

Rt Hon John Healey MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Andrew Dilnot  
Chair, UK Statistics Authority  
Drummond Gate  
Pimlico  
London SW1V 2QQ

21<sup>st</sup> January 2015

Dear Andrew

The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently released a consultation on the future of the English Housing Survey. You can see it online here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/397096/Consultation\\_on\\_the\\_future\\_shape\\_of\\_the\\_English\\_Housing\\_Survey.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397096/Consultation_on_the_future_shape_of_the_English_Housing_Survey.pdf).

Among the options the Department suggests it is considering is a 'pause' in the survey, and/or a move to running the survey every two years rather than on an annual basis.

This would be a huge mistake – making government decisions about housing less evidence-based, and government less accountable.

As well as leading to poorer policy decisions about housing, such a move would also have a knock-on effect on other policy areas. For example an annual report on fuel poverty released by the Department for Energy and Climate Change would no longer be possible.

Given the lag between the survey taking place and results being published, a move to a biennial survey could mean a gap of three to four years between survey and publication. This could in effect mean that a new government announcing a policy on the first day of a five year Parliament would not see the results of that policy feed through in the statistics until the end of the Parliament.

You may remember that when I introduced the legislation to set up the statutory independence of the UKSA and the national statistics regime as treasury minister, I stressed the reforms aimed to improve the integrity and quality of official statistics available in the UK.

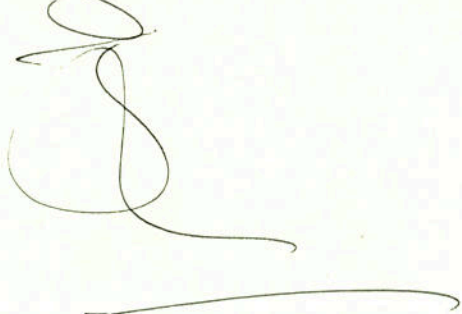
I am glad to see that as part of your strategic objectives for the UKSA released in 2013 you said you wanted the agency to be "aware of concerns about the adequacy of the statistical sources that support decision-making and support the public accountability of those who take the decisions." This is exactly such a concern, so I would be grateful if by way of reply you could tell me whether you

think that these proposed changes are appropriate given the importance of the English Housing Survey, and what view the UKSA has given or will give to the Department on this plan.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With all good wishes.

John Healey MP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Healey', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.