



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE
Chair, UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

1 October 2014

Dear Sir Andrew,

The Prime Minister's speech to the Conservative Party conference today contained a misleading reference to the Government's record on the national debt.

"We're making Britain proud again. Look what we are showing the world. Not just a country that is paying down its debts..."

<http://press.conservatives.com/post/98882674910/david-cameron-speech-to-conservative-party-conference>

As you will be aware, figures published last week by the Office for National Statistics show the national debt is not being paid down, but is actually rising. Since this government came to office, public sector net debt has risen from £997 billion (64 per cent of GDP) in the second quarter of 2010, to £1,432.3 billion in August 2014 (79.1 per cent of GDP).

The Office for Budget Responsibility has also forecast that public sector net debt will continue to rise and that the government will not meet its target for it to start falling by 2015-16.

You will recall that the Labour Party has written to you previously when the Prime Minister has made similar claims on the national debt. In January 2013, for example, Rachel Reeves MP, then the shadow Chief Secretary, made contact following a Conservative Party Political Broadcast and you confirmed the national debt had risen, rather than fallen, since 2010.

These repeated episodes suggest the Conservatives may be attempting to mislead the public about these statistics and the Government's record.

However the size of the national debt is an important element of current debate and I would be grateful if you would investigate the comments made by the Prime Minister today.

I intend to release this letter to the media given the considerable public interest in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Leslie

Chris Leslie MP

Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury