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**Director General for Regulation**

Pedro Wrobel  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Valuation Office Agency  
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London  
W1D 5BU

07 March 2018

Dear Pedro

**BREACHES OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

Thank you for alerting me to breaches of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics<sup>1</sup> in respect to *Non-domestic rating: stock of properties and update of 2017 revaluation statistics* from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The early discussions with both you and Sean Whellams have helped to clarify the circumstances of the breaches and we welcome your efforts to address the issues.

The breach report has been received and published on the Statistics Authority's website. As outlined in the report, the breaches relate to the VOA publication on 5 October 2017, which was then revised on 18 January 2018 after an identification of an error in the underlying data.

While your officials made sure that - as a key user - the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government officials were aware of the error in the published data at the earliest opportunity and worked at pace to correct it, we agree that these were breaches. The specific breaches of the Code of Practice for Statistics were that the VOA statisticians did not draw it to the wider public's attention promptly, pre-announce when revised Official Statistics would be published nor provide a full and comprehensive explanation of the correction.

In addition despite extensive quality control steps for each official statistics release, these failed to identify there was an error in the data set used for the publications thus breaching the principles of the Code relating to quality.

I am encouraged by the steps that you are taking to ensure that such breaches do not occur in the future. It is apparent that the high standards of the Code of Practice have guided you in reviewing what went wrong and what is required going forward to prevent recurrence. I see the request to the UK Statistics Authority's Good Practice Team to offer assistance as a very positive step as I think their advice will be very helpful in developing the necessary remedial measures. You may also like to highlight our Quality Assurance of Administrative Data report<sup>2</sup> to your colleagues in VOA to support further improvements to their quality assurance approach.

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<sup>1</sup> The Code of Practice for Official Statistics was extant at the time of the breaches but has since been superseded by the Code of Practice for Statistics Edition 2.0

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/osr/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics/>

We look forward to meeting with you and your colleagues to discuss the steps you are taking to avoid similar issues in future.

I am copying this letter to Sean Whellams.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation