



Public Administration Select Committee

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Rt. Hon. John Healey MP
Minister of State for Housing
Department for Communities and Local Government
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The Public Administration Committee is the Commons select committee responsible for oversight of official statistics. We held an evidence session last month with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the 2011 Census. It emerged in the session that there is no single authoritative source of national address information. As a result, the ONS will only be able to create a sufficiently accurate address register for the Census by buying address information from other public sector bodies at a substantial cost to the public purse (around £12 million), and spending further sums cross-checking and updating the information. Once the Census is completed, this updated, comprehensive address register will not be available as a public resource, nor will it be maintained. This seems to us to be a scandalous waste of public money caused by the way in which different public sector organisations have been set up to see each other as competitors, rather than to cooperate for the common good.

I am therefore writing on behalf of the Committee to support Sir Michael Scholar's call for a single definitive regularly updated national address register.

It is certain that such a register will cost money. It is equally certain that not having such a register is already costing money, and will continue to do so in future years. There would be clear benefits in having a register. This is why, as Sir Michael says, a business case needs to be developed, not only to set the costs and benefits of an address register alongside one another, but also to capture the costs (and benefits, if any) of doing nothing.

I am copying this letter to Sir Michael, as well as to all those copied in to his letter of 8 July.

Dr Tony Wright MP
Chair of the Committee