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Ed Humpherson
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Dear Ed

User Engagement

Many thanks for all of the work that you carried out earlier this year with colleagues across Defra group to develop your report on [User Engagement in Defra group](#).

It was very helpful to have your objective view of the overall position and encouraging to get recognition of the specific areas where our teams have been doing new and innovative things in this space (for example re the good work of our People and Nature team). Apologies for the delay in responding formally – we have been reviewing the overall position and priorities across the group, noting the specific opportunities and challenges that come from the scale of our overall portfolio of official and national statistics and from the specialist nature of a number of our products.

We recognise that additional investment will be triggered by the forthcoming GSS User Engagement Strategy – which I expect will assist in further describing the culture change we want to see and will help establish common approaches and standards for the way we make our investments in user engagement more transparent. I am hugely grateful that the work that you helped us with will put Defra group in a good position to respond to that strategy when it comes. In the interim, the key priorities we have identified include:

- 1) At the overall Defra group portfolio level

Telling users about the statistics

- We will be building on the good work in establishing the @DefraStats Twitter account in increasing the consistency with which we announce releases and in expanding the use of that channel to signal intended or possible product changes to users.
- We will be reviewing the gateway / landing pages to our statistical products on GOV.UK.

Increasing Accessibility

- We will continue to build on the work we have done this year in increasing the accessibility of all our products.

Understanding Use

- We will explore our current use of web analytics to look for ways in which we can make the cross-group analysis more useful for individual teams.

Listening to Users

- We will assess the different ways in which we ask users for their feedback within our products – in particular we will look at developing a shared feedback template that we can use more consistently across the portfolio.

Overall monitoring and learning

- Recognising the scale of our overall portfolio, we will be refreshing our internal official / national statistics register to help us maintain our own central view of the investment in user engagement for different products.

2) Sub-portfolio level

There are also some specific activities at the sub-portfolio level, notably within the Food, Farming and Biosecurity portfolio where:

- We are reviewing options (including virtual options) to create a future version of our previously successful AUK conference to enable engagement and collaboration with users of statistics in this portfolio.
- We are also exploring the viability of building on the ONS's good user persona work to better categorise and then support the different user groups for farming statistics, hopefully to build understanding and experience that can then be shared with other portfolios.

3) Product level

One of the key areas of user engagement at the product level is through a new suite of experimental statistics – as outlined on [our main GOV.UK landing page](#). As part of our assessments of these potential new longer-term products, we are looking at both quality and at user value.

One final observation – reflecting the focus of your work, we are, in the activity listed above, mainly targeting the engagement of users external to Defra. There is, of course, an important user community within the department (and the wider Defra group) which we serve both through the published official and national statistics and through the targeted analytical work delivered by our embedded statisticians and analysts. In parallel to the above work, we continue to test the extent to which we are meeting internal needs and that will (at a product by product level) also inform the development of the formal portfolio.

This is not a static plan – this will always remain an active area of work for us – and we will continue to learn from what we and others do. Again, many thanks for your assistance to us on this important agenda.

Kind regards

Ken Roy
Defra group Head of Profession (Statistics)