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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Andrew Dilnot CBE**

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Dear Will

**HANDLING OF AD-HOC REQUESTS FOR STATISTICS**

Thank you your letter of 2 April and for your good wishes. I am sorry for the delay in responding as I was away over the recent Easter holiday. I would be delighted to have a meeting with you as soon as that can be arranged. My office will be in touch about that separately.

On the specific concern you raise in your letter, the Statistics Authority supports the Government's Open Data initiative and wants to see all statistical material (that is not disclosive of confidential information) readily available in the public domain.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) practice in handling ad-hoc requests for unpublished analyses was the subject of recent discussion by the Board of the Authority. The Board has instructed ONS to ensure that responses to ad-hoc requests from the media and other bodies engaged in public debate should be made available on the ONS website at the time the data and analysis is released.<sup>1</sup> The National Statistician is also preparing related guidance for the wider Government Statistical Service.

The Board has been told by ONS that such requests from media organisations form only a small part of the estimated total of 13,000 ad-hoc requests received by ONS each year. Publishing responses to ad-hoc requests from the media is a priority, but the Board has asked ONS to consider how *all* responses to ad-hoc requests can best be made available in a cost-effective and accessible way for the benefit of all users. ONS has undertaken to maintain a published list of all analyses provided on an ad-hoc basis and to make those freely available on request.

I am copying this letter to the Information Commissioner and to Jil Matheson, the National Statistician.

Yours sincerely



**Andrew Dilnot CBE**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/what-we-do/publication-scheme/ad-hoc-analysis/published-ad-hoc-data/april-2012/index.html>