
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Siobhan Carey
Chief Executive and Registrar General
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
[by email]

23 November 2017

Dear Siobhan

ASSESSMENT OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSE PRICE INDEX

Thank you for inviting us to assess the Northern Ireland House Price Index (NI HPI) produced by Land and Property Services Northern Ireland (LPS) against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. We have completed the assessment and have today published our [Assessment Report](#). I am grateful for the positive contribution of your staff on behalf of the working group for engaging with us throughout this assessment process.

House price statistics are key economic indicators and provide important insights into the wider economy and society by helping users to understand trends national and local housing markets. The NI HPI quarterly report presents valuable insights about house prices in Northern Ireland and it is clear that LPS statisticians have worked to support users' understanding of house price trends within the wider economic context in Northern Ireland.

I very much appreciate the valuable and collaborative contribution LPS statisticians have made to the development of the UK House Price Index, the production of which represents a significant achievement. I encourage LPS statisticians to draw on any relevant insights obtained during UK HPI's development to further enhance the public value of NI HPI, for example, by enhancing information about the coherence of NI HPI with other house price statistics.

I understand that LPS statisticians are continuing to work to assure themselves of the quality of the HM Revenue and Custom's (HMRC) stamp duty land tax data, which is used in production of both NI HPI and UK HPI. I hope that HMRC will very soon be able to provide the information necessary for LPS statisticians to feel assured. Please let me know should they have any further difficulty obtaining this.

Our assessment highlights that some of the information presented in historic NI HPI reports is not publicly accessible. I therefore welcome the statisticians' plans to make the historical reports, including previous revisions to the index available for users.

Finally, I commend the decision to end pre-release access to the NI HPI from July this year. I believe that this will make a significant contribution towards increasing public confidence in the official figures produced by government.

Reflecting the importance of National Statistics designation and to provide users with confidence in the direction of travel, I encourage you to publish a plan of proposed actions to increase the trustworthiness, quality and public value of these statistics as a result of this assessment.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with us at any time.

I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, the National Statistician and Alan Brontë, Stephanie Harcourt and Ciara Cunningham at Land Property Services Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation