
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB

Tim Yeo MP
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London
SW1P 3JA

19 October 2009

Dear Mr Yeo

REPORTING OF UK EMISSIONS UNDER EU TRADING SCHEME

Thank you for copying to me your letters to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change dated 25 March and 24 June 2009. These relate to the reporting of statistics on UK emissions under the EU Emission Trading Scheme. I have also seen a copy of Mr Miliband's reply of 20 May to the first letter.

I will confine my comments to a specific matter that relates to the substance of your second letter. This is the presentation of the statistical information in the statistical News Release *UK Climate Change Sustainable Development Indicator: 2007 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures* which was issued by the Department of Energy and Climate Change on 3 February 2009 (a copy is enclosed for ease of reference).

I have asked the Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment to review the presentation of those statistics against the standards expected under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The statistics in question are not, as yet, included in the scope of National Statistics, but the News Release itself is marked as National Statistics and, as such, compliance with the Code is a statutory requirement under the Statistics and Registration Service Act.

Our conclusion is that while we understand that the presentation of statistics in this Statistical Release meets international rules and agreements, it does in some respects fall short of the standards of the Code of Practice. In particular the figure labelled as "CO₂ only, with allowance for trading, 2007 Emissions" in Table 2, shown as 516.9 million tonnes, and as a 12.8% reduction on base year emissions, requires very careful explanation if it is not to mislead the non-expert reader. The same is true of the equivalent figure for 'all greenhouse gases' in the same table.

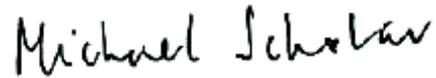
While we understand the case for including these figures in the Release, the Code of Practice requires the Release to "provide information on the quality and reliability of statistics in relation to the range of potential uses.." In this case the figures mentioned are, in our view, likely to be used by non-expert observers to judge progress in reducing CO₂ Emissions within the UK. For reasons including those set out in your correspondence with the

Secretary of State we regard the quoted figures (and particularly the percentage change) as unsatisfactory in the context of that use.

We hope that in future Releases in this series the statistics will be accompanied by enough clear explanation to guide the reader to a secure interpretation. On that basis, we would not suggest that the figures should be withdrawn, but rather that their presentation be improved in the way I have indicated.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, and to the National Statistician, Jil Matheson.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Scholar". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Sir Michael Scholar KCB