

Ed Humpherson
Director-General for Regulation
Office for Statistics Regulation
Drummond Gate
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Sent via E-mail

9 April 2020

OSR Review of the Public Value of Devolved Public Finance statistics

Dear Ed

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the constructive review that the OSR recently completed regarding the “Public Value of Devolved Public Finance statistics”. I apologise that a range of other competing priorities have prevented me from responding until now.

As you may be aware, the level of interest in Northern Ireland public finances has grown quite considerably over the course of the past year. In addition, the return of the NI Executive along with its associated spending priorities (including those arising from the global coronavirus pandemic) will no doubt heighten interest in, and scrutiny of, public finances and, in particular, the discharge of the NI Executive’s budget.

While the precise remit, objectives and workings of the new independent Fiscal Council committed through the ‘New Decade New Approach’ agreement have still to be formulated, it will provide a fresh and renewed impetus for such scrutiny and the delivery of greater insights and compelling narratives from the data as the review recommends.

The work that we do in the peer review process of the Country and Region Public Sector Finance Statistics publication is undertaken in conjunction with economist colleagues in the Department of Finance. With their support, I am happy to work collaboratively with the ONS and the other Devolved Administrations to develop more

engaging messages and better ways of presenting these data. Clearly it will be important that these are commensurate with the needs of users in Northern Ireland and further afield.

I also support the need for better quality country and region public sector investment statistics including estimates for the value of assets and liabilities, which will be beneficial in our supply & use tables work in terms of ensuring more robust data on the investment side. It would also be useful to have better information on capital formation statistics. Again, I am more than content to work with colleagues across the Devolved Administrations and at the ONS in developing these statistics over the medium term.

In closing, I very much welcome the findings from your review and am committed to working collaboratively with the various stakeholders within the Department of Finance, the NI Executive, at the ONS and in the other Devolved Administrations, to address the recommendations that have been made.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

SIOBHAN CAREY, CBE

Registrar General for Northern Ireland & Chief Executive NISRA

CC

Tony Simpson, Head of Strategic Policy Division DoF

Brian Green, NISRA Director of Sources

Gerard Colgan, NISRA Economic and Labour Market Statistics