
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Nick Hurd MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

27 October 2009

Dear Mr Hurd

2011 CENSUS

I was concerned to read the comments attributed to you in the press about the Census proposals, particularly the ill-founded suggestion that they are a licence to snoop into people's private lives.

We need the Census to know as best we can the size and distribution of the population, to provide a basis for the allocation of very large sums of public money to local government, the NHS and elsewhere, to help companies with their business plans, and to help us all understand how our society and economy are changing.

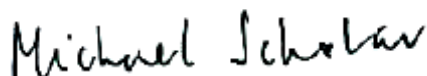
The question about the number of bedrooms is to help local councils establish whether and where accommodation in their areas is overcrowded. The question about overnight visitors is needed to achieve more accurate estimates of the whole population, by ensuring that people away from home are included in the Census.

The Census questions have been designed and tested by the Office for National Statistics after extensive consultation, and approved for submission to Parliament by the Board of the UK Statistics Authority. It is quite wrong to give the impression that they are initiatives of government Ministers.

The personal information that people provide on a Census questionnaire is wholly confidential and is protected by law. Personal census data is kept confidential for 100 years.

I am copying this letter to Francis Maude MP, to Angela E Smith MP at the Cabinet Office, to Dr. Tony Wright MP, Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee, and to the National Statistician, Jil Matheson.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Scholar KCB