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

Rt. Hon Jack Straw MP  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Selbourne House  
54 Victoria Street  
London SW1E 6QW

22 December 2008

Dear Mr Straw,

**PRESS COVERAGE OF THE LAND REGISTRY'S HOUSE PRICE INDEX**

I note that there have been recent press reports commenting on the incomplete coverage of the Land Registry's House Price Index. In particular, it has been suggested that the Index excludes repossessions and auctions because they do not reflect the full market value of the sale, although we understand that auction sales are included except for repossession properties sold at auction.

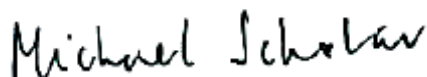
The Authority is concerned about whether the public and policy makers are getting all of the information that they need for decision making about the housing market, both in terms of prices and activity levels, in the most helpful form and at the right time. The Authority notes also that the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) publishes house price statistics each month, and that the Bank's Inflation Report contains information on house prices, based on an average of the figures produced by the Halifax Bank and the Nationwide Building Society.

I think the best way forward would be for officials from the Land Registry and the DCLG to meet, under the chairmanship of the National Statistician, to discuss how to ensure that government as a whole delivers a clear set of statistical information that meets the needs of users, with a view to reporting back to the Authority in March 2009.

The Authority has both obligations and powers to report on matters of public concern relating to official statistics. However, in this instance, we would propose to hold off on the preparation of a report on this topic until the proposed discussions have taken place.

Copies of this letter go to the Minister for Housing at DCLG (Margaret Beckett MP), the Chief Executive of the Land Registry (Peter Collis), and the National Statistician (Karen Dunnell).

Yours sincerely



**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**