

# REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS



## 1. Core Information

<b>Title and link to statistical output</b>	<p><b>Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: Headline reports and technical reports 2016-2017 to 2017-2018.</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-headline-reports-and-technical-reports-2016-2017-to-2017-2018">https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-headline-reports-and-technical-reports-2016-2017-to-2017-2018</a></p>
<b>Name of producer organisation</b>	Natural England
<b>Name and contact details of person dealing with report</b>	<p>Claire Gray 07770704311 <a href="mailto:Claire.gray@naturalengland.org.uk">Claire.gray@naturalengland.org.uk</a></p>
<b>Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)</b>	N/A
<b>Date of breach report</b>	02/10/18

## 2. Circumstances of breach

<b>Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)</b>	Practice T3.3 - Access to statistics before their public release should be limited to those involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the release, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Accurate records of those who have access before they are finalised should be maintained.
<b>Date of occurrence of breach</b>	03/09/18
<p>On 10th September 2018 the results of the eighth and ninth years of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey were published on GOV.UK. This is a National Statistic produced by Natural England. Currently, this publication is not subject to Pre-release access (PRA).</p> <p>The statistician in Natural England, who prepared the statistical release was on extended leave during the final phase of publication. The responsibility for publishing the release was therefore passed to the MENE Project Manager and the MENE Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). The Project Manager and SRO had no previous experience of publishing a statistics release and the Code of Practice for Statistics.</p> <p>On 3rd September, the MENE Project Manager sent a draft press release, for sign-off, to two people in the DEFRA communications team. The documents included a draft version of the MENE report, which provided non-published headline figures, data and trends.</p> <p>The Project Manager and SRO were not aware that this information should not have been shared in this manner until they spoke to the Head of Profession on 5th September.</p> <p>This was a breach of practice T3.3, as access to statistics before their public release had not been "limited to those involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the release, and for quality assurance and operational purposes".</p>	

### 3. Impact of the breach

Two members of staff of an external organisation (DEFRA), who had not been involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the release, had access to the MENE report before publication.

The statistics were not distributed or discussed any further.

### 4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

The MENE SRO and Project Manager have received advice and guidance on applying the requirements of the Code from the Statistics Head of Profession Office. Further training will be provided as necessary.

In future, when publishing official statistics:

- The MENE SRO will act as Lead Official for Natural England, in the absence of the Lead Statistician, to ensure the requirements of the Code of Practice for Statistics and rules on pre-release access to official statistics are enforced.
- Press releases sent for sign off will not include any reference to statistical results or trends.
- There will be no sharing of results or trends prior to publication of statistical releases to anyone outside the teams involved in production, quality assurance or publication of a statistical release, except to eligible persons granted PRA.