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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation**

Iain Bell

Deputy National Statistician and Director General, Population and Public Policy

Office for National Statistics

(By email)

1 October 2020

Dear Iain

**Compliance check of ONS Overseas Travel and Tourism statistics**

I am writing about the [compliance check](#) of ONS Overseas Travel and Tourism statistics which we carried out last year. Our review focused on two issues: the sample size of the survey used to calculate the statistics and how the tourism team engaged with users. We set out several requirements that ONS was to meet by July 2020 to ensure compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). These included improvements to user engagement and publishing better information about quality and methods.

I would like to commend the hard work your team has carried out since our review. Taking into account [the impact of COVID-19 on the International Passenger Survey](#), which provides the data for these statistics, we consider that ONS has demonstrated great progress in meeting our requirements. Developing new ways to engage with users has resulted in ONS reaching and understanding a broader group of users – for example hosting user events and seminars, carrying out an online survey and distributing a regular newsletter. Implementing an [improved methodology](#) to deal with the known underestimates for visitors from some countries means that users have more accurate information. Users are also now better supported in understanding the statistics and their limitations thanks to your published [guidance on interpreting confidence intervals](#). I welcome your commitment to ensure the longevity and sustainability of these improvements.

I would also like to welcome your review of tourism statistics which you plan to carry out over the next six months and support your plans to explore additional sources to further enhance the scope and value of these statistics. I encourage you to ensure that the approach to, and findings of, the review are open and transparent to users. Given that COVID-19 led to suspension of International Passenger Survey operations in mid-March, I welcome your team's efforts to publish tourism statistics for the affected period. This

approach meets user needs as far as possible, while acknowledging the impact on quality through temporary suspension of National Statistics status.

We appreciate the openness and enthusiasm with which your team has engaged with us over the last year and look forward to receiving further updates on the outcome of your review.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation