

Ed Humpherson
Director-General for Regulation
Office for Statistics Regulation
Drummond Gate
London

Sent via E-mail

29 September 2020

NORTHERN IRELAND TOURISM STATISTICS

Dear Ed

This note follows on from our correspondence in April regarding the temporary suspension of the Northern Ireland Tourism Statistics. As you may recall, the suspension was due to the unavailability of the Central Statistics Office's (CSO's) Household Travel Survey data which provides an estimate of overnight trips to NI by visitors from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). As agreed at that time, we published official statistics on overnight trips to NI (excluding RoI visitors) for quarters 2 and 3 2019 in June 2020 and are now working towards the publication of the 2019 Northern Ireland Annual Tourism National Statistics during October 2020 – the latter will include overnight visits to NI by RoI residents.

By way of background, CSO has advised that they will be publishing their 2019 annual statistics on 30th September including overnight visits to NI by RoI residents. We have spoken to CSO and are reassured that the quality of the statistics are comparable to the historic series. We had already discussed and agreed with our key users that we would defer publishing our annual statistics until the CSO data were available as this would avoid publishing two sets of data which could potentially cause confusion. Our key users were content with this approach.

The publication was suspended following the publication of quarter 1 2019 tourism statistics and the production of the October release will allow us to complete the time series. All quarterly statistics will be contained within this release.

As anticipated, COVID-19 has caused disruption to the collection of tourism statistics in Northern Ireland. We propose that we publish data for Quarter 1 2020 up to the date that face to face data collection stopped (17th March 2020). We suggest that this should not have National Statistics status. We will continue to publish passenger flow at airports (Official Statistics) and occupancy in hotels (National Statistics) and other accommodation establishments (Official Statistics) for the period they are open. We are continuing to explore other data sources that can give our users an indication of tourism in Northern Ireland during 2020.

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