
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Gordon Lindhurst MSP
Convener
Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee

15 September 2017

Dear Convener,

I write to offer evidence to your Committee's inquiry on Economic Data.

As you may be aware, the UK Statistics Authority is an independent body at arm's length from government, which reports directly to the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Established by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, the Authority is charged with "promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good."

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the Authority's executive arm, and the UK's National Statistical Institute. ONS produces statistics on a range of key measures, including economic change across countries and regions of the UK.

The Authority also oversees the Office for Statistics Regulation (the OSR). The OSR provides independent regulation of all statistics produced by the UK Government, Devolved Nations, and by related public bodies. It does so by assessing official statistics for compliance with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Those statistics that are judged to comply with the Code are designated as *National Statistics*, a sign that the data are trustworthy, and of high quality and public value.

I understand that Committee members were particularly interested in what assessments the OSR have made of Scottish economic data. The OSR have prepared a detailed report on the issues the Committee raised, which I attach to my letter.

As the report highlights, the evidence base on the Scottish economy has been growing in recent years, as the Scottish Government has developed a range of new official statistics. This is encouraging, as is the fact that the OSR have seen fit to designate so many of these series as *National Statistics*.

I am also encouraged by the continuing good cooperation between Scottish Government statisticians and those in Wales, Northern Ireland and at the UK level. This enables statisticians to agree common standards, share good practice and set the Scottish economy in context.

Of course, some gaps do remain, for instance, in our understanding of flows between Scotland and other countries of the UK, and in our understanding of how inflation might vary between Scotland and other nations of the UK.

In the coming years, harnessing the potential of alternative data sources (including administrative data), will provide statisticians with new opportunities to develop the evidence available to decision-makers, and close these gaps. The OSR report sets out in further

detail how the new *Digital Economy Act 2017* is expected to provide statisticians and researchers with greater access to data than ever before.

I hope the Committee members find this note helpful; we would of course be happy to provide further analysis as necessary.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Norgrove". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir David Norgrove