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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE**

John Pullinger CB  
National Statistician  
UK Statistics Authority  
1 Drummond Gate  
LONDON  
SW1V 2QQ

14 November 2014

Dear John

**EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES FOR UK RESIDENTS' VISITS ABROAD AND OVERSEAS RESIDENTS' VISITS TO THE UK**

Thank you for your letter of 12 November informing me that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has suspended the publication of expenditure estimates for UK residents' visits abroad and overseas residents' visits to the UK contained in the ONS National Statistics release *Overseas Travel and Tourism*, published yesterday morning.

Under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, the Board of the UK Statistics Authority is responsible for deciding on the designation of statistics as National Statistics, on the advice of the Director General for Regulation. The Board would always wish to be notified of concerns about statistics by those producing them. We were therefore grateful that you brought to our attention errors in the expenditure estimates for UK residents' visits abroad and overseas residents' visits to the UK contained in the ONS statistical release *Overseas Travel and Tourism*; and the consequent errors in the ONS monthly *UK Trade Statistics* release.

The Authority has concluded that it should suspend the National Statistics designation of both the expenditure series within *Overseas Travel and Tourism*, and of *UK Trade Statistics*. In the case of the expenditure series within *Overseas Travel and Tourism*, we are content that this suspension is achieved by removing the relevant statistical series from the release, together with accompanying text explaining the removal of the designation. In the case of *UK Trade Statistics*, the National Statistics designation should be removed from the latest *UK Trade Statistics* release on both the website and any accompanying printed materials. For earlier monthly releases of *UK Trade Statistics* that have also been affected by this error, the versions on the website should be amended to make clear to users that the errors led the Authority to suspend the National Statistics designation on 14 November 2014.

I understand that ONS is undertaking a full review of the errors in the expenditure series, and of the impact on other statistics including *UK Trade Statistics*. Once the Authority has considered the results of these reviews, it will determine, on the basis of advice from the Director General for Regulation, what further action it will be necessary to take. In the case of *UK Trade Statistics*, the Director General for Regulation will consider the case for continuing the suspension of the designation until a full re-assessment of these statistics can be undertaken given this error and the

error in data supply that occurred earlier this year.<sup>1</sup> We also note that there was a breach of pre-release access to these statistics, which also occurred earlier in 2014.<sup>2</sup> In light of the importance of these statistics, the Authority will undertake a re-assessment as quickly as possible but we will need to make further detailed enquiries which may take a period of time to complete.

I look forward to receiving further reports in due course. I am copying this letter as yours.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Dilnot', written in a cursive style.

**Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-andrew-dilnot-to-glen-watson-18062014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/letter-from-sir-andrew-dilnot-to-sir-nicholas-macpherson---19062014.pdf>.