

PRESS RELEASE

Statistics Commission

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MINISTERS HAVE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD TRUST

The Statistics Commission today publishes its response to the Treasury paper *Independence for Statistics: A Consultation Document*. Commission chairman Professor David Rhind commented that

“The Government needs to take steps to give people confidence that official figures are being produced and managed in the public interest. Trust in statistics affects everyone because so many decisions on policy and public services are influenced by them. The proposed Statistics Board could be made to work - but only if it is given a bigger role and wider authority than currently proposed. The role of the National Statistician also needs to be reinforced. The current proposals should be strengthened considerably”.

The main points in the Commission’s response:

- plans to make the Office for National Statistics accountable to an independent board can be only part of the solution; all the statistical work elsewhere in government must be subject to scrutiny by the same board
- the National Statistician’s central role should be underwritten in legislation
- there must be a statutory Code of Practice, binding on all government bodies that produce statistics and against which their actions will be audited. The current non-statutory Code is unclear and must be replaced.

The chairman concluded: “The new arrangements will properly be judged by whether they have a beneficial impact on public perceptions and the quality of the statistical service, not by whether government departments welcome them.”

/...ENDS.../

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The Statistics Commission is independent both of Ministers and of the producers of National Statistics. It operates openly and transparently, making its correspondence open to public scrutiny.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Statistics Commission was set up in June 2000 to advise on the quality, quality assurance and priority setting for official statistics, and on the procedures designed to deliver statistical integrity, to help ensure official statistics are trustworthy and responsive to public needs. It is independent both of Ministers and of the producers of official statistics. More information about the Commission's role and work is on its website www.statscom.org.uk.
2. The Commission's response to *Independence for Statistics: A Consultation Document* can be found on the Commission's website at: http://www.statscom.org.uk/correspondence_1-06-2.asp. The original Treasury consultation document is at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/budget/budget_06/other_documents/bud_bud06_odstatistics.cfm.
3. The Commission report *Legislation to Build Trust in Statistics* published in 2004 is on the Commission's website at: http://www.statscom.org.uk/media_pdfs/reports/LegislationToBuildTrust.pdf
4. The Statistics Commission, in conjunction with the Royal Statistical Society and the Financial Times organise a major conference *Future Governance of Official Statistics* at Cass Business School on 17 May to consider the Treasury proposals for statistics legislation. Speakers included the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Baroness Onora O'Neill and Lord Claus Moser. A report of the seminar is on the Commission's website at: http://www.statscom.org.uk/media_html/reports/17May%20Legislation%20seminar/17May%20Legislation%20seminar.asp
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