
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Siobhan Carey
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
14 Castle Street
Belfast
BT1 1SA

30 November 2016

Dear Siobhan

ASSESSMENT OF STATISTICS ON NORTHERN IRELAND TOURISM

Thank you for your request for an assessment of Northern Ireland Tourism statistics. In response to this request the Office for Statistics Regulation has completed its assessment of these statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

During the course of this Assessment your team has sought to make improvements in a number of areas as a result of our findings and I would like to commend this commitment to adding value and enhancing the quality of these statistics. The tourism industry contributes to the growth of the economy, employment, and investment in Northern Ireland. The statistics that you produce allow users and policy officials to better understand and monitor the industry and how it evolves over time.

I understand the challenges you face in relation to the limitations of some of your data sources. It is clear that your team has a sound understanding of the impact of these on the statistics and has investigated ways in which other data sources could be used to improve the statistics. I welcome this proactive approach and encourage you to continue to seek solutions which would enhance the quality of the statistics. In some cases improving data quality may be a longer term goal and until that point I would encourage you to ensure that users are made aware of the impact on the quality of the statistics.

We judge that National Statistics (NS) designation for the composite report and data tables *Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics* should be granted once you have demonstrated that you have enhanced the value, quality and trustworthiness of these statistics in the ways described in the Assessment Report. As previously agreed, you are due to report back to us by 31 March 2017 outlining how you have improved each of those three aspects to address the points raised in the report. I would also invite you to reflect on whether you feel that NS designation would also be appropriate for each of the satellite statistics separately and encourage your team to continue to engage with the regulatory team for guidance in this matter.

Reflecting the importance of NS designation and to provide users with confidence in the direction of travel, I encourage you to publish a plan of proposed actions to increase public value, quality and trustworthiness as a result of this Assessment.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with us at any time. I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, the National Statistician, and to Kevin Sweeney and Joanne Henderson in the Tourism Statistics Branch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Humpherson