

Professor David Hand
President
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24 September 2008

Dear David

PRESS BRIEFING HOSTED BY THE UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY: 21 AUGUST 2008

Thank you for your letter dated 28 August regarding a press briefing hosted by the UK Statistics Authority on 21 August to release the latest population and migration statistics published by the Office for National Statistics, Home Office, and Department for Work and Pensions.

We discussed the matter briefly when we met at the Society's annual conference in Nottingham on 4 September. Since then I have spoken with Sir David Normington, Permanent Secretary at the Home Office. During that conversation I conveyed my own disappointment at what occurred.

I understand that Sir David has now responded to you, in a letter dated 15 September, in which he noted his regret for what transpired, and that he has apologised directly to Karen Dunnell, the National Statistician.

I welcome the reassurances that Sir David provided in that letter that the Home Office recognises the independent release of statistics separate from ministerial or policy comment is a key component in building trust in official statistics.

Thank you also for your helpful comments with regard to how you feel that the presentation of the statistical press releases could be improved. We recognise that if the Authority is to be successful it must make official statistics more readily accessible and comprehensible for both the media and, perhaps more importantly, the general public and I have asked Karen Dunnell to consider your comments and suggestions for the future.

I greatly valued being able to attend Society's annual conference earlier this month, giving me another valuable opportunity to speak direct with professional statisticians and users of statistics, in particular about how they see the work of the Authority developing and what our priorities must be for the future. Thank you once again for inviting me.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Scholar KCB
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority