



# CabinetOffice

**The Rt Hon Francis Maude MP**  
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Sir Michael Scholar KCB  
Chair  
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Statistics House  
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19 July 2010

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 28 June 2010 and our subsequent meeting on July 7.

I completely agree that official statistics need to be produced independently of Government and fully support the work of the Authority in promoting and upholding this important agenda.

I recognise that there is a wide audience for the ONS publication on public sector employment statistics. I note your suggestion for Cabinet Office and ONS officials should work together to extend the coverage of this publication. However I am doubtful whether we could justify asking ONS to undertake this work at a time of acute financial stringency. I think it must be for ONS to decide on the scope and granularity of statistical series; and those decisions on this area should reflect the wider public interest, not the management demands of government itself.

In the work I lead on efficiency and productivity I would not feel that significant input from ONS would add much to the value of the management information that I want to have available. Well run organisations expect to have regular access to, and control of, routine management information such as headcount in order to run efficiently. The collection of this sort of operational data should not in my view be treated as a statistical exercise. The involvement of ONS can only create the impression that these data are being collected as some sort of statistical exercise rather than as the management routine that it should be. I think it would be completely wrong and damaging for central government organisations to feel that these data are being collected for statistical purposes. Ministers must be able to decide at short notice to publish such information, obviously surrounded by caveats that make clear that the information may be incomplete or inaccurate. Indeed



one reason for releasing the headcount data as we did in June was to make the point rather starkly that government before then simply didn't have the data at all. To hold up publication as Jill Matheson wanted me to do while the data were subjected to full quality assurance would have prevented us from delivering the shock treatment that ministers judged was needed.

I am therefore grateful that you agreed at our meeting to review with your board the guidance issued by the National Statistician on the *Use of Management or Administrative Information* to ensure it does not hinder Government from making available to the public the internal management information it holds, as quickly as possible, to promote transparency. I look forward to hearing your conclusions.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Francis Maude". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'F' and a long, horizontal tail.

**FRANCIS MAUDE**