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**Director General for Regulation**

Brian Green, Director of Sources  
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency  
(by email)

16 December 2021

Dear Brian

**Assessment of Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics**

We have completed our [assessment](#) of NISRA's Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES). I am grateful for the positive engagement from you and your team throughout the assessment process.

BESES Users value the statistics as they are the pre-eminent source of data on both sales by Northern Ireland (NI) businesses outside the NI domestic market and international trade outside of GB. Users who wish to gain insight into the characteristics on NI trade see BESES as the go-to source. These statistics were invaluable in the run-up to EU Exit and the introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Policy-makers and commentators told us that BESES are vital for informing potential economic impact of decisions around trade and access to markets.

We found that NISRA's engagement with its users is very positive with good communication about the developments to the statistics that are possible to meet users' needs and what is beyond the scope of the BESES statistics to satisfy. Users have expressed concerns that the team's resources are stretched. We interpret this not as a comment on the current performance or capability of your team, but that it recognises the significant demand for insights into the trading aspects of Northern Ireland's economy, and that further demands may well emerge. It will be important for NISRA to monitor these demands and assess whether resources are adequate to meet them.

We have identified two areas that could strengthen the statistics further, to ensure that they fulfil the highest standards of the Code:

- There is clearly a demand for more-timely statistics which the team has identified and has committed to explore as part of its development planning.
- NISRA has been proactive in providing BESES statistics in multiple formats for use and publishes extensive quality and methods information through different documents. NISRA should take the opportunity to make clear information on the choices users have to access BESES data and summarise the quality and methods information so that users can more easily absorb it.

We judge that the Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics can be designated as National Statistics once these areas have been addressed. We have agreed with the BESES team to report back to us by May 2022, outlining how these enhancements have been addressed. Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with me or my team at any

time. I am copying this letter to Siobhan Carey Chief Executive and Registrar General, NISRA.

Yours sincerely

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

Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation