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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Martin Allen  
(by email)

17 January 2019

Dear Mr Allen

We have been passed details of your concerns about Defra statistics on the extent of lowland meadow habitat, particularly the figure presented in the [England Biodiversity Indicators](#) publication. Thank you for raising these issues.

There are different estimates available of the extent of lowland meadow habitat. We understand that Defra and Natural England are separately looking into this aspect of your query and will read their response with interest. If necessary, we will follow this up with their statistics teams; for instance, if we have concerns about the quality of the estimates. We expect Defra and Natural England to be clear about the estimate they use and that it is used consistently.

The England Biodiversity Indicators bulletin was assessed against the Code of Practice for Statistics and [designated as National Statistics in 2013](#). As this is a compendium publication, which combines statistics from a range of sources, the assessment focused on the processes involved in preparing the publication; for example, whether Defra identified and met user needs in terms of the content of the publication and whether the commentary is appropriate. The assessment did not include a full review of the trustworthiness, quality and value of each statistical series included in the publication.

The National Statistics designation for a compendium does not mean that all individual statistics presented in that bulletin are National Statistics. In this case, the last page of the bulletin explains which statistics have been designated as National Statistics. It notes that all other statistics included in the publication, including the extent of lowland meadow habitat estimate, are official statistics. These have not been designated as National Statistics, but as official statistics they have been produced in line with the Code of Practice.

It would be helpful if Defra highlighted more clearly what the National Statistics designation means in the context of this publication and more prominently identified which indicators are National Statistics and which are official statistics. We have spoken to Defra's Head of Profession for Statistics who has confirmed Defra will review how the information is presented for future publications and on the associated webpage.

We will review the actions of Defra and Natural England to ensure they support users in their interpretation of these statistics and take further action if necessary.

I am copying this letter to Ken Roy, Head of Profession for Statistics at Defra.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation