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**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

Stephanie Howarth  
Chief Statistician, Welsh Government  
(by email)

29 June 2021

Dear Stephanie

**Welsh Government Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics, Grassland Fires, Deliberate Fires, and Fire and Rescue Authority Performance**

As you are aware we recently completed our compliance check of the Welsh Government's [Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). This review also covered three additional publications – [grassland fires](#), [deliberate fires](#), and [Fire and rescue authority performance](#). I am pleased to confirm that they should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

Our review found a range of positive features that demonstrate the trustworthiness, quality, and value of the statistics:

- The statistical bulletins are well presented and use a mix of charts, tables and maps to aid user understanding and interpretation.
- You have increased the public value of the statistics by adding further insights, for example by drawing on other sources such as Met Office data when analysing the incidents of grassland fires across Wales. Developments such as these help to support the wider public interest in fire incidents in Wales.
- Signposting users to, and in some cases making comparisons with, relevant fire statistics from the other UK nations so that users can understand trends in fires across the UK.
- Plans to innovate and introduce more interactive content around the statistics, for example: presenting the statistics using Power BI, therefore improving accessibility of the statistics for a wider range of users; and exploring the use of Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP) and other means to streamline production processes. Time savings that result from adopting a RAP approach mean that analytical time and skill can be better used to increase value for users. We have recently published our [review into the use of RAP principles and overcoming barriers](#) which may be useful to your team.
- Plans to discuss the possibilities for data linkage between the fire statistics and housing conditions data within the [Housing Conditions Evidence Programme](#), which has potential for adding further value to the statistics.
- The strong links your team has with the fire and rescue authorities that supply the data, with other fire statistics producers, and with policy colleagues within Welsh Government. These help to enhance the team's understanding of the quality of the data, how and why the data are collected, and how they are used to measure the

Welsh Government's performance against policy targets and the performance of the fire and rescue authorities.

We also identified some areas where more could be done to improve the quality and value of the statistics:

- The team has agreed to refresh the [Fire statistics: quality report](#) as parts of this are outdated. In doing so, the team should also assure users of the level of the quality of data through reviewing its quality assurance processes for the source data, ideally using our Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) framework. In line with this we would expect producers to communicate their knowledge of suppliers' quality assurance checks and publish a description of this alongside a description of its own checks on the administrative data.
- The team told us about its approach to engaging with users of the statistics. Publishing details about the team's approach to engaging with users from a wider audience, for example, through the Fire and Rescue Statistics forum, and details of the team's future development plans, will increase the transparency of planned developments to the statistics, and help foster wider and better engagement with a broader range of users. We recently published [guidance on user engagement](#) which the team may find useful in planning future user engagement activities.
- The live nature of the Incident Reporting System (IRS) means that the data are subject to a degree of revision. While tables are helpfully provided in some of the bulletins setting out the extent of these revisions between provisional and final data, this could be extended for all bulletins to aid interpretation. As it is not always clear in the bulletins that figures are 'reported' incidents and therefore subject to a degree of regular revision the team should consider how any uncertainty in the statistics might be more clearly communicated to users for example providing more signposting to the revision tables.
- The team explained that due to the length and content of the bulletins there are several constraints in place preventing the publication of the statistics in the more accessible HTML format compared to PDF. We suggest speaking with users about the format of output that best meets their needs and you may find that the [Government Statistical Service Good Practice Team](#) will be able to offer some advice.

We understand from speaking with the fire statistics team at the Home Office that the IRS used to collect data on fire incidents across England, Wales, and Scotland, cannot be easily updated. This limits the capacity of the statistics to be kept relevant and runs the risk that the value of the statistics could diminish over time if they cannot be used to answer new and emerging questions. We encourage you to work closely with Home Office and Scottish fire and rescue statistics colleagues to help bring about improvements to the system that will benefit the three nations.

I would like to thank your team for their positive engagement on this review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further. I am copying this letter to Sue Leake, Head of Education and Public Services Statistics, Nia Jones, Head of Social Justice Statistics, and Claire Davey, the lead statistician.

Yours sincerely



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