

Press Release

8 July 2008

UK Statistics Authority launches consultation on a new Code of Practice

The UK Statistics Authority today launches its consultation on a new Code of Practice for Official Statistics alongside a draft Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment. The consultation phase will last for 12 weeks, ending on 30 September.

Speaking today, the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar, said:

“I am delighted to publish today the first report of the new UK Statistics Authority - a consultation document inviting views on the draft Code of Practice for Official Statistics, alongside a supporting statement of the principles and procedures that will guide our Assessment process.

“Official statistics are a vital resource for government and society. They influence many decisions in government, in the management of public services and in the private sector. These decisions affect all our lives. Official statistics provide the citizen with a window on the work and performance of government and in this way play a central role in the processes of democracy.

“The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gave the Authority the power to determine a Code of Practice and specific powers to assess the compliance of official statistics against that Code. The Code and the assessment of compliance will be among the most crucial tools in enabling the Authority to pursue our statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good – and thus rebuilding trust in statistics. The Code will also define common principles that we expect to be observed by all those different bodies that produce official statistics.

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“I believe the draft Code and the supporting statement of Assessment principles and procedures are well thought-out and coherent. However, we are keen to hear a wide range of views and specific suggestions for changes or additions to our proposals. Please let us know what you think.”

The consultation document, *Official statistics serving the public good*, containing the draft Code of Practice for Official Statistics and Statement of Principles and Procedures for Assessment, is available on the UK Statistics Authority website at: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/consultations/index.html>

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**For more information on the UK Statistics Authority
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Notes to Editors

1. The Statistics and Registration Service Act gained Royal Assent in 2007 out of which The UK Statistics Authority came into existence on 1 April 2008. Since its official launch the UK Statistics Authority, and not Government Ministers, are in charge of the nation's main economic and social statistics produced by ONS. The Authority is fully independent and reports directly to Parliament, not through Government Ministers or departments so as to be sure that these figures are not subject to political interference or manipulation. In addition, the Authority have oversight of all UK official statistics, with statutory powers and the obligation to promote, improve and safeguard official statistics across the UK.
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070018_en_1
2. The level of trust in official statistics is currently very low in Britain, recognised by Government through the introduction of the legislation, with all-party support in both Houses of Parliament, and support from the devolved Administrations, to establish the new Authority. A recent survey released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 17 March 2008 found that only one in five people think figures are compiled without political interference. The UK came 27th out of 27 in a recent survey within European countries of trust in their Governments' statistics.
3. Sir Michael Scholar KCB was appointed Chair of the new Authority in September 2007 in open competition, and with Parliamentary approval under the new procedure. He is President of St John's College, Oxford. He has been a governor of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research since 2001. Previously he was Permanent Secretary to the Department of Trade and Industry (1996 to 2001), Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Office (1993 to 1996) and Private Secretary to the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1981 to 1983).
4. The non-executive members of the authority were appointed in open competition and are:

Lord Rowe-Beddoe of Kilgetty (David Rowe-Beddoe), who will occupy the Deputy Chair post with responsibility for the governance of the Office for National Statistics.

Professor Adrian Smith FRS, who will occupy the Deputy Chair post with responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of all official statistics across the UK.

Professor David Rhind CBE, FRS, FBA who was Chairman of the Statistics Commission and was Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the City University in London until July 2007.

He is a non-executive director of the Bank of England's Court of Directors, and until 1998 was Director-General of the Ordnance Survey.

Partha Dasgupta who is currently Chief Executive of the Pension Protection Fund and a former Managing Director at Barclays Global Investors.

Sir Alan Langlands FRSE who is Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dundee. He was Chief Executive of the National Health Service in England 1994-2000.

Moira Gibb CBE who is Chief Executive Officer of Camden Borough Council.

Professor Steve Nickell CBE, FBA who is Warden of Nuffield College, Oxford. He was a member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee from June 2000 to May 2006.
5. The Authority also includes three executive members. These are: the National Statistician, Karen Dunnell; the Head of Assessment, Richard Alldritt; and the ONS Finance Director, Steve Newman.
6. The postal address for the UK Statistics Authority is, Statistics House, Tredegar Park, Newport, NP10 8XG.