might nonetheless put census operations under greater pressure. Although the bulk of census operations for England and Wales will remain in Titchfield in Hampshire (and not be directly affected by ONS relocation plans), ONS is closing its main London office and moving its headquarter functions to Newport in South Wales over the period up to 2010, and also seeking to make large efficiency gains to stay within forward budgets.
108. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- Operational risks have been identified in corporate risk registers.
 - Census offices have carried out a Census test 2006 or 2007 and will carry out a full rehearsal in 2009.

Statistics Commission view

109. We have seen the Census risk register of the General Register Office of Scotland but we have not been shown the full ONS one and so we cannot comment on the adequacy of the steps proposed in the ONS context. However, in relation to the operation risks, the Statistics Commission's main concern is the need for the census offices to have suitably skilled and experienced staff in key posts and to retain them through the long preparation period. In view of the procurement and operational management difficulties of the last Census, we have concerns about the demands being made on ONS officials by such a large and intrinsically high-risk project at this time.

110. Systems will have been tested on a smaller scale during the Census tests of 2006 or 2007 and again during the rehearsal in 2009. The Statistics Board should ensure that any lessons learnt from the test and rehearsal are implemented in subsequent planning, and that procurement of contracts and fieldwork is managed effectively and appropriately.
111. The Statistics Board will have to ensure that within the broad sweep of work of the statistical services across the UK, the Census is given sufficient priority, the risks are effectively managed, and the pace of development is not faster than the census offices can handle – recognising that a census cannot be postponed. Other priorities may have to be put back to make this a reality.

Section 7: The Contextual Risks

112. The United Nations Statistical Commission describes quality as a “multi-dimensional concept”, and notes that “even if data are accurate, they do not have sufficient quality if they are produced too late to be useful, or cannot be easily accessed, or conflict with other credible data or are too costly to produce.”³⁶ We endorse this essentially utilitarian view of quality. Within reference to contextual risks, the Census itself may be faultless but a separate issue might throw doubt on the reliability of the Census results. The risks here are a threat to the *perceived quality or value* of the Census and thus to willingness among users to make full use of census information in decision-making. We are treating the Census ‘disclosure control’ arrangements and the production of annual mid-year population estimates as being of this contextual kind.

Disclosure control

113. Disclosure control refers to the processes used to prevent the identification of personal information from the published Census results. These can be complex and there are many different approaches in use. In 2001, Scotland chose one approach while the rest of the UK adopted a different option at a relatively late stage. Regardless of the methods, the fact that there were differences made the data more difficult to use and interpret than would otherwise have been the case, particularly for users who needed consistent UK-wide data. In that sense, the value of the Census product was reduced.

114. There are also risks if the disclosure control methods are more stringent than they really need to be. This can lead to the suppression of information of value to users, again reducing the value of the Census. The census offices have already begun consulting with users on the methodology to protect individuals from being identified in the results, including in the anonymised datasets.

115. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:

- The *Statement of Agreement between the Registrars General* (February 2005) aimed to increase consistency of outputs from the three UK censuses.
- The three Registrars General have together published “*UK Statistical Disclosure Control Policy for 2011 Census Output*” (November 2006).

³⁶ *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*, United Nations Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, United Nations Statistical Commission, 38th session, Feb-Mar 2007 (page 53) <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc07/BG-Census.pdf>

- The census offices are developing a strategy for statistical disclosure control in 2011.
- Census offices are carrying out consultation on confidentiality.
- ONS has established *data labs* to allow researchers access to anonymised census data.

Statistics Commission view

116. The Statistics Commission welcomes the *Statement of Agreement* which should lead to a more consistent approach to disclosure methods across all four UK administrations.

117. ONS's disclosure control methodology for 2001 was criticised because small area statistics were difficult to use after they were modified in a particular way to prevent disclosure.³⁷ This might have been avoided through earlier consultation and better communication about the methodology.

Mid-year estimates

118. One of the main triggers of concern about the Census results in 2001 was the discrepancy between mid-year population estimates and the Census. Local authority grants, and a lot of other funding decisions, are largely determined by population estimates. Those local authorities which saw their estimated population fall significantly between the release of mid-year population figures in 2001, and publication of results from the 2001 Census were understandably concerned. Although much of the problem was eventually proven to have been with the population estimates in the years up to 2000, the damage to the reputation of the Census had already been done. The press carried stories about a 'missing million' despite the fact that the Census undercount was much less than this.
119. The Census acts as a baseline for subsequent years' population estimates. But these estimates become more problematic as time passes. The danger is that if the Census appears to contradict earlier estimates, as happened in 2001 in some cases, there is a loss of confidence in the utility of the Census data.

³⁷ Memorandum submitted by Telford and Wrekin Council, *Minutes of Evidence, Preparations for the 2011 Census*, Oral and Written Evidence, Wednesday 21 February 2007, Treasury Sub-Committee, 9 May 2007 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmtreasy/326/7022108.htm>

120. One reason that mid-year estimates are problematic is that there is a lack of adequate statistical information about immigration into the UK, migration within the UK and emigration from the UK.³⁸ There is no single source which can provide the migration information, at national and local levels, that is required for statistical purposes.
121. We have been informed that the census offices are taking the following steps to address the risks:
- A National Statistics *Quality Review of International Migration Statistics* was carried out in 2003.
 - A *Demographic Statistics Service for the 21st Century* (2003) set out proposals for an integrated population statistics system using linked administrative and survey data.
 - ONS published a cross-departmental task force report with recommendations to improve migration and population estimates (IMPS, December 2006).
 - IMPS migration research (ONS is carrying out research into migration both international and internal within the UK, short and long term).
 - ONS carried out a local authorities case studies project to evaluate population estimates using other local and national sources of information including administrative data sources.
 - ONS is developing the methodology for mid-year estimates, 2007.

Statistics Commission view

122. The Statistics Commission has been pressing for improvements to migration statistics for some years. Improvements will be vital in ensuring that the regular population estimates are accurate enough to be broadly consistent with the census estimates and not to spark suggestions that the Census is at fault.
123. A National Statistics *Quality Review of International Migration Statistics* in 2003 made recommendations for improving both (i) the estimation of total migration flows to and from the UK, and (ii) the allocation of international migration to local areas. Whilst it is clear that some progress has been made, it is also clear that it has not been enough.

³⁸ For details of how migration statistics are calculated, see *Using Administrative Data Sources in the Estimation of Emigration*, Evans H, Vickers L and Wright E, Population Trends 128, ONS, Summer 2007 http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/PopulationTrends128.pdf

Statistics Commission view (*continued*)

124. In April 2007, ONS released information about how migration will be estimated for the mid-year estimates from 2007. However, the work in hand largely applies new methods to existing sources which have known weaknesses. A number of local authorities have questioned the indicative estimates arising from the new methodology.³⁹
125. The delivery of robust population estimates, nationally and for local areas, should be seen as the single most important criterion against which the Census should be judged. However, in practice, the robustness of census population estimates cannot be measured directly; and commentators will be heavily influenced by whether the census estimates are consistent with expectations prior to the Census. It is therefore important that those expectations are well-informed and for this it will be necessary to have robust measures of population movements – that is both international and internal migration – ahead of 2011. Unless we know about patterns of migration in the years before the Census, there is a real risk that the Census will not be seen to have been a success even if it does deliver good estimates.

³⁹ ONS *Population Estimates*, letter to John Healey MP, London Councils, 25 May 2007
<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/1102/JohnHealeyMP250507.doc>

Section 8: The External Risks

126. We use the term external risks to refer to things like natural disasters and national emergencies. ONS coped well with the difficulties presented by the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001. However, we have not seen any ONS business continuity plans for the Census and do not know what contingency plans are in place for events such as an influenza pandemic or another recurrence of foot and mouth disease.
127. We do not have much information on specific steps being taken to manage these risks but understand that this is under review.

Statistics Commission view

128. We have had sight of the Census risk register for Scotland and note that it describes contingency plans and refers to the need for appropriate planning for mitigating external risks, such as disaster recovery plans and building security arrangements.

Section 9: The 2001 Census in Context

129. This section provides some information about the European and UK context for the next Census.

European context

130. In 1999 the European Union Statistical Programme Committee approved recommendations from the European Commission and United Nations Commission for Europe for the collection of information from a round of censuses to be carried out in 2000/01 (or equivalent statistics to be prepared by other methods) by member states. The 2001 Census was the first to be conducted under these guidelines.

131. For the 2011 round of censuses, the European Commission intends to introduce a *Framework Regulation on Population and Housing Censuses* covering the harmonisation of outputs from Member States' censuses of population and housing. This Regulation will define certain terms including "usual residence", which will be consistent with the United Nations definition, and set out a number of topics on which the UK will be required to report statistics to Eurostat. Data collection for these topics is permissible by the Census or alternative sources such as surveys or administrative records.⁴⁰

The UK context

132. A census has been carried out in Great Britain every ten years since 1801 except for 1941. There was an additional mid-term Census in 1966.⁴¹

133. In Northern Ireland, the first Census was carried out in 1926, then a limited one in 1937 and since 1951 at the same time each decade as the rest of the UK.

134. The UK is the only country, to our knowledge, with three different censuses, and with four administrations required to agree secondary legislation to allow the censuses to proceed. The censuses are administered separately in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland administers its own census but co-ordinates the date and some other aspects with the Northern Ireland census office. All adhere to European recommendations, and within the UK, to agreements to co-ordinate censuses.

⁴⁰ *Taking the Census Road to Brussels, Population Trends 128*, ONS, Summer 2007
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/PopulationTrends128.pdf

⁴¹ "200 Years of the Census of Population", *Social Trends 31*, ONS, 2001
[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/social_trends31/ST31\(final\).pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/social_trends31/ST31(final).pdf)

135. The Census is taken under the Census Act 1920 and the Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. It requires secondary legislation in the form of a Census Order to prescribe the date, areas, enumeration base and question items, and the Census Regulations which prescribe the detailed arrangements such as geography, appointments and duties of field staff, delivery and collection of forms, and security and confidentiality procedures. The process of approving the legislation provides opportunities for informed debate amongst the public, parliaments and assemblies about one to two years before the Census date.
136. The Census is a devolved responsibility in Northern Ireland and Scotland but not in Wales. There is separate secondary legislation for Scotland and Northern Ireland; the National Assembly for Wales will be consulted about the (England and Wales) Census Order in respect of 2011, and a Transfer of Functions Order, made in 2006, devolved the power to make secondary legislation for the Census Regulations to the Welsh Assembly. The draft Census Order is expected to be laid before the Westminster Parliament around November 2009 and formally made in February 2010; the Regulations laid around March 2010 and to come into force around May 2010.
137. Confidentiality of individual personal data is paramount and the Census (Confidentiality) Act 1991 made it illegal to disclose personal census information acquired in the course of carrying out census work.

ANNEX 1

REVIEW OF CONSULTATION PROCESS

24 February 2007

Demographic Decisions Ltd.

8 Hugh Street

London SW1V 1RP

Tel: 020 7834 0966

Fax: 020 7834 4304

Email: *dugmore@demographic.co.uk*

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Executive Summary and Recommendations

Executive Summary

This report reviews the consultation mechanisms which are being employed for understanding the needs of users of the 2011 Census planned by the UK Census Offices – the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in England and Wales, the General Register Office (GROS) in Scotland, and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Each organisation started consultation two years ago, and it will continue until close to census day – this is a moving target. The review finds that consultation is being taken seriously by the Census Offices, with the primary mechanisms being regular meetings of advisory groups of specialist users, and also some formal public consultations. The latter have tackled some of the important aspects of the census such as question topics, and are now moving on to other aspects equally vital to users such outputs and their timing, and access to the results.

The consultations have been successful in capturing the opinions of specialist users, particularly in public sector organisations, but have had little success in attracting the views of occasional users, who range from chief executives to students, nor users in other sectors such as business and the press. Amongst the specialist users there is often the wish to be able to give their top priorities, without having to get involved in voluminous detail. There is also a wish to retain the view of the bigger census wood, as well as probing the detail of separate aspects. Most users are keeping an open mind about the likelihood of their opinions influencing the Census Offices' decisions, and view the inclusion of new questions in the Test Censuses as a positive indication.

All three Census Offices have much in common in their consultations so far, with similar mechanisms, scope and feedback. However, the smaller size of Scotland and Northern Ireland result in GROS and NISRA having better-developed networks and informal contacts than ONS. The ONS has been very attentive to the needs expressed by the Welsh Assembly for questions on Language and Identity. There is good management co-operation between the three Census Offices with the aim of sharing experience, and facilitating UK-wide statistics, but users have yet to be consulted on their detailed needs for common statistics across all four countries.

The recommendations of this review to the Census Offices emphasise the need to build networks in order to reach occasional users and those in sectors hitherto little involved; the importance of targeting messages (less information can often mean more); and the need to explain thinking and decisions. It concludes by questioning whether sufficient resources are

currently being allocated to consultation in order to get a thorough understanding of customers' needs.

Recommendations

The Census Offices should consider the following proposals (see more detail in Section 8):

Build networks

1. Develop existing networks to reach out to occasional users.
2. Streamline communication with the Census Offices' own advisory groups.

Target messages

3. Recognise that some aspects of the census such as coverage, quality and licensing, are of great importance to users, but who require information, rather than consultation.
4. Recognise that for those aspects where users' views of alternative options are of great importance, plans for consultation should be developed on a bespoke basis – there is no single standard ideal method.
5. Focus consultation methods towards help make decisions – for example, “What are your 15 most important Census Topics?” – and avoid collecting masses of information of low value.
6. Target each market segment appropriately, both in content (census aspects, and appropriate buzzwords) and format (high level executive summaries for occasional users, more detail for the specialists).

Respond to UK-wide needs

7. To build on the UK-wide management structures that have already been established, by initiating consultation on users' needs for UK-wide information, targeting those sectors with known interest.

Explain current thinking and ultimate decisions

8. Keep all users informed of the choices to be made, the current vision for 2011, and also explain the reasons for decisions when they have been taken.

Review resources

9. Consider whether the resources currently being allocated to consultation should not only be better targeted, but are also sufficient to maximise the possibility of the 2011 Census meeting customers' needs and therefore being hailed a success.

1. Introduction – the purpose of the review

Even as the final results of the 2001 Census were being published in 2004, the United Kingdom's three Census Offices started consultation with users on the plans for the 2011 Census. In England and Wales alone 500 organisations and individuals responded to a formal consultation in 2005, and further consultations are continuing and planned in the run up to 2011.

The purpose of this review is to evaluate the formal consultation processes that have taken place so far, the scope of those planned for the future, and to assess their effectiveness. In practice this means whether responses have been received from a sufficiently broad range of appropriate organisations (including central and local government, the private and voluntary sectors), whether those responses are authoritative and well informed, and whether the responses have influenced planning. The review has the following sections:

- The research approach. This involved the use of existing literature about both the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, and interviews with each of the Census Offices, fourteen specialist census users from a wide range of sectors, and also twelve Local Authority Chief Executives and other senior policymakers, together with representatives of the press and voluntary organisations as examples of occasional users.
- Census users and consultation. Users are classified by broad sectors which have similar needs, and by whether they are census specialists, or the much more numerous occasional users. There is also a short discussion of "consultation".
- Summaries of the consultation processes carried out in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, users' views, and an assessment of the consultation processes in capturing the views of the full range of users of the census.
- The coherence of the process across the UK as a whole.

The review then draws together the summary conclusions, discusses the need to segment users and target communication with them, and makes several recommendations to the Census Offices.

The Statistics Commission would like to express its thanks to all the people who have made time to provide information and opinions for this review.

2. The review – the research approach used

The review has gathered information and opinions from both the extensive existing literature, and also from a series of specific interviews. All information that was available by 31st December 2006 has been considered.

2.1 Existing literature

The experiences from the 2001 Census and its predecessors are very valuable in illustrating the diversity of the users of census statistics, their broad needs, priorities, and concerns. They have been recorded in a variety of papers, books and conference proceedings. This knowledge is elaborated in Section 3, and has been used to inform interviews with both the Census Offices and users. Each of the three Census Offices has also already produced considerable documentation on the 2011 Census consultation processes, and this is referred to in the three sections that follow. References and links to the sources, including the lists of interviewees, are gathered together in Appendix A.

2.2 The Census Offices – interviews

Face-to-face interviews were held with each of the Census Offices and also the Statistical Directorate of the National Assembly for Wales between 25 September and 10 October 2006. Much of the Census Offices' documentation is publicly available on their websites, and this has been supplemented by some additional internal papers.

2.3 Specialist users – interviews

Each of the Census Offices has well-established groups of external specialist users to give advice: these are GROS's Population and Migration Statistics Committee (PAMS), and the Census Advisory Groups run by NISRA and by the ONS. The ONS has seven such groups, representing local government, central government, health, business, academics, diversity, and Wales.

Using a qualitative approach, telephone interviews were held with fourteen members representing the full range of groups, using a topic guide (see Appendix B) which explored their contact with each of the Census Offices, several aspects of consultation important to users, interest in UK-wide statistics, the effectiveness of consultation to date, any gaps, and suggested remedies. All interviews took place between 27 October and 21 November, excepting the final one on 22 December 2006.

2.4 Occasional users – interviews

It was also felt to be very important to learn the views of people who appreciate the value of census information, but who seek it occasionally, rather than being regarded as census specialists. Such people are very numerous, and represent the great majority of the Census Offices' customers. They are, however, spread across a range of diverse organisations, and often there is little or no contact between them, or with the Census Offices.

In these circumstances it was decided to concentrate on Local Authority Chief Executives as exemplars of such users who use information for strategic policy purposes. A sample of fifteen local authorities across the United Kingdom was drawn (see Appendix C), using the ONS's 2001 Census classification of local authorities, which ranges from London Cosmopolitan to Coastal and Countryside.

Ten of the fifteen authorities sampled agreed to face-to-face meetings, and a further two were interviewed by telephone. Those interviewed were Belfast, Bristol, Cumbria, Doncaster, Enfield, Glasgow, Gwynedd, Lambeth, Manchester, Peterborough, South Ayrshire, and Surrey. In five cases the Chief Executives themselves were involved; the seven other interviews were with senior policy advisors. This illustrates the often low priority attached to the Census by Chief Executives, and the difficulty of understanding their needs. Several of the interviewees also referred to their use of Neighbourhood Statistics, which represents another group of occasional census users of interest to the review.

Again using a qualitative approach, the interviews used a topic guide (see Appendix D) which probed the authority's organisational structure and the use made of census-type information in different policy areas, any involvement in census consultation and its effectiveness, perceptions of the Census Offices, and suggestions for improvement.

Seeking to extend knowledge of occasional users, interviews were also held with two journalists who work for national broadsheet newspapers, and with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. The interviews with occasional users were carried out between 7 November and 21 December 2006.

2.5 Analysis and evaluation of information gathered

Each individual response from both the interviews with both specialist and occasional users has been summarised. The responses to particular points have then been gathered to provide summary views.

3. Census Users and Consultation

3.1 Consultation – with users of census outputs

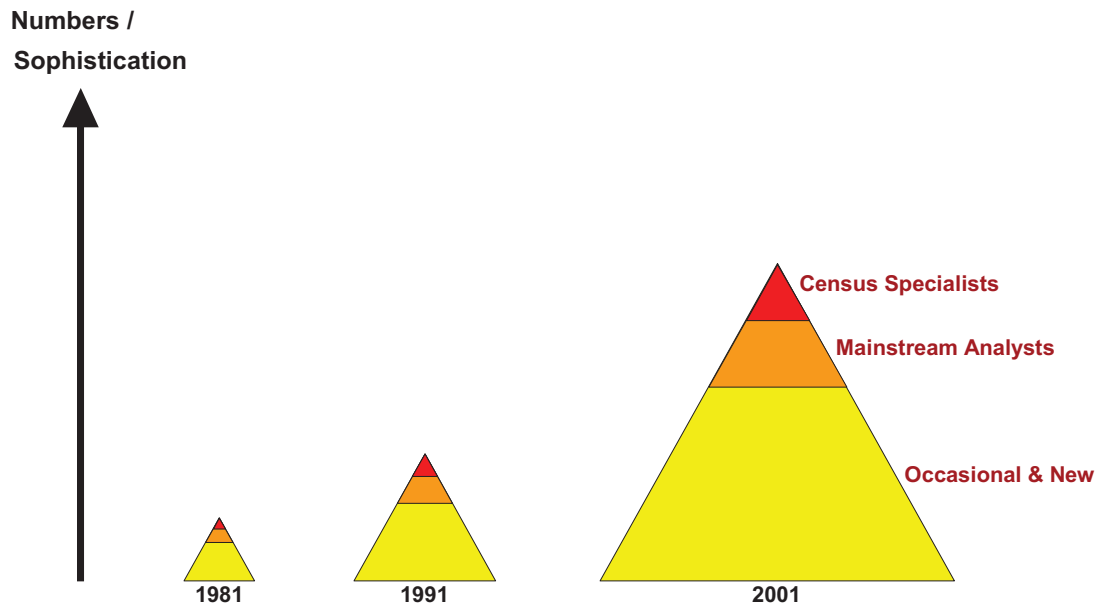
This review is focussed on consultation with users – both existing and potential – of census outputs. The Census Offices also seek advice and help in their planning of the conduct of the census, for example in compiling comprehensive address lists, contacting particular populations (such as blind, homeless or travelling people), and developing statistical methodology, but this review is concerned with consultation on the ends rather than means of achieving them.

3.2 The range of users, and the uses made

Who – both organisations and the general public – is expected to use information from the 2011 Census and find it valuable? The growth in use between the 1971 and 2001 Censuses gives us some good pointers^[1,2,3,4], but advances in technology and alternative licensing models can make enormous differences between existing and potential use.

When considering the marketplace for census information there are two key dimensions. Firstly, users can be classified into broad groups who often share similar needs; the major sectors are central government, local government, health, academia, business, value-added resellers, voluntary organisations, the media, and the general public. The second dimension is the degree of specialist knowledge. Here, it can be useful to consider a pyramid of users.

Figure 1. Census users – the growing pyramid



These range from serious specialists (a few thousand people who spend much of their time analysing the census), through general analysts (tens of thousands, who integrate information from many sources, including the census), to the mass market (of perhaps at least a million, who want to grab information occasionally). However, this is not a hierarchy in terms of status – whilst the occasional users include many students researching projects, senior managers in both public services and commercial companies also need key statistics to inform their decisions, and in some cases employ specialists to help them. Census information is also made available to wider audiences by value-added resellers and the media.

Taking both dimensions together, the experience of the 2001 Census is illuminating. Figure 2 shows the numbers of direct requests by specialists for data, and classifies them by sector. The largest sector is businesses and other organisations. This is only one view, but it does illustrate that there is extensive use of the census outside the traditional public services.

Figure 2. 2001 Census: Direct requests to ONS* for CDs & DVDs to January 2005

Sector	Census Area Statistics	Key Statistics	Standard Tables	Other #	Total
Government Dept.	474	256	278	294	1302
Local Govt.	1486	1582	2016	2280	7364
Health	477	482	647	492	2098
Education	1371	618	671	709	3369
Business (other orgs.)	3838	1938	1877	2972	10625
Individual	522	261	350	306	1439
All	8168	5137	5839	7053	26197

* ONS only (excludes Scotland & NI); & DOES NOT include downloads from the ONS Website
Lookup files, digital boundaries, etc.

Source: ONS (personal correspondence, June 2005)

And why are users so keen to have census information? The census offers considerable detail for both subjects and geographical areas, and is collected at one point in time across the whole of the UK, enabling comparisons of areas. The public services use the information for analysing the conditions of particular populations, for allocating resources between administrative areas, and, increasingly, local neighbourhoods. Commercial companies use it to estimate local markets, target customers, and plan market research surveys. Voluntary organisations seek information about particular population subgroups, and to analyse the impacts of policies. Many members of the public, including students, are interested in profiles of their local areas, and how they compare with other parts of the country, and the press takes great interest in painting social portraits of the UK and the contrasts within it.

Looking ahead to the uses of the 2011 Census, the implicit expectation of both the Census Offices and users is that the existing uses for decision-making and research will continue, and that usage will further increase alongside improvements to technology, especially the web. There may also be some marginal extensions in use triggered by possible new questions, such as income and language. There appears to be no expectation at present that the demand for 2011 Census information will decline as other new sources (such as statistics derived from administrative files) are developed: indeed, the latter usually require census information to provide population denominators.

3.3 Census outputs: what matters most to users?

Based on the experiences of recent censuses^[5,6,7,8], Figure 3 summarises aspects of census outputs which are important to specialist users. However, occasional users may only discover their importance when failing to obtain information they were seeking or expected.

Figure 3. Users' needs – Twelve key aspects

Users' needs	Issues
"The Population" – definition(s)	The 2001 Census counted usual residents, but there is also increasing interest in visitors and multiple addresses such as weekday / weekend.
Topics, questions, and derived classifications	Which topics should be squeezed onto the Census form? How much detail will each specific question seek? There are many conflicting demands. This aspect is usually subject to wide consultation, but can, however, overlook the importance of derived socio-economic classifications.
Coverage – near 100%? & estimates of those missed	Will the Census get close to its aim to count the whole population? This involves both a definitive list of addresses, and also the special measures needed to target those people who are less likely to respond. The 2001 Census broke new ground in estimating those who did not complete a Census form.
Quality of responses	Users also want each question asked in a way that will produce information of good quality, although experienced analysts are aware that some questions (e.g. sex) are traditionally answered more accurately than others (e.g. number of rooms).
Geographical areas used for outputs	Will Census outputs be available for both administrative and postal geographies, and will these be the same as in 2001? Might geographical detail be sacrificed due to concerns about possible disclosure of information about individuals?
Measures taken to prevent disclosure of information about individuals	The alternative options vary considerably in their impact on users, as was apparent in the differing approaches adopted across the UK for the 2001 Census.
Outputs – statistical tables	The Census Offices have a history of intensive consultation with specialist users who want detailed statistical tables, but there is also a big demand for simpler, popular products. Outputs also include geographical boundaries in digital form for computer mapping, and directories relating census and other geographies, such as postcodes.
Timing of outputs	Users have views as to which products should be given the highest priority, need a publication timetable, and for that to be met.
Access – getting hold of the results	Unlike question topics, which tend to be subject to much consultation, the delivery of data – involving such issues as file formats and area identifiers – has been treated in earlier censuses as a low-status technical matter. But deficiencies in this last stage can make or break the Census for users.
UK-wide	Some users seek to compare areas across the United Kingdom as a whole, which requires coordination of both the questions asked and also the delivery of the ultimate statistical products.
Licensing terms	The contrast between the 1991 and 2001 (with its Click-Use Licensing) illustrates the importance of policy about licensing terms, and their impact on usage.
Measuring change since earlier censuses	(Some users are keen to measure inter-censal change: this is dependent on both consistent questions and geography, and therefore has to be considered as part of the aspects above.)

It should be noted that whilst some of the aspects – such as the questions to be included – are obvious candidates for detailed consultation, others of perhaps even greater importance – such as licensing terms – might not be treated in this way. All will, however, comprise a critical checklist when users judge the success or otherwise of the 2011 Census.

3.4 Consultation

The term “consultation” is widely used, but what does it mean in the context of the 2011 Census?

The ONS considers consultation in the context of identifying stakeholders (ONS management bodies, partners, suppliers and users), and identifying those with a high level of influence as “key stakeholders”. Plans for communication (including consultation) are then devised accordingly.

From a user’s viewpoint it can be useful to consider a continuum of consultation. For some, the word “communication” can suggest the idea of a supplier pushing its own message, exemplified by political parties having a Director of Communications. At best, this can inform customers and manage their expectations, with the aim of “no surprises”: users will understand the alternative options and constraints, and why choices have been made. Further along the spectrum, users can get involved in dialogue, expressing their own informed preferences and choices – suppliers can then respond to customers’ needs. In the context of the Census, it is particularly important to hear from the full range of customers, in order not to satisfy only the most vocal.

This review adopts the position that the goal of consultation is to understand users’ needs so as to optimise the use of the budget for the 2011 Census: the Census Offices won’t be able to meet all needs, some of which will be in direct conflict, but the aim should be to maximise customer satisfaction using the resources available.

4. Consultation in England and Wales

4.1 The Census organisations, and the government context

The ONS is responsible for carrying out the census in England and Wales. The National Statistician reports to a minister in the Treasury, who is responsible to the UK Parliament at Westminster, which will take the final decisions on the 2011 Census.

However, the National Assembly for Wales was also influential in the conduct of the 2001 Census and its interest – particularly in national identity – is continuing for 2011. The Welsh Assembly Government's Statistical Directorate is in close contact with both the ONS and the Assembly members, and with users in Wales through the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee, and the Local Government Data Unit. New devolution regulations will increase the power of the Assembly with regard to the 2011 Census.

4.2 ONS's consultation to date – the mechanisms

The ONS's website^[9,10] provides the following menu for information about the 2011 Census as a whole^[11]: a Guide to preparations (which points to Information Papers on its design, and strategic aims); the 2011 Census Programme (referring to its management); Research and Development (with links to several documents); and "User consultation, how to take part"^[12] – this has information about Census Advisory Groups, and also the May 2005 consultation on census topics.

ONS's Census Advisory Groups – specialist users

The Census Advisory Groups^[13] aim to represent the interests of the main user communities: central government departments; local authorities; the health service; the business sector and professional interests; the academic community; and organisations with interests in special needs and minority populations. An additional group is convened jointly by ONS and the Welsh Assembly Government to cover users in Wales. Each group typically has 15-20 members, with ONS arranging meetings at intervals of six months or more to coincide with particular developments or key events in census planning. Meeting agendas usually include several detailed papers.

ONS's Public consultations

The most conspicuous of ONS's mechanisms for consulting its users are the public consultations which seek to attract as wide a response as possible.

Figure 4. ONS public consultations – timeline

Start Date	Aspect	Comments
Initial:		
October 2003	2011 Census: a proposed design for England and Wales	An initial Information Paper ^[14] setting out a proposed model for a census in 2011, and inviting users' comments.
June 2004	2011 Census: Strategic aims and key research	Information Paper 2 ^[15] , summarising aims, and identifying key questions to be answered.
June 2004	Population Definitions	A paper ^[16] seeking users' views (but not a formal 12-week consultation).
May 2005 onwards	Topics (Content, Questions)	The formal 12-week consultation ^[17] on possible topics has been much the most significant one to date. It was based on a document entitled "The 2011 Census: Initial View on Content for England and Wales" and was published together with a number of supporting papers, and a response template which was to be filled in by users to justify each topic on the census questionnaire. 2,000 responses on particular topics were received from 500 users, with good representation of the public sector and charities, but only 20 businesses, and 120 from the public. The responses were evaluated in an Information Paper "Assessment of initial user requirements for content" ^[18] published in March 2006. ONS has also set up 8 working groups to develop particular topics: these are seeking the opinions of targeted specialist users (see below). Further public meetings for all users are planned for early 2007. The ONS will finalise its decision on topics in spring 2008.
New:		
Started November 2006	Geography	ONS made proposals for small area geography policy in autumn 2005, and at the end of November 2006 launched a 12-week formal user consultation ^[19] . (This was after this review's interviews with users had been completed).
Started November 2006	Disclosure Control	At the end of November 2006 a joint statement ^[20,21] by the heads of the three Census Offices was released, stating their aims for an agreed policy. The principles will provide a basis for consultation during a 2-year period of methodological research. Recommended methods will be published for consultation in Autumn 2008.
Forthcoming:		
Planned for 2007 and beyond	Outputs – Consultation Strategy	A paper was included on the agenda of the December 2006 CAG meetings which sought views on a proposed strategy for consulting users on outputs. It included plans for a data distributors' workshop on access / dissemination in March 2007, and broad proposals which include an ONS "output user champion", roadshows, and working with user groups.

ONS's additional working groups

The ONS has also set up several other groups which draw on the experience of external expert users. Eight of these are focussed on particular topics (for example the Population Definitions Working Group), informally consulting with, and learning from, specialist census users. In other cases, however, the emphasis is less on user consultation, and further along the spectrum towards giving ONS advice on how it might carry out the census operation. Examples of these are the UK Census Design and Methodology Group (which is particularly concerned with estimating the numbers and characteristics of non-respondents), and the Local Authority Liaison Group, whose interests include the 2007 Test Census, and the need for comprehensive address lists.

External specialist user groups

In addition, census users themselves have set up several of their own groups. Examples include the ESRC Census Advisory Committee, the Market Research Society's Census Geodemographics Group, the Association of Census Distributors, and the Royal Statistical Society's Census Study Group, all of which meet regularly, and invite representatives of ONS. Several other organisations such as the British Urban and Regional Information Systems Association, the Statistics User Forum, and the Demographics User Group, also organise events which address users' needs. Many of the people who are active in these are also members of ONS's Advisory Groups, but these externally-organised specialist groups have the advantage of setting their own priorities and agendas, as well as responding to those set by the ONS.

4.3 Specialist users' views – interviews

The specialist users were interviewed during October and November 2006, just before the announcements of new consultations on Geography and on Disclosure Control policy, and the latest round of advisory group meetings.

Views on aspects of consultation

These are initially summarised for each aspect in Figure 5 below, and are followed by some more general comments.

Figure 5. Specialist users – views on aspects of consultation

Users' needs	Views
"The Population" – definition(s)	Even amongst the experts this is seen as a specialist issue – they were pleased to have been consulted, but were generally happy to leave the detail to the Population Definitions Working Group.
Topics, questions, and derived classifications	This has been much the most significant consultation so far, and drew the following observations: "Hard going – all those templates! Collected more information than could be digested." "Not well planned – a lot of effort – reams of prose." "ONS took topic consultation seriously, but what method to take it forward? Messages heard, but will advice be taken?" Weighting of priorities – various doubts, including the influence of government departments, and of those "with axes to grind" lobbying for particular questions. Need to explain why users' views on some questions e.g. Sexual Orientation, Religion, have been rejected or ignored.
Coverage – near 100%? & estimates of those missed	Coverage is vital to users, but is not seen as a matter for user consultation – although users working in Local Authorities might be able to encourage their organisations to assist the ONS. One user did, however, observe that seeking to maximise coverage might require sacrifices in the range and detail of questions; an external group – the RSS Census Study Group – is planning a meeting on this subject in February 2007. ONS needs statistical methods to compensate for undercoverage, but this is a very specialist area, and is not seen as a matter for formal user consultation.
Quality of responses	Again, Quality is seen as something that ONS should and does strive for, but users do not generally expect to be consulted.
Geographical areas used for outputs	All the interviewees regarded this as vitally important to users, and welcomed the fact that consultation was about to start.
Measures taken to prevent disclosure of information about individuals	Again, this was seen as another vital aspect, and the users were anxiously awaiting the announcement of ONS's plans for consultation. "The problems experienced in 2001 are a good illustration of the need to consult." Several respondents pointed out that Disclosure policy needs to be considered together with Geography.
Outputs – statistical tables	As with previous censuses, users were anticipating consultation in due course. One particular comment: "I don't want endless consultation on draft tables".
Timing of outputs	The expert users attached more importance to the results being checked and correct, rather than being issued earlier than the Census Offices' target of 18 months after Census Day.
Access – getting hold of the results	Consultation is awaited, although the Association of Census Distributors been able to raise and discuss this issue already, in advance of any ONS formal consultation.
UK-wide	Very important to some user sectors – business, academics and to a lesser extent government. However, most of the members of the Advisory Groups usually talk only with ONS, hoping that they will sort matters with GROS and NISRA. No formal UK consultation yet, or planned.
Licensing terms	Vitally important to users, but they look to ONS to repeat its success of 2001, rather than seeking consultation.

Views on the effectiveness of consultation

Specialist users' views of the effectiveness of ONS's consultation are based primarily on their experience of the Topic consultation, together with their involvement in the advisory groups. Here are some representative quotes on the effectiveness of consultation so far:

"Pretty good. A lot more open since 2001."

"Not doing badly – but need to engage more."

"Seems to be going slowly – always takes longer – running to keep up."

"A lot of (topic) consultation, but have views been taken on board?"

"We are being talked to, if not listened to."

Interviewees' comments, and suggested improvements

Without exception, the specialist users showed strong interest in the census, and were keen to give their opinions on consultation. In general, there was consensus on the following major issues.

Aspects. Referring to the summary Figure 5 above, there was general agreement that, although all the aspects are of great importance to users, not all should be the subject of consultation. In some cases (topics, geography, disclosure, outputs and their timing, access, and UK-wide) there are various alternative technical solutions which directly affect the information ultimately produced. In others, such as coverage, quality and licensing terms, users look to ONS to do a professional job and operate in users' best interests. There is also a third category, applicable to population definitions and estimation for undercoverage, where even the specialist users are content to be represented by a small subset of their super-specialists.

Considering the first major public consultation on topics, the experienced users welcomed it as an opportunity to give their views, but found the method of repetitively filling in templates to be unnecessarily arduous, and felt that there was no need to collect information in such detail. As might be expected, there is suspicion about the weighing of priorities – some users with particular interests were unhappy that their requests might not be met, whilst others feared that ONS might be unduly influenced by either powerful organisations such as government departments, or minority interests. Users were united in the view that ONS will need to explain why some questions have been included and others rejected.

Census Advisory Groups. The groups' meetings were felt to be valuable, but some members felt that meetings should be held more frequently to increase user involvement and momentum. Papers were both praised and criticised for their length and detail. The recent move to having joint meetings (for example Business and Academic groups meeting together) was seen as a retrograde step. The Diversity Advisory Group appears to have some difficulties: its members are each interested in one particular topic, and in some cases would find it better to have individual contact, rather than take part in a big meeting which involves not only other topics, but also many aspects of the census which are of little interest to them.

Involving occasional users. Most of the specialist users were very aware of the difficulties in getting occasional users involved in consultation:

“Really difficult to consult – they seek the advice of the experts.”

“Each sector relies on its “super users” who get involved – it’s a fact of life that it’s difficult to drag in other MRS members.”

“We send Census alerts to local authorities, the police, and the emergency services – but they are generally happy to leave it to us.”

“Small local authorities need hand holding – but they are better organised than Health.”

“It’s good to have regional meetings, although ONS resources are stretched.”

Wider observations. Users also commented on the need for ONS to engage with local authority chief executives, the importance of not neglecting politicians, and ONS’s need for better publicity and the rapid rebuttal of bad press coverage.

Lastly, there were pleas that the Census Offices should continue to keep in mind all the experience and knowledge that had been gained from the 2001 Census.

4.4 Occasional users' views – interviews

Local authorities and their need for information for policy purposes

The Local Authority Chief Executives and senior policy staff were interviewed during November and December 2006. Many local authorities have their own census specialist, and in most cases that person also attended the interview. This is significant: policymakers in local authorities have an advantage over many other occasional users in that they can call on internal specialist expertise, and local government also provides a wider framework for sharing knowledge. In short, these occasional users are in a better situation than most.

All the policymakers recognised the importance of census information. There was a strong emphasis on seeking information for performance monitoring and evidence-based policy. At local authority level the census was valued as a benchmark for measuring different populations, and there was a particular concern with making returns to central government. Within the authority, information was required both for electoral wards and, increasingly, ad hoc definitions of neighbourhoods when targeting renewal initiatives. Several (but not all) authorities were interested in comparing themselves with their peers in other parts of England or Wales, and in some cases the rest of the UK and Europe, particularly when bidding for resources.

Two striking themes emerged from the interviews with policymakers. Firstly, that they were driven by the need to inform their decisions, rather than taking the census as the starting point – the importance of the census was recognised, but any possible source of information would be welcome. Secondly, especially in the case of neighbourhood initiatives such as interventions on crime or education, current information – usually neighbourhood statistics derived from administrative files, or the Index of Multiple Deprivation – is at a premium to measure recent impacts, and the 2001 Census is seen as of little value (unless the user is aware of its continuing importance as a source of population denominators, or the base for updated estimates). Most interviewees mentioned the importance of recent migration from Eastern Europe since the 2001 Census.

Involvement in consultation

Of the nine local authorities interviewed in England and Wales, the six largest ones had been directly involved in the Topic consultation; however, for the three smaller councils, “2011 still seems a long time ahead”. Lambeth and Bristol both emphasised the benefits of meeting with other authorities (Greater London, and those in the old Avon County Council) to develop their

views. It was notable that the senior policymakers turned to their specialist staff to respond to the topic consultation, described by one as "time consuming and repetitious."

Views on effectiveness, and perceptions of ONS

Views were sought on the effectiveness of consultation, and also (given that not all had got involved) their perceptions of ONS. These were a lot more variable than those of the specialist users:

"Effect? Jury's out – very familiar with our own consultations – we get lots of views then go ahead and do what we like."

"Good perception of ONS – they respond to email queries, and do consult users."

"ONS reluctant to admit 2001 problems, but did so in the end; since then, consultation very positive – well engaged – good perception of ONS."

"Very little contact – we value the Local Government Data Unit as an intermediary."

"Difficult to work with them – "impenetrable beast" – are they willing to listen?"

"The stuff they send is dense – it doesn't talk at a strategic level."

"ONS seen as remote from users' needs – need to discuss what matters now, rather than ONS's offerings."

"If a supplier refuses to respond to market signals they will be bypassed."

Local Authority interviewees' comments, and suggested improvements

Like the specialists, the occasional users in local authorities all showed strong interest in the census, but there was considerable variation in the extent to which they felt involved, and consequent satisfaction. Several suggestions were made for improving future consultation: communications from ONS were seen as sporadic, and it would be best to have a single contact point within the authority; buzzwords (such as "funding") help engage interest; meetings of users (such as those organised by the Greater London Authority for the London Boroughs) are valuable in galvanising users' views; senior people need to be targeted with strategic messages. Several authorities also saw the benefits of coordinating or even centralising their own scattered census expertise in order to respond more effectively.

The views of journalists and of voluntary organisations

Seeking to extend knowledge of occasional users, interviews were also held with two journalists who work for national broadsheet newspapers, and with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. Michael Cross, who writes for the Guardian's Technology supplement, and is an active campaigner to make government data freely available, recognised the census as an important source, but not one core to his writing. If he did need census information he would seek the help of specialists, rather than hunt on ONS's website. He was not aware of the 2011 Census consultation.

Simon Briscoe, Statistics Editor of the Financial Times, is not typical of journalists in that he is also an active member of the Royal Statistical Society. In his view, consultation had been haphazard at best, having received occasional impersonal emails; he expected that ONS will largely repeat what was done before. He said that the expert groups set up in the run up to the last census had been ineffective and unaccountable. The greatest failure is that consultation documents don't give a holistic picture – there is a need for a clear overview. There was a need to open up consultation to new groups of users, such as the Press. Users should be given information – for example, the costs of adding more questions, and of producing results more swiftly – to enable them to make informed choices. He could not understand why the ONS was so quiet on key topics such as the need for a decent address list.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations in England is an umbrella organisation for 5,000 charities, ranging from the biggest household names to very many small ones. They have diverse interests: some (such as RNIB and Shelter) are interested in both encouraging participation and using the results; Liberty focuses on the privacy aspects; many voluntary organisations seek census information to argue their causes and to seek funding. UK-wide data is important: some charities cover all four countries, and devolution is also resulting in differing policies, the consequences of which need to be compared.

Assessing consultation for 2011, several members of NCVO are represented on ONS's Diversity Advisory Group, having interests in particular topics, but this appears to be the only involvement. There was a need for a broad overview of all census consultation, in particular a "need to democratise the results." The NCVO could help with several potential networks for publicity, and saw the need for meetings of voluntary organisations: "It's only by getting together and thinking things through that you get what you want." ONS was seen as a trusted source of statistics and very professional, but lumbering and slow. "They must find out what users want, and be seen to be open and transparent."

4.5 The effectiveness of consultation

ONS's seeking of users' views has some parallels with the organising of any census or survey. The definition of the user population presents a particular challenge – the enthusiastic specialists are easy to identify, but the vast numbers of occasional users are much more difficult. Turning to the aspects known to be important to users, in some cases, such as coverage, quality and licensing terms, users expect ONS to do a professional job in users' best interests. In some others, notably population definitions and estimation for undercoverage, even the specialist users are content to be represented by a small subset of their number. However, for aspects such as topics, geography, disclosure, outputs and their timing, access, and UK-wide statistics, there are various alternative options which directly affect the nature of the statistics that are ultimately produced, and users expect their preferences to play a large part in ONS's ultimate decisions.

Figure 6. The extent of users' involvement in ONS consultation

Summary - Extent of Users' involvement in ONS Consultation							
Important to users, and needing Consultation	Specialist - Public Services	Specialist - Academic	Specialist - Commer'l + Resellers	Occasional - Public Services	Occasional Academic	Occasional - Commer'l	Occasional - Many others, inc. citizens
Population definition					X	X	X
Topics & questions					X	X	
Output geography				X	X	X	X
Disclosure control				X	X	X	X
Outputs - statistics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Timing of outputs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Access to data	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
UK-wide	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Also important, but ONS already knows users' needs							
Coverage							
Quality							
Licensing							

KEY: Extent of involvement	
Established	
Starting	
Patchy	
Little or none	X

Figure 6 provides a simple summary of the reach of ONS's existing consultation. It takes each aspect of the census which is important to users, and also classifies users by specialist / occasional, and by broad sectors. For the eight aspects where users might expect to be consulted on options, the table illustrates the extent of their involvement. Of these, specialist users are involved to some extent in four aspects to date. However, available evidence

suggests that most occasional users (even in local authorities, which usually also employ specialists) currently have had little or no direct involvement.

The Topic consultation was successful in attracting a big response, particularly from the public sector. Many users found the requirement to fill in repetitive templates unnecessarily arduous, and thought that too much information was being collected. The roadshows were welcomed as a method of informing users and encouraging debate. Given that the respondents were often census specialists, their views were usually authoritative and well informed. There is some scepticism as to how ONS will weigh different users' priorities when planning the ultimate recommendation to parliament on topics in Spring 2010, but the inclusion of questions on Income, Language and Second Residences in the 2007 Test Census is encouraging. It is felt by users in Wales (and also in England) that the ONS has been very attentive to the needs expressed by the Welsh Assembly for questions on Language and Identity. Turning to the Population Definitions consultation, this is seen even by the specialists as a subject for experts, and there is general satisfaction that the Population Definitions Working Group is responsive to users' needs.

ONS provided some examples of the costs of particular consultation events. It is, however, important to appreciate that these do not include the costs of long-term consultation mechanisms such as the Census Advisory Groups. The 2005 roadshows cost £28,000 for venues, accommodation, travel, printing materials, Welsh translation, and deaf signers (sign language). The costs of staff time in organising the roadshows, preparing presentations, attendance, scoring submissions, and preparing the publication were estimated as approximately £30,000. This gives a total cost of c £58,000 for the 2005 roadshows. The cost of the open meetings in March 2007 is expected to be approximately £25,000 for venues, accommodation, travel, printing materials, Welsh translation, and deaf signers, with staff costs estimated at approximately £10,000: this will give a total cost of c. £35,000.

Looking ahead to further consultations, several users observed that the method used for Topics should not be treated as a standard model, and that different aspects would need different approaches. One underlying theme was that users should have the opportunity to make their most important points without necessarily having to get involved in great detail. This might be particularly relevant for future consultations on aspects such as disclosure, outputs, timing, access and UK-wide in order to attract the views of occasional users. As one such user put it: "When I buy a car I know broadly what I want, but I don't expect to advise on the design of the carburettor."

ONS made further announcements about consultation in November and December 2006, after most of this review's interviews with users had taken place (see Figure 4). A 12-week formal consultation on Geography was launched at the end of November. Informal reactions from users were to welcome the initiative, and its novel use of a blog (as well as written submissions), but to also seek at least one open meeting to discuss views. Informal reactions suggest that users strongly supported a joint policy statement on Disclosure by the heads of the three Census Offices: this will provide a basis for consultation over the next two years. Lastly, a paper at the December 2006 CAG meetings seeking views on a proposed strategy for consulting users on outputs appeared to be broadly welcomed.

5. Consultation in Scotland

5.1 General Register Office (Scotland) and the government context

GROS is part of the devolved Scottish Administration, and is responsible for carrying out the census in Scotland. The Registrar General reports to a minister in the Scottish Executive, which is in turn accountable to the Scottish Parliament. The Parliament took a keen interest in the 2001 Census, and will make the final decisions on the 2011 Census.

5.2 GROS's Consultation to date – the mechanisms

The GROS's website^[22,23] provides a range of information about 2011 Census^[24]. One of the menus is "Census Consultation"^[25], which invites involvement in Formal Consultation^[26], Questionnaire Consultation^[27], Consultation Papers and Topic Groups^[28].

GROS's Formal public consultations

Figure 7. GROS public consultations – timeline

Start Date	Aspect	Comments
<i>Initial:</i>		
Autumn 2004	1 st Formal Consultation	General consultation of users and stakeholders about the 2011 Census was formally initiated in Autumn 2004 with the publication of a consultation document entitled "Scotland's Census 2011; Scotland Counts". It was accompanied by four consultation events, two in Edinburgh, one in Glasgow and one in Inverness. This was the first of three formal 12-week consultations on all aspects of the census. A subsequent report on the consultation outlined the responses was published in June 2005. GROS received nine written responses to the consultation paper from a cross section of community groups, local authorities and health boards. Many other users made their responses

		directly at the consultation meetings. GROS also used an online questionnaire during 2005 to seek views on census questions, and published a summary in September 2006.
<i>Forthcoming:</i>		
2007	2 nd Formal Consultation	Prior to the 2009 Dress Rehearsal
2009	3 rd Formal Consultation	Prior to the 2011 Census

Specialist groups

The Population and Migration Statistics Committee (PAMS)^[29] acts as the Census Advisory Group for Scotland. GROS has also set up specialist groups for topics such as travellers, disability, and ethnicity. In addition, several users based in Scotland are members of ONS's Census Advisory Groups. The externally-organised specialist user groups based in England also often invite GROS representation to their events.

5.3 Users' views on consultation – interviews

Two specialist users based in Scotland were interviewed: both were members of both PAMS, and also one of ONS's Census Advisory Groups. The specialist users' comments were largely similar to those in England and Wales, and reflected their local authority and academic bases. Some comments, however, stood out: some unhappiness about topic consultation, and the need to take a broad view, but also to get into the detail of how to frame questions; considerable satisfaction with Scotland's approach to both Geography and Disclosure; and the need to be aware of the importance of politicians in the Scottish Parliament.

One striking point was the highlighting of GROS' small size in comparison with ONS: – "GROS easier to engage with than ONS – you can ring up and speak to the right person". It was, however, more stretched, and has to focus on delivering data, rather than getting involved in research.

Turning to occasional users, the chief executives of two contrasting local authorities – Glasgow City and South Ayrshire Councils, were also interviewed. Again, the occasional users in local authorities in Scotland had much in common with England and Wales. Both showed strong interest in the census. Glasgow's chief executive is supported by a specialist team, with the census being used for many different policy purposes; there is a strong network of personal contacts with GROS. Glasgow saw the consultation as going well, warning only of the danger of making final decisions too far in advance of 2011.

On the other hand, although South Ayrshire makes extensive and regular use of the census they were not actively involved in census consultation with the GRO. For instance, an officer from within the Council does maintain contact with the PAMS group and attend meetings, but this role can most reasonably be described as one of "participant observer", rather than steering agendas and leading discussions.

5.4 The effectiveness of consultation

Although based on only four interviews, consultation with specialist users and also occasional users who have specialist teams in Scotland appears to be going well. This may be partly due to well-established local contacts, but also to the fact that GROS's first formal consultation ranged across most aspects of importance to users, rather than just focussing on topics, and enabled users to get a broad vision of what 2011 might be like. However, the more isolated occasional users are still not much involved, and it is striking that, like England and Wales, the responses to the first formal consultation were concentrated in the public services.

As to the costs, GROS's rough estimate is that the first round of consultation in 2004 cost c.£12K, mainly in staff costs and accommodation hire. Overall, GRO is expecting that the cost of its three main consultation rounds (including 2004) will be c.£50K in total.

GROS's plans for future consultations are straightforward. Second and third formal consultations are scheduled in 2007 (before the 2009 Dress Rehearsal) and 2009 (in advance of the census itself).

6. Consultation in Northern Ireland

6.1 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, and the government context

NISRA is responsible for carrying out the census in Northern Ireland, which has its own Census Act. It is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance and Personnel of the Northern Ireland Office. Unlike the other Census Offices, the majority of NISRA's staff are based in policy departments and agencies: this helps communication with users. The structure of government in Northern Ireland is under review: proposals for devolution could result in local responsibility for the 2011 Census, as in Scotland.

6.2 NISRA's Consultation to date – the mechanisms

NISRA's website^[30,31] has a section on 2011 Census Consultation^[32] which has links to information about the initial consultation launched in December 2004.

NISRA's Public consultations

Figure 8. NISRA's public consultations – timeline

Start Date	Aspect	Comments
<i>Initial:</i>		
December 2004 – April 2006	Initial Consultation	NISRA launched an initial consultation "The future Provision of Demographic Statistics in Northern Ireland (Towards the 2011 Census)" in December 2004. An Information Paper ^[33] provided a 15 page overview, whilst the Consultation Questionnaire ^[34] sought detailed views on topics and the population base. A detailed summary of responses was published ^[35] in September 2005. 50 responses were received – a higher rate per capita than ONS's consultation; the biggest single category of responses was 11 from government departments. The responses were discussed at three roadshows in March 2006, and these were evaluated in a short report in April 2006.
<i>Forthcoming:</i>		
January 2007	Consultation Strategy	Plans to be announced at the Census Advisory Group.

Specialist users

NISRA's Census Advisory Group mirrors those organised by the ONS, although given the nature of government in Northern Ireland, it has closer links with users in policy departments, including the use of statistics for equality monitoring. Unlike Scotland, no users based in Northern Ireland are members of ONS's Census Advisory Groups. However, NISRA keeps alert to the needs of specialist users outside Northern Ireland by participating in some of the groups organised by ONS. The externally organised specialist user groups based in England occasionally invite NISRA representation to their events.

6.3 Users' views on consultation – interviews

Given the time available, it was only possible to carry out interviews with two users in Northern Ireland. The Chief Executive of Belfast City Council emphasised that many functions in Northern Ireland are administered by central government and agencies, but these are often not concerned with "place" – policies can have unforeseen local consequences. Census information is important for policy development: "It's a divided society – it's good to quote

objective census evidence – although interpretations will differ." Consultation for the 2011 Census was taking place within a good working relationship with NISRA: "If we need anything special, we ring NISRA who are always very helpful." Belfast City Council had endorsed NISRA's broad approach, and welcomed NISRA's feedback at the roadshows. They had raised other issues, for example the timing of outputs, but these didn't fit in with NISRA's consultation plan. The Council had recently had further thoughts about topics such as East European migrants, and recycling, but were unsure if it was still possible to make their case.

One of the specialist members of NISRA's Census Advisory Group is also Head of Research at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive – a major policy agency. The census is a vital source, also underpinning other information such as household projections and neighbourhood statistics. The CAG was seen as a useful forum. The NIHE had responded to the formal consultation, with views on both the topics and the population base. It was felt that consultation was working well at the moment, although the CAG doesn't reach occasional users. NISRA's earlier consultation for the 2001 Census had been effective.

6.4 The effectiveness of consultation

The impression from two interviews is that, like Scotland, consultation with specialist users and also occasional users who have specialist teams appears to be going quite well, and is based on strong local and personal connections. However, the more isolated occasional users are still not much involved, and it is striking that, like England and Wales, the responses to the first formal consultation were concentrated in the public services, rather than from commercial users. There is also some evidence that users don't want decisions (for example on topics) to be taken too early, and that they would welcome the opportunity for early discussion on other aspects, such as outputs.

NISRA's estimate of the cost of consultation to date is just over £4,000. The majority of the expenditure is attributed to postal and printing costs, and to hosting the three public information days in March 2006.

NISRA's plans for further consultation were to be presented in a paper to its Census Advisory Group in January 2007.

7. Is there a UK-wide view?

The ONS's Programme Board for managing the 2011 Census includes representatives from GROS, NISRA and the Welsh Assembly Government. Several UK-wide committees have also been set up to consider different areas of census development where common methodologies and approaches can be adopted.

The National Statistics website has a statement^[36] on UK harmonisation:

“The Registrars General of England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have agreed (subject to the need for approval where appropriate by the relevant legislatures) the intention to conduct Censuses simultaneously throughout the UK in 2011. The aim is to promote UK harmonisation and to produce consistent and coherent outputs for the UK and for each component country.”

An Annex^[37] on Outputs details several aims, which include comparable UK outputs, up-to-date dissemination methods, concurrent release across the UK, and licensing free at the point of delivery. Another Annex^[38] details an agreed policy on Statistical Disclosure Control, which is much in line with users' wishes. The website also states that a number of UK-wide Committees have been set up to consider different areas of census development where common methodologies and approaches can be adopted.

Specialist users representing the Academic Advisory Group, the Market Research Society, and the Association of Census Distributors all made clear the needs of academic and business users for UK-wide statistics, and these statements on behalf of all three Census Offices are likely to be very welcome. It is, however, significant that none of the specialist users interviewed referred to the statements as guarantees that their needs would be met, or pointed to any existing consultation mechanism.

The time appears right for users with a UK-wide interest to become actively engaged in helping the Census Offices implement their policy. This should include advice over several aspects including not just comparable topics and questions, but also outputs and how they can be accessed. Users are concerned not only with the definition of statistical outputs, but also digital boundaries, and postcode directories. Turning to access, users with a UK-wide interest seek to download files for all four countries in identical formats, preferably from one website, and ideally with the option of choosing a single file for the whole UK. It is to be hoped that a dialogue can be established between the Census Offices and users soon.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Census Offices' consultation and users' views – summary conclusions

Each of the three Census Offices started its 2011 consultation processes two years ago, and they will continue until close to census day – this review is looking at a moving target. It is apparent that consultation is being taken seriously by the Census Offices, with the primary mechanisms being regular meetings of advisory groups of specialist users, and also some formal public consultations. The latter have tackled some of the important aspects of the census such as topics, and the population definition, and are now moving on to other aspects equally vital to users such as geography, methods to prevent disclosure, outputs and their timing, and access. There are not yet any plans for user consultation on UK-wide statistics.

The consultations have been successful in capturing the opinions of specialist users, particularly in public sector organisations, but have had little success in attracting the views of occasional users, who range from students to chief executives, nor users in other sectors such as business and the press. Amongst the specialist users there is often the wish to be able to give their top priorities, without having to get involved in voluminous detail. There is also a wish to retain the view of a bigger census wood, as well as probing the detail of separate aspects. Most users are keeping an open mind about the likelihood of their opinions influencing the Census Offices' decisions, and view the inclusion of new questions in the Test Censuses, and the statement on statistical disclosure, as positive indications.

Comparing the three census offices, they have much in common in their consultations so far, with similar mechanisms, scope and feedback. However, the smaller size of Scotland and Northern Ireland has resulted in GROS and NISRA having better-developed networks and informal contacts than ONS, which help suppliers to get closer to their users. Open meetings and roadshows have the advantage of building relationships between the census offices and users, and amongst users. One other feature of consultation in Scotland is that it has been planned in three formal waves (2004, 2007, 2009), which range across all the aspects of importance to users – such consolidation probably helps users to have a sense of involvement and commitment.

It is felt by users in Wales (and also in England) that the ONS has been very attentive to the needs expressed by the Welsh Assembly for questions on Language and Identity.

8.2 Discussion

Aiming to satisfy existing customers and to create more customers

Looking at the Census Offices from a marketing standpoint, the Census Offices are seeking to meet the needs of their established customers, and also to increase the size of the market by attracting new prospects. The Census is, however, an unusual product. It takes place in an environment of increasingly rapid social and technological change, but is manufactured only every ten years – a big contrast to the motor industry, for example, which has the opportunity to make innumerable marginal improvements to its products. Also, the budget for the census is finite – not all needs can be met, and choices have to be made with the aim of optimising the use of the money available. One big advantage, however, over the launch of a completely novel product is that there is already a big customer base of both specialist and occasional users of the 2001 Census, and they are of great potential value in discussing alternative choices, and helping the Census Offices make the best decisions in the circumstances.

Segmenting the market and communicating appropriately

As we have seen, the users are diverse, and can be classified by several sectors, and by level of expertise. This does not mean that they are entirely separate segments, with nothing in common, but it is plain that one size does not fit all. In order to seek their views, there is great benefit in being able to tap into identifiable networks or constituencies of users, and these need to be developed. Again, in communicating with them, messages need to be targeted and presented appropriately: occasional users need simple headline messages to get them involved, and even the specialists appreciate executive summaries and broad overviews of the current position before plunging into more detail. Developing targeted messages does not automatically result in increased effort and cost – it may in some cases avoid excessive and unproductive effort. That notwithstanding, spending a very small percentage of the total census budget on understanding users' needs is likely to greatly increase the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Understanding what is important to customers

When planning consultation on the various aspects of the 2011 Census, the most powerful method is to envisage the situation after 2011, when all the results have been published. How will users judge such a post-mortem? Will any problems be due to not knowing users' preferences, or not responding to them? The experience of the 2001 Census is illuminating. On balance it was largely successful, but several problems – disclosure control measures, output formats, ad hoc requests, and UK-wide files – need never have arisen if there had been better consultation.

8.3 Recommendations

The Census Offices should consider the following recommendations:

Build networks

1. Develop existing networks to reach out to occasional users by:

- Harnessing the interest shown by Local Authority Chief Executives in this review, not only in assisting in the conduct of the census, but also in using their networks to advise on the strategic needs for information for policy purposes.
- Encouraging and assisting the members of census advisory groups and external groups of experts to explicitly develop the role of acting as intermediaries between the Census Offices and occasional users.
- Putting particular effort into those user sectors which are currently poorly co-ordinated – the health service, commercial companies, voluntary organisations and the press.
- Working with user groups to help organise more public meetings for users to meet and develop their own networks.
- Identifying a primary census contact within each user organisation, and assisting them in disseminating information, and feeding back users' views.

2. Streamline communication with the census offices' own advisory groups by:

- Holding meetings more frequently and regularly to increase momentum.
- Holding separate meetings for each group, rather than doubling up.
- Writing 1-page executive summaries for each paper, and also a short executive overview of the current plans as a whole.
- Making papers publicly available on the web as soon as they are produced, so that advisory group members can solicit users' views in advance of meetings.
- Review the operation of the Diversity Advisory Group to consider whether members with very specialist knowledge of particular population groups and classifications might be able to contribute more productively on an individual basis.

-
- Consider reinstating the Outputs Working Group to focus on options for access and dissemination for the UK as a whole.

Target messages

3. Recognise that some aspects of the census such as coverage, quality and licensing, are of great importance to users, but who require information, rather than consultation.
4. Recognise that for those aspects where users' views of alternative options are of great importance, plans for consultation should be developed on a bespoke basis – there is no single standard ideal method.
5. Focus consultation methods towards help make decisions – for example, “What are your 15 most important Census Topics?” – and avoid collecting masses of information of low value.
6. Target each market segment appropriately, both in content (census aspects, and appropriate buzzwords) and format (high level executive summaries for occasional users, more detail for the specialists).

Respond to UK-wide needs

7. To build on the UK-wide management structures that have already been established, by initiating consultation on users' needs for UK-wide information, targeting those sectors with known interest.

Explain current thinking and ultimate decisions

8. Keep all users informed of the choices to be made, the current vision for 2011, and also explain the reasons for decisions when they have been taken.

Review resources

9. Consider whether the resources currently being allocated to consultation should not only be better targeted, but are also sufficient to maximise the possibility of the 2011 Census meeting customers' needs and therefore being hailed a success.

Appendix A. References and links

SECTION

1. Introduction – the purpose of the review

(No references)

2. The review – the research approach used

Existing literature

(See Section 3 below)

The Census Offices – interviews

Organisation	Person	Position
GROS	Duncan Macniven Peter Scrimgeour	Registrar General Head of Census
NISRA	Norman Caven Robert Beatty Brian Green	Registrar General Head of Census Census Manager
ONS	Ian Cope	2011 Census Director
National Assembly for Wales	Kate Chamberlain Steven Marshall	Chief Statistician Head of Core Statistics

Specialist users – interviews

Census Advisory Group	Person	Organisation
Local Government	Jenny Boag (Scotland) John Hollis	Falkirk Council Greater London Authority
Central Government	Bob Garland Richard Campbell	DCLG DfT
National Health Service	Peter Aspinall	Centre for Health Service Studies
Private Sector	Barry Leventhal Peter Sleight	MRS Census Geodemographics Group Association of Census Distributors
Academic	Paul Boyle (Scotland) Dave Martin	University of St. Andrews University of Southampton
Diversity	Prof Leslie Francis (Wales) Anjul Sharma	University of Wales Ethnic Researchers' Network
Wales	Nick Holmes Graham Winter	Local Government Data Unit Wales National Assembly for Wales
Northern Ireland	Joe Frey	NI Housing Executive

Occasional users – interviews

Organisation	Person	Position
Local Authorities:		
Belfast City	Peter McNaney Sinead Grimes	Chief Executive Policy Officer
Bristol City	Nick Gurney David Bishop Peter Robinson Sarah Driscoll	Chief Executive Director of Planning, Transport & Sustainable Devt. Chief Financial Officer Strategic Policy Manager
Cumbria County	Paula Kennerley	Corporate Information Officer
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough	Tal Michael Scott Cardwell	Strategic Director Policy, Partnerships & Governance Performance and Improvement Manager
Enfield London Borough	Rob Leak Mark McLaughlin	Chief Executive Director of Finance & Corporate Resources
Glasgow City	George Black Steve Inch	Chief Executive Director of Development
Gwynedd County	Arwel Ellis Jones Natalie Jones	Senior Manager, Policy & Operations R&I Manager
Lambeth London Borough	Thomas Mann Beth Hinde Ian Banner Liz Cloud	Policy and Information Manager Housing Policy Strategic Commissioning, Adult and Community Services Environment Research and Consultation
Manchester City	Susan Orrell	City Solicitor
Peterborough City	Malcolm Burch Steve Winstanley	Assistant Chief Executive Research & Information Team Leader
South Ayrshire	Tom Cairns Christina Cox	Chief Executive Head of Planning Policy & Research
Surrey County	Liz Constance Cathy Trott Steve Miles	Head of the Performance & Information R&I Manager (Census) R&I Manager
Other occasional users:		
Guardian	Michael Cross	Journalist
Financial Times	Simon Briscoe	Statistics Editor
National Council for Voluntary Organisations (England)	Karl Wilding	Head of Research

3. Census Users and Consultation

The use of Census information

[1] A guide to the 2001 Census: essential information for gaining business advantage. (Edited by Keith Dugmore and Corrine Moy). Sponsored by the Market Research Society and the ONS. The Stationery Office. 2004.

[2] People and Places. A 2001 Census atlas of the UK. Daniel Dorling and Bethan Thomas. The Policy Press. 2004.

[3] The 2001 Census and its significance to the commercial world. Alison Green. BRC. 2004.

<http://www.geodemographics.org.uk/pdf/BRCMarch2004pp56-57Census-AlisonGreen.pdf>

[4] Use made of official statistics: Report on Stage 1. Statistics Commission. (Forthcoming, 2007).

Assessments of the 2001 Census

[5] Census 2001 and Beyond: Learning from the past and building for the future. National Statistics Conference. 11 and 12 November 2003:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/events/RSS_ONS_Conf/default.asp

[6] Census and population estimates and The 2001 Census in Westminster: Final Report. Report No 22. Statistics Commission 2005:

http://www.statscom.org.uk/C_403.aspx

[7] A user's view of the 2001 Census. Association of Census Distributors and the Market Research Society. February 2005:

http://www.mrs.org.uk/networking/cgg/downloads/users_view_2001census.pdf

[8] 2001 Census Debriefing Seminar. Greater London Authority. 10 April 2006:

<http://www.saspac.org/2001debrief.html>

4. Consultation in England and Wales

[9] ONS Website: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp>

[10] Census: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census/>

[11] 2011 Census: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/census2011/default.asp>

[12] Consultation: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/census2011/user_consultation.asp

[13] Census Advisory Groups: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/advgroups.asp>

[14] Information Paper 1. A design for England and Wales.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/2011_design_information.pdf

[15] Information Paper 2. Strategic aims and key research.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Strategic_aims.pdf

[16] Population Definitions Consultation:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/Consultations/downloads/Population_definitions.pdf

[17] Consultation on Topics: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/consultations/2011Census.asp>

[18] Consultation on Topics – Response:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/consultations/downloads/2011Census_assessment_of_user_requirements.pdf

[19] Geography Consultation:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/consultations/Small_Area_Geography_Policy.asp

[20] Disclosure Control Policy:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/census2011/downloads/SDCpolicy.pdf>

[21] The most recent Census News:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/whats_new.asp

5. Consultation in Scotland

[22] GROS website: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/>

[23] Census: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/index.html>

[24] 2011 Census: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/index.html>

[25] Consultation:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/census-consultation/index.html>

[26] Formal consultation:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/census-consultation/formal-consultations/index.html>

[27] Questionnaire consultation:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/census-consultation/questionnaire-consultation.html>

[28] Topic Groups:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/census-consultation/topic-groups.html>

[29] Population and Migration Statistics Committee (PAMS):

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/user-consultation-groups-seminars/pams/index.html>

6. Consultation in Northern Ireland

[30] NISRA website: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/>

[31] Census: <http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/start.html>

[32] 2011 consultation: http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/2011_census_consultation.html

[33] Information Paper: http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/2011_info_paper.pdf

[34] Consultation questionnaire: http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/census_completion.html

[35] Consultation summary report: http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/Consul_Summ.pdf

7 Is there a UK-wide view?

[36] UK Harmonisation – Statement by the Registrars General:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/census2011/downloads/RGsAgreement.pdf>

[37] Output Aims:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/downloads/Annex_RGs_agreement_Output_Aims.pdf

[38] Disclosure Control Policy:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/census/census2011/downloads/SDCpolicy.pdf>

8. Conclusions and recommendations (No references)

Appendix B. Specialist users – interview topic guide

2011 Census – Review of Consultation – Specialist users

Name:

Date:

Introduction: KD's Email of 13 October.

- Evaluate the formal consultation processes that have taken place
- Scope of those planned for the future
- Across the UK
- Assess their effectiveness

Broad range? Responses well informed? Responses influenced planning?

Own role / involvement? CAG:[]; Other mechanisms?

Contact with which Census Offices? ONS / GROS / NISRA

Aspects (To date, and Planned):

- Population Base
- Questions (& derived topics such as NS-SEC)
- Coverage
- Output geography
- Disclosure Control
- Outputs
- Dissemination
- Licensing
- Timing
- + Any others (NB)

Comments:

Effectiveness / Impact?

UK-wide: Need a UK view? Effectiveness / Impact?

Any gaps? Reasons / Possible consequences / +Suggested remedies:

Appendix C. Occasional users – sampling of local authorities

In order to obtain a representative sample of different types of local authorities throughout the United Kingdom, it was decided to categorise them by the type of authority in England (London Borough, Metropolitan, Unitary, District, County), Wales (Local Councils), Scotland (Unitary) and Northern Ireland (Local Councils). Two authorities were sampled from each category, using a random start point; the only exceptions to this were the deliberate selection of Belfast (given its unique status in Northern Ireland’s local government) and Manchester (which had been much involved in discussion of the results of the 2011 Census).

In addition, the sample was checked using the National Statistics 2001 Census classification at the Supergroup level, which identifies 8 different types of area.

Details of the area classification are available at:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/methodology_by_theme/area_classification/la/default.asp

The resulting sample of local authorities is listed in the table below. The only area classifications not represented are Cluster 3 (London Centre) and 8 (Northern Ireland Countryside)

Country	Type of LA	Sample: (1 in n; random start)	ONS Supergroup [see footnote 1]	Obs
England	London Borough (33)	Enfield Lambeth	2 4	<i>Sample omits Cluster 3 – London Centre (but only 7 LBs)</i>
	Metropolitan (36)	Doncaster Manchester	7 1	
	Unitary (46)	Bristol Peterborough	1 5	
	District (Lower Tier) (238)	Ellesmere Port Watford	7 1	
	County (Upper Tier) (34)	Cumbria Surrey	(6) (5)	<i>Counties not classified by ONS – code is for the mode of the constituent Districts</i>
Wales	Local Councils (22)	Gwynedd Neath	6 7	
Scotland	Unitary (32)	Glasgow S. Ayrshire	1 7	
N Ireland	Local Councils (27)	Belfast	7	<i>Treated as a special case – local government is very different, & Cluster 8 is unique. Selected Belfast</i>

Appendix D. Occasional users in local authorities – interview topic guide

2011 Census – Review of Consultation – Policy users

Local Authority:

Name(s) & position(s):

Date:

Introduction: Professor Rhind's letter 23 October.

- Evaluate the formal consultation processes that have taken place
- Scope of those planned for the future
- Assess their effectiveness

(& KD's email)

LA's organisation / structure:

Need for Census-type information for policy:

- LA c.f. other LAs?
- Within LA – local neighbourhoods?

Policy areas, & information sources used in each:

- Census
- NeSS
- Others?
- Census for denominators?

(Explore policy angles, e.g.):

- Performance indicators?
- Recent White Paper (England)?
- Press publicity – Test Census / migration / Bank of England /other?

LA's own involvement in consultation (to date, and planned):

- Questions (ONS consultation late 2005)
- Population Base
- Coverage
- Output geography (& Disclosure Control)
- Outputs / Dissemination / Licensing / Timing
- UK – need UK-wide comparisons?
- + **Any others (NB)**

Census Offices' methods – successful engagement? Perceptions of COs?

Effectiveness / Impact on Census Offices?

Gaps? Reasons / Possible consequences?

Suggested remedies / methods / successful models?

LA POLICY USERS – TOPIC GUIDE

[END]

ANNEX 2

Risks to the 2011 Census A record of the seminar, by the Statistics Commission

On 30 January 2007 the Statistics Commission held a round-table seminar with invited expert participants to discuss risks to the success of the 2011 Census and the steps being taken to manage them.

Part 1. How will we know whether the Census has been a success? What is a good census?

Tests for success

Views on what would constitute success were quite varied, but all participants agreed on the importance of reaching a consensus view. The issues highlighted ranged from completeness of enumeration and coverage (ie the range of questions), through to timeliness and value for money.

The need for high levels of accuracy varied between uses and users. Where the Census was being used to monitor targets, or to bid for resources, accuracy was crucial. It was noted that census statistics drive policy decisions in many areas (social care, health, education) but that the value of census statistics in such contexts is higher in the few years immediately after the Census and then reduces progressively.

The role of local authorities

It was suggested that local authorities ought to be more involved in the Census planning, since they have organisational capacity, information on household addresses, an interest in the range of questions, and can engage local residents on its value. Residents often want to engage more with local authorities and local authorities have an interest in promoting debate on how services can be improved, and in providing the public with better information to help them understand local authorities' financial constraints. However, the suggestion that local authorities should be the prime census data collectors was challenged, although some thought that they could contribute to the enumeration process.

It was noted that realistic expectations have to be encouraged and that census offices should focus on the single specific thing only the Census can do – which is to provide consistent local area data. There was a good case for still greater focus on the hard-to-count areas than in the past.

Communicating the value of the Census

A good census was held to need broad community support, but census offices should seek to avoid people having too high expectations of the Census, and explain to citizens the extent to which the Census has a role in confirming what may already be known by government (eg basic household information) and what information is exploratory (eg socio-economic questions).

It was widely hoped that the creation of the new Statistics Board might foster greater public confidence in official statistics and in the purposes behind the Census. However, fears over confidentiality and increasing public apathy towards official forms etc meant that census offices will need to find a balance between enforcement and appealing to goodwill or community spirit.

Societal changes

Participants highlighted some of the societal and political changes that will make 2011 more difficult than previous censuses, including:

- The increasing complexity of households
- The fluidity in population
- Internal and external migration
- Increasing diversity
- Difficulty in finding people at home
- Apathy (as opposed to reluctance); people receive too much junk mail and regard the Census in the same light
- A lack of incentive to complete the Census form
- A changing political climate (dependent on election outcomes, new leaders, civil disobedience, identity cards, unfortunate media coverage etc)
- A common fear around joined-up data: people may perceive the Census as a state intrusion into their lives

Population concepts

The group discussed the range of population concepts that would ideally need to be measured and commented that there was an ongoing need for debate about which definitions of population to use. The definition in 2001 was inadequate because it excluded visitors and people resident for less than one year; the definition should also reflect the changing structures of households. It was noted that the appropriate definition(s) may vary according to changing migration patterns: visitors, usual residents, exchange students, seasonal workers; day, night or weekend populations.

Statistical evaluation of the outputs

Participants agreed that a good census needed a clear process of evaluation to determine how it performed. This should involve effective checking against other information sources to measure consistency of the results and the schedule should allow time for this evaluation. The value of Demographic Analysis techniques to assessing the reliability and consistency of the Census results was made. However, there was less agreement on the specific data sources that should be used for the evaluation, and the meeting noted that the migration element is the hardest to count.

It was noted that the quality of responses to questions in 2001 was not always good – only the questions that enumerators were required to check were well completed, and so more checks should be done at the fieldwork stage.

Part 2. Is there sufficiently wide recognition across government of the challenges and risks of a census and the need for ownership of those risks to be widely shared ahead of 2011? Will methods, in particular technological ones, be sufficiently tested to ensure that the quality of the Census is not jeopardised?

Owning the risks

Ownership of risks was generally perceived to rest with census offices but it was acknowledged that those offices must work in partnership with other organisations, including local authorities, (address register, design of questionnaires etc), central government departments (as users of the Census), with international colleagues (for consultation and benchmarking) and with specialist users via the consultations. It was suggested that the commercial world might be able to provide valuable information for the address register. Census offices now have a closer relationship with local authorities than was the position in 2001, but were warned against treating all local authorities as equally engaged, since some put more resources into census work than others and the quality of the information they can provide is extremely variable. Despite this, local information from local authorities has significant potential to help to ‘triangulate’ census estimates and can inform analysis of risks and local circumstances; it was felt that all local authorities should be consulted and involved as much as possible.

Political engagement

Some participants were concerned that the future Statistics Board may have less influence with ministers than the current ONS, while others thought it an advantage that it will deal directly with Parliaments and offer the opportunity to reduce risks elsewhere.

It was noted that for the 2001 Census, ONS had active, well managed engagement with politicians (elections, foot and mouth epidemic, riots – relations with Home Office and others was vital), demonstrating that the support of politicians was both important and achievable.

Consultation

On consultation, it was felt that there were some problematic areas to be resolved, including mitigating the risks around address lists; and consulting the private sector. It was suggested that information about the costs for each Census question could be published and this would help in consultation and engagement because users would be able to understand the trade-offs between different options. In addition, setting up Census Expert Groups now would facilitate consultation.

Part 3. Have the census offices taken effective approaches to deciding the priorities for including questions in the Census against an ever changing environment?

Census questions

Comments related to the number of questions (the fewer the better from the point of view of good population estimates), whether new questions should be introduced to keep the Census 'alive' and innovative, and the inevitable tension over continuity and the need to strike a balance between innovation and continuity. A suggested approach was to have core questions which were constant between censuses while the second part of the form might have new or changed questions. It was pointed out that statistical surveys can be split or joined to model against the Census at the moment. The earlier suggestion of a menu of question options was re-iterated. It was suggested that if we knew more about how people used the data then this might allow for more tailoring in the content of Census forms.

The wording of some Census questions varied between administrations but core questions were identical. For example, the wording and options of the ethnicity question vary to accommodate different perceptions of the word "black" (in Scotland there is public resistance to the term while in England it seems to be the preferred one). It was agreed that we need to ensure the results are comparable, and allow for the fact that questions are understood differently in different parts of the country. The agreement between the census offices aims to standardise the output from varying inputs.

Local area focus

The census offices face different challenges: the smaller scale in Scotland, for example, resulted in less difficulty in co-ordination or enumeration. It was suggested that ONS might tend to be a little isolated from large pools of users, and have limited understanding of local needs, since the focus within central government is mainly on large-scale policy-making. Since some areas of the country are subject to more rapid population change than others, it was felt that a balance of emphasis on national and local data requirements was required.

Part 4. The scope for political and special interest groups to use the Census as a political football should not be ignored. Have the census offices carried out horizon-scanning and engaged such groups in order to pre-empt disruption?

Advertising the Census

In 2001, a creative approach was successful in persuading people of the value of the Census, by for example, including an enumerator in “East Enders”, or collaborating with the Sun newspaper’s ‘Sunsus’ prior to enumeration day. It was felt that in the current climate of “migration paranoia”, newspapers might be willing to promote the need to have a census, and people might recognise the need to measure migration movements. Conversely, there were public concerns about a surveillance society as well as people’s fears that their answers will be linked to administrative processes such as tax collection.

Horizon-scanning

Reference was made to some of the societal and political changes described earlier, and an additional suggestion was made for more emphasis on the address databases by pre-enumerating dwelling spaces rather than addresses. This would need close working with local authorities to eliminate uninhabited, or “ghost”, properties from the address lists.

ONS relocation

The relocation of ONS staff was considered to be a risk to the statistical system as a whole and there was concern that the focus on the Census could be affected by it.

Statistics Commission, February 2007

Participants

Prof	David Rhind	Statistics Commission (chair)
	Richard Aldritt	Statistics Commission
	Tim Allen	Local Government Association
Dr	Robert Barr	Manchester University
	Simon Briscoe	Financial Times
Dr	Norman Caven	Department of Finance & Personnel, Northern Ireland
Prof	Danny Dorling	Sheffield University
	Keith Dugmore	Demographic Decisions Ltd
	Karen Dunnell	Office for National Statistics
	Damian Highwood	Westminster City Council
	John Hollis	Greater London Authority
Prof	Tim Holt	Royal Statistical Society
	Michael Jennings	Surrey County Council
	Duncan MacNiven	General Register Office for Scotland
	Jil Matheson	Office for National Statistics
	John Pullinger	House of Commons Library
	Philip Redfern	Former senior official, Office of Populations and Censuses (later merged into ONS)
	Ludi Simpson	Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research
	David Walker	The Guardian
	Martin Weale	Statistics Commission

ANNEX 3

The Use Made of Census Data

Introduction

1. Ultimately, census results are of value where they support decision-making, in government or elsewhere in society. Census data may go through various transformations and be combined with other sources of information before they are used in any decision making process. Partly because of this, people and organisations will often use such data to inform their choices without being aware that they are doing so. For example, any comparative local area information, such as crime rates, are likely to use data originally derived from the Census as the population denominator.
2. This annex draws on an earlier Statistics Commission report, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*¹. It focuses mainly on the uses of census data in managing public services whilst recognising that census results are also a domain of official statistics that other sectors of society use extensively. The reason for the focus on public services is that the value of the data in this context can manifestly be regarded as the justification of the cost to the public purse of carrying out the Census. The examples given are drawn from existing information available publicly with further detail supplied directly as necessary.
3. Our report described a range of users in a variety of settings – national and local government and agencies, other public bodies, charities, lobby groups, academics, private sector including market researchers, and the media. This report draws on the same source material.
4. The Census is a unique source, allowing demographic characteristics to be linked to household characteristics at small geographical level. This supports a very wide range of uses – often in combination with data from other sources.
5. The first results from the 2001 Census were released in the spring of 2003 and the final microdata released in 2006. The eighteen month to two years' lag in results being made available was a common grievance from interviewees in the Consultation Review (Annex 1) and also in the research into use made undertaken by Ipsos-MORI for the Statistics Commission. Some users reported that they would be prepared to sacrifice some reliability for timeliness.

¹ *The Use Made of Official Statistics*, Report No. 33, Statistics Commission, 2007

6. The use of the Census in the early years after it is released differs from its use in the latter years of the decade when it has lost its immediate contemporary relevance but still has value. Examples of its use over five years after the Census date include international benchmarking, time series analysis or profiling over time, or for predictive modelling. Its use also persists because there is no better alternative source of information; for example in describing the ethnic make-up of a population.

Examples

Policy decisions

7. Policy analysis relies on information on trends, patterns and relationships, as well as the impact of intervention strategies. The aim is to gain insight and understanding and the use of statistics can cover analysis of trends, forecasting future demand, market research or customer or user profiling. In this context census data are typically combined or presented alongside data from other sources and, as such, are harder to link directly to decisions or actions. For example, census data are used to supply the European Commission with data to inform the progress of European Union integration,² as well as statistics for other policy decisions, monitoring and performance indicators.
8. The Institute for Public Policy Research recently collated census and other data from the UK and other countries to present new estimates of how many British people live abroad, where they live and what emigration patterns will look like in the future.³ This type of use of the Census informs public policy debate.
9. The first example (case study 1) describes use of the Census alongside administrative data that influenced a decision of the Scottish Executive. This is also an example of using census data in the latter years of the decade.

² *EU integration seen through statistics - Key facts of 18 policy areas*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006.
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-71-05-691

³ *Mapping the scale and nature of British emigration*, D. Sriskandarajah & C. Drew, Institute for Public Policy Research, December 2006. <http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=509>

Case study 1: Health care for the elderly in Scotland⁴

In 1999, the Royal Commission on Long Term Care chaired by Professor Sir Stewart Sutherland⁵ published a report *With Respect to Old Age: Long Term Care - Rights and Responsibilities*. The Commission was set up to examine the short and long term options for a sustainable system of funding of long-term care for elderly people in the United Kingdom, both in their own homes and in other settings and to recommend how, and in what circumstances, the cost of such care should be apportioned between public funds and individuals. The report used census data up to 1991 and population projections based on 1991 Census as well as data from other sources. The Commission recommended that personal care should be free in all settings, and this flagship policy was implemented by the Scottish Executive in 2002.

10. Case study 2 describes a more indirect use of census data in setting a policy context.

⁴ Case study 1 references

With Respect to Old Age: Long Term Care - Rights and Responsibilities, report by The Royal Commission on Long Term Care, March 1999 <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm41/4192/4192.htm>

Free care deal for elderly people, BBC news, 24 September 2001
<http://news.bbs.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/1559427.stm>

Royal Commission On Long Term Care Of The Elderly, News Release: 0481/99, Scottish Office, 2 March 1999
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/news/releas99_3/pr0481.htm

⁵ Now Lord Sutherland of Houndwood.

Case study 2: Use of census data in *Developing the Regional Transport Strategy in the South West*⁶

Developing Regional Transport strategies is a useful example of an area where the Census cannot on its own provide simple answers to a complex issue but it can help to provide elements of the evidence base required to support decision making in Government. In a recent report *Developing the Regional Transport Strategy in the South West: Investment Priorities for the South West*, there were no tables of census data but behind the text there was considerable use of census data.

The body of the main report contained references to population figures and included a map of deprivation using an index which relies on the Census as one of its data sources. The 2001 Census is listed as one of 14 sources of information used. Looking more closely at some of the other sources, it can be seen that census data formed part of the evidence base for them too. For example:

- South West Regional Observatory's State of the South West
- The South West Regional Economic Strategy
- The South West Environmental Strategy

These secondary sources had combined census data with a wide range of other information to enhance its value and draw out messages for policy makers.

Resource allocation

11. Transparent resource allocation in central and local government relies on a needs-based formula. The definition of needs and the weight given to them is normally couched in terms of the available statistical information from official sources. It is important that the data that go into the formula are reliable, relevant, timely and available at a suitable level of geography. In many cases census, or census-derived, demographic data are preferred over other sources. One well known example of these resource allocation formulae is the Barnett Formula which allocates funds to the three devolved administrations based on the change in the budgets for each UK department, along with demographic information. The Barnett formula is one of many

⁶ *Developing the Regional Transport Strategy in the South West: Investment Priorities for the South West*, South West Regional Assembly, 2004
http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/RSS%20Documents/The_DRTS_-_Approved_Version_by_Exec_14-09-04_-_For_Website.pdf

The State of the South West, South West Regional Observatory, 2005
<http://www.swo.org.uk/observatory/home-1/introduction.shtml>

Regional Economic Strategy, South West of England Regional Development Agency, 2005
<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/res-review2005/draf-res/shtm>

Regional Environmental Strategy, South West Regional Assembly, 2005
http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/ngcontent.cfm?a_id=521&tt=swra

resource allocation processes within central and local government that make use of demographic data based on the Census. Others include the Local Government Finance Settlement which is concerned with the distribution of Formula Grant, comprising Revenue Support Grant, redistributed business rates and principal formula Police Grant. Around £26 billion will be distributed in Formula Grant in 2007-08. This excludes ring-fenced and specific formula grants, which, including the Dedicated Schools Grant, are expected to total around £40 billion in 2007-08.⁷

12. Case study 3 describes the use of census data in allocating funds in Wales.

Case study 3: Use of census data in Welsh local government finance settlement⁸

Allocation of resources to Local Government in Wales is agreed on an annual basis. One element of this funding, the revenue support grant (RSG), totals some £3 billion in 2007-08. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires that the National Assembly specifies the basis on which the RSG is distributed amongst the councils. The National Assembly produces an allocation formula based on a range of indicators and agrees the settlement with councils. The method allows a large number of factors to be taken into account while maintaining transparency and objectivity. About half of the indicators used to calculate the RSG for 2007-08 were either census data or were calculated or estimated using census data.

Local councils in Wales then have the option to use census data to set their own funding priorities internally. In 2005 Wrexham used the Census to identify a relatively high rate of long term illness compared to other areas of Wales and took this and census based population projections into account in their Community Meals on Wheels service strategy.

13. Population data are updated annually producing mid-year estimates based on the latest Census, estimates of migration and registration of births and deaths.
14. In addition to resource allocation, non-governmental organisations often make use of census data when bidding for grant funding although this type of use is more akin to benchmarking or targeting services.

⁷ *A guide to the Local Government Finance Settlement*, Department for Communities and Local Government, November 2006. <http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/finance/0708/simpguid.pdf>

⁸ Case study 3 references

Local Government Finance Report (No.1) 2007-2008, National Assembly for Wales.

A New Vision for Wrexham's Community Meals Service, Wrexham Council, 2005

http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/social_services/key_documents/communitymeals_strategy.pdf

Planning and targeting services

15. Census data have fine level geographic disaggregation which makes possible the option of mapping rates across the country to easily identify areas for targeting. A tool for this is the Neighbourhoods Statistics Service,⁹ launched in 2001, initially in response to the Neighbourhood Renewal Policy Action Team 18's recommendation for better information for small area statistics. It provides the information base for the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. The core of this information is the 2001 Census, plus other data held across the public sector.¹⁰

Case study 4: Planning and targeting Sure Start projects

Sure Start is the government programme to deliver the best start in life for every child. It brings together early education, childcare, health and family support. Sure Start was announced in the spending review of 1997 and is a major programme designed to combat social exclusion by working with families with pre-school children in England (devolved administrations are responsible for implementing their own strategies to combat social exclusion). A strong theme in social exclusion is area-based disadvantage and the need for community empowerment and joined-up services. The programme used the index of local deprivation based on census data published by the then Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) to identify the 250 areas to establish Sure Start projects.¹¹ Census data are also used to evaluate the success of the programme – the National Evaluation of Sure Start¹² has used Census 2001 in the first phase of its evaluation which runs from 2001 to 2008, to establish the numbers of young children in each area and their demographic characteristics. It has also used the Index of Multiple Deprivation, based on census data, to set evaluations into context.

Benchmarking

16. The Census is used in benchmarking – either by comparing individual areas or regions with the national picture or in creating clusters of similar areas to enable benchmarking with a selection of areas. For example, local authorities use census data in creating profiles of their own area set against the national picture. In their

⁹ <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

¹⁰ Neighbourhood Statistics Report to Ministers 2001-2003, ODPM, 2004
<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/downloads/NeSS-Report.pdf>

¹¹ *Report to Sure Start Unit, Sure Start Evaluation Development Project*, November 1999, www.surestart.gov.uk_doc/0-D9DADA.pdf and *Sure Start: the development of an early intervention programme for young children in the United Kingdom*, Norman Glass, 1999 (<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2006.00012.x>)

¹² The National Evaluation of Sure Start is undertaken by Birkbeck College: www.ness.bbk.ac.uk

reviews of local authorities, the Audit Commission presents contextual data in all their Comprehensive Performance Assessment reports, drawing on census data to describe the local area.¹³

17. In the mid 1990s, Ofsted in conjunction with the University of London, the Audit Commission and the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS), used 1991 Census data to create clusters of local education authorities according to their demographic characteristics. The purpose was to identify ten close statistical “neighbours” for each authority and so enable a comparison of services. The statistics chosen were those that had been shown to have some impact on children’s education achievement – from the Census these were employment, mobility, parental education, ethnicity, population density, population growth and location.¹⁴ In some cases, particularly in London, the geographical neighbours were not particularly close statistically; however, in 2007 this grouping is still in use with 1991 Census data, although it is now being revised to enable Children’s Services authorities, with their broader remit across education, social care and health, to make benchmark comparisons.
18. Because the Census collects a wide range of variables it presents a useful opportunity to make links not possible in other data sources. Case study 5 describes how data derived from the Census 2001 is used in evaluating pupil and school performance.

¹³ Audit Commission CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment) website:
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/index.asp>

¹⁴ The Teachernet website contains a summary of statistical neighbours – see part 5 Grouping of LEAs at
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/npf/guidance/>

Case study 5: Census data used in analysing pupil attainment

For many years, pupils' eligibility for free school meals has been used as a proxy deprivation measure. However, it was felt to be problematic because not all eligible pupils took up their free meals, and because there were other deprivation factors not measured by eligibility to free school meals. Previously, area based data could only be associated with the location of the school, not with the pupil. Now with pupil postcode data, more census data and derived data available at small area, it is possible to analyse pupil performance using geo-demographic classifications. Two types used by the Department for Children, Schools and Families are ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) and IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index).

ACORN is a classification based on census and other data. It describes people according to where they live on the basis that they will share similar characteristics. IDACI is a supplementary index to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and it measures the proportion of children under age 16 in areas living in low income households. It is provided at small area level by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

These derived census data can be matched to pupils' home postcodes. Although these data are not pupil specific, used alongside pupil characteristics data they provide further detail for analysis of pupil performance.¹⁵

19. The Census is also used to benchmark against other countries or to compile international datasets. For example, the European Commission compiles *The Urban Audit*¹⁶ for benchmarking the quality of life in European cities.

Performance indicators

20. Recent years have seen a big increase in the use of targets and performance indicators to set expectations and monitor performance against them. The Census is not regular enough to provide direct input into performance monitoring mechanisms; ten years is a long time to wait for an update in any arena, particularly a political one. It is however used to create the basis for performance indicators across government. Targets such as the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs' (Defra) public sector agreement (PSA) targets to:

¹⁵ *National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2005/06* (Provisional) – Tables 54-55, Statistical First Release 46/2006, DfES, December 2006 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000693/index.shtml>
see also *Indicators Of Deprivation For Use In School Funding: September Draft Of Note For Authorities*, DfES, Oct 2006
[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/10254/Technical%20Review%20of%20Deprivation%20Indicators%20\(Sept%2006\)%20Full%20draft.doc](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/10254/Technical%20Review%20of%20Deprivation%20Indicators%20(Sept%2006)%20Full%20draft.doc)

¹⁶ *The Urban Audit – Towards the Benchmarking of Quality of Life in 58 European Cities*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2000
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/urban2/urban/audit/index.html

a. reduce the gap in productivity between the least well performing quartile of rural areas and the English median by 2008, demonstrating progress by 2006; and

b. improve the accessibility of services for people in England's rural areas

are based on 1991 urban settlement boundaries and 1991 Census details.¹⁷

21. Performance indicators, where presented as rates, often use a population or a sub-population denominator derived from the Census. Many local authority best value performance indicators are based upon mid-year estimates which are derived from census data.¹⁸
22. Definitions of performance indicators often make use of the same classifications as the Census, and so enable comparison with the Census baseline. For example, ethnic group classifications used by every school in England were revised to be consistent with categories used in the 2001 Census. Local authorities are required to agree with the Department for Children, Families and Schools a range of targets for the performance of pupils including for pupils in each broad ethnic group.¹⁹ Similarly, case study 6 below describes using census ethnicity categories for monitoring service delivery.

Monitoring

23. In addition to monitoring performance against set objectives it is important for the public sector to keep track of a wide range of issues as society develops and changes. The Census provides a snapshot of a range of key characteristics of the population such as the age distribution and geographic distribution. The number and range of variables provided by the Census provide an excellent source for long term monitoring of changes in society. The level of detail available also makes it a useful tool for developing short term monitoring processes, comparing census results with results from other surveys or administrative data. For example, case study 6 describes using census ethnicity categories in monitoring and analysing trends in the police force.
24. The range of variables included in the Census has developed over the years reflecting the concerns and changes of each decade. For example, the 1951 Census included information about presence of basic amenities such as a kitchen sink to monitor slum clearance, questions about ethnicity have been included since 1991 to enable race equalities monitoring, and in the recent consultation on the 2011 Census several lobby groups argued for the inclusion of a question on sexual orientation to enable equality to be adequately monitored.

¹⁷ *PSA Targets – the Devil is in the Detail*, Report 29, Statistics Commission, March 2006, http://www.statscom.org.uk/C_467.aspx

¹⁸ Audit Commission best value performance indicators – see <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/>

¹⁹ *Guidance for Local Authorities on setting statutory education performance targets*, DCSF, September 2007 <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/>

Case study 6: Monitoring service delivery by ethnicity

The Association of Chief Police Officers' *Guide to Self-Defined Ethnicity and Descriptive Monitoring* describes how the Census is used in monitoring.

"The national Census in 1991 was the first to seek universal information about ethnicity. At that time the categories used were simply 'White' and a number of sub-groupings of 'Black' and 'Asian'. This census information has provided the benchmark for statistical analysis of ethnicity in relation to a host of different aspects of life.

In relation to the public services, self-defined ethnicity and descriptive monitoring provide indications of disproportionate experiences of minority ethnic groups. Such disproportionality is a useful signpost indicating the need for action to identify and, where appropriate, to rectify the causes."²⁰

In its guide to ethnic monitoring for public authorities, the Commission for Racial Equality recommended using census categories for ethnicity in further data collection exercises and says that census output data "will be an important source for benchmarking data".²¹

The availability of data on ethnicity for small areas increases opportunities for those delivering or lobbying for local services to benchmark against a ethnic distribution relevant to their area.

A basis for further statistical work

25. The Census forms the backbone of a number of demographic statistics sources such as mid-year population estimates and population projections. Because the data are available at low levels of geography it can be used in conjunction with a range of other sources in further research or to ascertain the reliability of more regular local surveys. An example of using derived census data combined with school data is describe in case study 5.

²⁰ *Guide to Self-Defined Ethnicity and Descriptive Monitoring*, Association of Chief Police Officers, 2001.
http://www.acpo.police.uk/asp/policies/Data/self_defined_ethnicity.doc

²¹ *Ethnic Monitoring – A Guide For Public Authorities*, Commission for Racial Equality, 2002.
http://www.cre.gov.uk/downloads/duty_ethmon.rtf

26. The Census also provides a basis for weighting the findings of other surveys. Even with careful sampling and field controls it is impossible to ensure that the results will be truly reflective of the population as a whole. A weighting process is required to improve the reliability of findings of statistical analysis of survey results when they are grossed up from the sample to the population as a whole. Examples of UK official surveys that weight responses using the Census or population estimates based on the Census include the General Household Survey, the Labour Force Survey, the Family Resources Survey, the Time Use Survey and the Contraception and Sexual Health Survey. Case study 7 below describes how census data was used to weight a survey in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
27. Another use of the Census in statistical work is its use as a resource for teaching and learning – either for teaching statistics or analytical methods, or in teaching about social and demographic characteristics. The Scottish website resource Census Learning Zone²² uses census data and contains datasheets of relevance to children and young people for teaching and learning.

Case study 7: Using the Census to improve the reliability of other survey statistics

A survey of drug prevalence in 2002/03 was carried out in Ireland and Northern Ireland using a stratified sampling method. Small areas were randomly selected using enumeration districts in Northern Ireland and District Electoral Divisions in Ireland. Within each household in the selected areas, the person who had most recently had a birthday was selected. This yielded a sample where younger people were under-represented and older people were over-represented than would be expected given their presence in the general population. The process of weighting is described in the methodology report:

“To adjust for this, the data from the sample were weighted so that the results would be more representative of the survey population. Weightings have to be chosen carefully as it is essential that the information derived from the survey and for the general population are robust. The sample in the current survey was thus weighted by gender; age group; and area (by County in Ireland and by Health and Social Services Board area in Northern Ireland). Data used for weighing were derived from the Censuses of Population in Ireland (2002) and Northern Ireland (2001).”²³

²² <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/schoolhm/index.html>

²³ *Drug Use in Ireland & Northern Ireland, First Results of the 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey, A Summary of the Methodology*, National Advisory Committee on Drugs in Ireland & Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit in Northern Ireland, 2003 http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/drug_use_methodology.pdf

Conclusion

28. This annex has considered uses of census data in relation to the management of public services. Despite some drawbacks, census data are still frequently used in preference, or in addition, to other less comprehensive sources of data. Whilst we cannot evaluate the benefit derived from use of census data in cash terms, there can be no doubt that the information is of great influence across the public service throughout the period between censuses. We think that the census offices should do all they can to research the use made of the data and take every opportunity to illustrate that use when explaining the value of the Census to Parliament, government and the public.

ANNEX 4



HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Professor David Rhind
Chairman
Statistics Commission
Artillery House
11 -19 Artillery Row
London
SW1P 1RT

13 March 2007

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Rhind'.

PREPARING FOR THE 2011 CENSUS – INTERIM REPORT

Thank you for your letter of 15 February drawing my attention to the report that the Statistics Commission has published and for the summary of interim conclusions. I welcome your helpful report and your views that preparations for the 2011 Census are further advanced than at an equivalent point ten years ago.

I will respond to the interim conclusions as follows:-

The White Paper on the Census, which is scheduled for publication in Autumn 2008, can include details of what a successful 2011 Census will look like. In advance of that I understand that ONS will be having discussions with a wide range of stakeholders on this.

ONS has noted the risks raised in the report and the National Statistician has already agreed to share the current analysis of risks and the associated strategies for mitigation with the Statistics Commission.

ONS fully recognises and shares the view that there needs to be wide recognition of the Census within government. The focus to date with a wide variety of stakeholders has been on consultation around the content of the Census. This is scheduled to broaden later in the year following the Census test.



other statistics offices is that high-profile and mass marketing is ignored if started more than 2- 3 months before Census day, although support from key stakeholders needs to be built up in the years leading up to the Census. ONS will look for ways in which support for the Census can be garnered, and will I know be happy to discuss with you any ideas you may have. Active engagement with local authorities has already started and will be trialled in the 2007 Census Test.

The consultation for the 2011 Census has been more extensive than on previous occasions. The initial view on content of the Census resulted in over 2,000 responses from 500 groups and individuals. Press coverage on consultation and the release of the Test questionnaire was significant. I am assured that ONS is keen to engage with all users – including small scale users, although this is not always easy. I am aware that there are more consultations planned and I have asked ONS to ensure that they engage with as wide a range of users as possible.

People with more than one usual residence found the 2001 Census definition difficult. For 2011 ONS are planning on a population base of 'usual residents plus visitors on Census night' and this will be tested as part of the 2007 Test.

ONS are actively engaging with the Treasury spending team and has set out its case for funding the 2011 in their Census Comprehensive Spending Review submission. I can assure you that I am actively engaged in ONS' Comprehensive Spending Review submissions and share your concern to adequately fund the Census, whilst balancing it with other spending priorities.

The Census funding bid includes bids for outputs and communication of results. I know that ONS too is giving high priority to its work on population estimates and is continuing to work with a range of departments on plans to improve migration estimates.

The ONS Executive is progressing well with a range of strategic developments to deliver change across a broad spectrum of activities, including relocation plans and does not consider that this will have a great impact on the Census. ONS has dedicated experienced senior management to lead the Census, who are based in Titchfield and not directly affected by relocation plans.



I agree that there is a risk that the Census could be used as a political football. Plans are being worked up to engage with Parliament in the run-up to the White Paper to minimise this risk. The support of the Statistics Commission in this endeavour will, of course be welcome.

I too expect the Census to be of key interest to the Statistics Board.

It has not so far proved possible to produce a single national address register. ONS is working with both Ordnance Survey and Local Authority address providers and has therefore developed proposals that do not rely on a single national address register.

I am copying this letter to recipients of yours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Healey', with a large flourish at the end.

JOHN HEALEY MP

A simple horizontal line drawn below the name.