

T: 0845 774 1741
E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Sir Michael Scholar
UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Tredegar Park
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8XG

15 July 2010

Dear Sir Michael,

I am writing to advise you that the Scottish Government has now concluded its review of the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008.

In summary, the review has shown that the principles set out in the Order have been working extremely well in practice, successfully enabling professional statisticians to ensure Ministers and other delivery partners are able to properly understand the figures and to comment on an informed basis upon publication. The setting out of the purpose of pre-release access in the Order has helped to ensure the correct people receive access. The review proposes no changes to current procedures and this has been endorsed by the Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee.

The review aims to respond to the proposals made in your own review of pre-release access across the UK Administrations, published on 18 March 2010. In particular, it highlights that the proposal to reduce access to 3 hours before publication would lose the benefits of the Scottish regime as it would not allow sufficient time to properly brief ministers.

The possible impact on public trust is one of the arguments the Authority puts against 5 day pre-release access. However, it remains the case that pre-release access has not resulted in any issues regarding public trust in official statistics in Scotland. There have been no breaches of the pre-release Order affecting public trust since implementation. There have been a small number of minor breaches however these were genuine mistakes which have not resulted in public leaks of information.

Our review also notes the disappointment of the Scottish Government at the unfounded and unevdenced assertions the Authority makes regarding the integrity of professional Government Statisticians.

The review report is available on the Scottish Government website at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/PRAreview2010/Q/EditMode/on>

Yours sincerely



JIM MATHER