
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Lyndsey Melbourne
Head of Information & Analysis / Head of Profession for Statistics
Office of Rail and Road
(By email)

1 December 2020

Dear Lyndsey

Confirmation of National Statistics designation for estimates of station usage

We have reviewed the actions that your team has taken to address the requirements in [Assessment Report number 352: Estimates of Station Usage](#). I would like to commend you and your team's engagement with us during the assessment, demonstrating your commitment to improving the statistics for the public good.

On behalf of the Board of the UK Statistics Authority, I am pleased to confirm the designation of National Statistics for estimates of station usage, produced by the Office of Rail and Road. These statistics provide a valuable, trusted source of information about the use of the rail network across Great Britain to a varied user base.

During the assessment you and your team showed great commitment and enthusiasm to the improvement of these statistics. We were particularly impressed by the initiative you showed in reaching out to users during the assessment process. We anticipate that the additional contextual and quality information provided alongside the statistics will greatly enhance understanding and insights for users. More detail about our judgment is included in the annex to this letter.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value and is something to be celebrated. We welcome the statement you have published today in the latest statistical release, reflecting National Statistics status. We also welcome your ongoing work to improve the statistics and look forward to seeing these developments, such as enhancing your use of Google Analytics to understand how people use and interact with the statistics.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation

Review of actions taken in response to Assessment Report number 352: Estimates of Station Usage, produced by Office of Rail and Road (ORR)

	Requirement	Actions taken by ORR to meet the Requirement	OSR's evaluation of the evidence
<p>Quality</p>	<p>To ensure that all users are aware of data quality issues and how they impact the way the statistics should be used and interpreted, ORR should improve its published quality information.</p>	<p>The team has developed a new statistical release to replace the previous factsheet. This includes an introductory section explaining why the statistics are estimates, what limitations users should be aware of and how these impact use of the statistics, and what methodology changes have been implemented in the latest release. An annex provides further detail on these issues as well as guidance on how the statistics can and cannot be used.</p> <p>The team has developed a quality and methodology report to supplement the existing methodology report produced by Steer, a business consultancy contracted by ORR to produce the estimates. The report includes information on the quality assurance process carried out by ORR and Steer to validate the statistics.</p> <p>Additional data have been added to the main table and dashboard, providing information on data sources and highlighting data quality issues or methodology changes alongside the statistics for individual stations.</p>	<p>We are pleased by the range of actions that ORR has taken to meet this requirement. By implementing several different approaches, ORR is responding to the varied user base of the statistics. This includes technical users who require detailed information about quality and methods and less-expert users who visit the webpage infrequently to find a particular figure. Highlighting relevant data quality information in all the outputs ensures that all users can be aware of important issues and how to use the statistics appropriately.</p>
	<p>To mitigate the risk of errors in the statistics, ORR should develop a structured framework for quality assurance of the full production process and communicate this with users.</p>	<p>The team has developed a quality assurance framework to manage the production of the statistics. This includes detailed descriptions of both ORR and Steer's processes, a checklist used by statisticians for quality assurance checks and a risk log identifying high risk points in the process</p>	<p>Again, the team has taken a thorough approach to meeting this requirement and worked well with Steer to develop this framework. We consider that the new framework will enhance ORR's</p>

		<p>and detailing the actions taken to mitigate these risks. ORR has also updated its revisions log policy</p>	<p>existing quality management approach by managing risk in a more structured way. We are especially pleased that ORR has considered how these actions are relevant to its other statistics, for example applying changes to the revisions log to all its statistics.</p>
<p>Value</p>	<p>To meet the needs of the broad range of people who use these statistics, ORR should develop its understanding of what users do with the statistics and how they interact with the outputs.</p>	<p>Following OSR’s user engagement for the assessment, the statistics team reached out to some of the users we interviewed to discuss specific feedback they had provided. ORR made use of its recently developed newsletter to invite further feedback from users on the statistics and on its improvement plan for the statistics.</p> <p>The team has updated the Frequently Asked Questions document with information about why some of the user requests raised cannot be met.</p> <p>In the longer term, ORR has committed to enhancing its use of Google Analytics to gain more-detailed insight into user interaction with the statistics.</p>	<p>We have been impressed by the proactive approach that the team took to reach out to users and follow up on specific issues raised during our user engagement. By engaging with users early, the team has been able to obtain further feedback on changes as the statistics have been developed. We encourage ORR to continue with this proactive approach to user engagement in future.</p>
	<p>To maximise insight and increase the value of these statistics for users, ORR should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work with stakeholders who can provide local knowledge about stations which can be shared with users b) Ensure that users are aware of important contextual information, such as infrastructure changes, 	<p>Over the last few months, the team has engaged with stakeholders such as local passenger transport executives and devolved administrations to gain insights on reasons for changes in usage at individual stations. The information obtained will be used in the statistical release and data tables to supplement ORR’s own investigations into changes in the data.</p> <p>As described above, the team has developed a new statistical release to replace the previous factsheet. This document provides commentary</p>	<p>By engaging with stakeholders who can provide local information on changes in the data and using these to develop a new statistical release, the team has significantly enhanced the insights that users can glean from the statistics. We also commend the work that the team has done to anticipate user interest in the impact of COVID-19 on the statistics and to provide</p>

<p>and the impact of this on the statistics</p> <p>c) Improve coherence with other related information and data sources</p>	<p>alongside the statistics and contextual information, for example infrastructure changes that have impacted large changes in usage at individual stations. Additional data and analyses are also included in the document, such as the most used request stop stations and an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the latest figures. Finally, the statistical release includes a section on related statistics published by ORR and other producers.</p>	<p>additional analyses to meet this need.</p> <p>The addition of links to related statistics to the new release means that users can more easily find the information they need.</p>
<p>To further improve the quality of the data used to produce these statistics, ORR should:</p> <p>a) continue to investigate and use new data sources</p> <p>b) engage with stakeholders who can provide local knowledge about stations</p>	<p>Following user requests, the team has worked hard to include estimates for usage at Heathrow stations in the latest release.</p> <p>As described above, the team engaged with stakeholders during the production of the latest release of statistics, providing the opportunity to identify and respond to local data quality issues before publication. For example, Transport for Wales was able to provide a list of stations where usage is likely to be over-estimated due to end-of-line ticket purchases – this will be noted alongside the figures and ORR is considering how this issue can be addressed further in next year’s release.</p>	<p>Our assessment recognised that ORR works hard to continually improve the data for these statistics by making use of newly available data sources. The addition of information for Heathrow stations in the latest release will be of great interest to users.</p>
<p>To enhance its support for users to analyse and reuse the data, ORR should:</p> <p>a) review the data tables and dashboard and implement improvements to make them more user friendly</p> <p>b) ensure that the data is available in an accessible, machine-readable format</p>	<p>Following feedback from users during our review, the team developed a new table structure and a csv version of the main table. These were shared for feedback with some of the users who had provided feedback in this area and have been published in the latest release of the statistics. ORR has committed to further engagement with these users to refine the data outputs in future.</p>	<p>Following our assessment, the team quickly responded to the feedback users had provided on the usability of the data tables and dashboard. Straightforward changes such as reordering columns in the tables will have a significant impact on user experience. By providing a new csv version of the main table, the team is supporting its most</p>

			technical users who reuse the data for their own analysis.
Trustworthiness	To ensure that all users are aware of revisions and changes to the release schedule, ORR should improve its communication with users outside the rail industry.	ORR has developed a newsletter to update a wide range of users about changes and improvements made to the statistics, as well as keep users informed about updates and changes to the release calendar. Information about ORR statistics is also now included in the Transport Statistics User Group newsletter.	The regular newsletter that ORR has developed improves transparency about upcoming changes to the statistics. It also provides users with the opportunity to provide feedback on developments.