

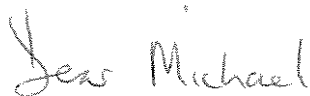
Statistics Commission

Artillery House, 11-19 Artillery Row
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From the Chairman, Professor David Rhind, CBE FRS FBA

Sir Michael Scholar KCB
Chair, Statistics Board
c/o Office for National Statistics
D4/05
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2 October 2007



STATISTICS COMMISSION REPORT – PROPOSALS FOR A CODE OF PRACTICE

The Statistics Commission is today publishing a report *Proposals for a Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Work on this report was initiated early in 2006 following discussion, at the House of Commons Treasury Sub-Committee and elsewhere, about the Commission's experience in commenting on compliance with the existing National Statistics Code of Practice. We noted at the time that the NS Code was not well suited to a process of independent assessment and it was suggested that we should therefore make proposals to develop it.

At the end of 2006 we issued an interim report for consultation over a three month period and received a number of substantive and valuable responses including from leading international experts, the Bank of England, the Royal Statistical Society and other important UK institutions. The current report includes in Part 3 a full discussion of the observations and issues that were raised in that consultation. These proved influential in shaping our final proposals.

As this work progressed, it became evident that the Statistics and Registration Service Act was going to require the Statistics Board to 'prepare, adopt and publish a Code of Practice for statistics'. And that the Board would be expected to consult on its own draft of a Code. However, faced with the situation in which the Statistics Commission would not itself be in existence to discuss these matters with the new Statistics Board, we decided that the best course of action would be to carry on with publication of our own proposals. We hope that this will now prove beneficial in relation to the Board's deliberations.

The report explains our thinking in more detail but I would draw attention to two points. The first is that our proposals were very largely derived by distilling the essence of the existing National Statistics Code of Practice and that they are thus an evolution of that Code, not a rejection of it. We did however take the opportunity to align it more closely to the European Statistics Code of Practice – which has been welcomed by Eurostat.

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*The Statistics Commission is independent of Ministers and of the producers of official statistics.
It operates openly and transparently.*

The second is that, with a few welcome exceptions, neither Ministers, officials nor statisticians in Whitehall departments or the devolved administrations felt able to contribute to the consultation on our interim report. We regret that but understand the reasons for it. The Statistics Board may wish to bear in mind that our proposals have not as yet been the subject of effective consultation with these important constituencies – though we believe it has been subject to serious scrutiny by other constituencies.

This letter will be widely circulated with copies of our report. We are not seeking responses from copy recipients but any that we do receive will be passed on to the Statistics Board.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David".