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Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation,
Office for Statistics Regulation
(by email)

10/01/2023

Dear Ed,

Assessment of statistics from the People and Nature Survey for England

I would like to thank you for [your letter dated 10th January 2023](#).

We welcome the assessment report, particularly its finding that statistics from the People and Nature Survey for England are valued by a range of users and provide helpful insight into people's interactions with the natural environment. We recognise the importance of the requirements the review has identified and are taking steps to address them.

In response to assessment report, the People and Nature Survey project team has worked with their counterparts at the OSR to develop an Action Plan focusing on four priority areas for further development of the survey:

- Improving the public value of the People and Nature Survey through better communication with the survey's users and stakeholders;
- Providing guidance to help users compare the survey with statistics derived from similar surveys produced elsewhere in the UK;
- Helping users to understand how data derived from the People and Nature Survey can be compared to data derived from the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey;
- Working with the data producer to improve the quality of the statistics produced by the survey.

A full outline of the steps the team is taking to meet the requirements can be found in the Annexe to this letter.

We are extremely grateful to the team at the OSR for their positive and constructive engagement during the assessment process. We look forward to working with them in future as we continue to improve the trustworthiness, quality and value of our statistical products.

I am copying this letter to Lindsey Clothier, Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics at DEFRA, and to the team at Natural England – Tom Marshall, Caitlin Clark, Amy Greenwood, and Sergio Milheiras.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Lonsdale'.

IAN LONSDALE

Head of Profession for Statistics, Defra

Annex - Natural England's Response to the OSR's Assessment Report of Statistics Produced by the People and Nature Survey

Requirement	Actions
<p>Requirement 1: To enhance the public value of PaNS statistics, Natural England should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • publish development plans with timescales and share with its newly expanded user base, • ensure that users have opportunities to contribute to development planning, are aware in advance of developments being launched, and have opportunities to contribute their views on new developments once published. • enable wider access to the data by continuing with plans to make it available through the UK Data Service or equivalent platforms. <p>This will help ensure that users' needs are fully understood, and their use of the statistics is supported.</p>	<p>a. To remove ambiguity around development plans, Natural England has updated the PaNS technical report to remove reference to developments that are no longer planned and provide clarity around work that is still planned.</p> <p>Natural England will continue to update the technical report and other published information on survey methods and technical details to ensure that they accurately reflect the most recent developments.</p> <p>b. To involve users in development planning, we have scheduled a PaNS Research User Group meeting for January 2023. Natural England will present its development plans to users and seek feedback on them. Minutes from the Research User Group meeting will be published online and additional user feedback will be solicited via the People and Nature Survey User Hub.</p> <p>Natural England will continue to welcome ongoing feedback from users on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>c. Natural England will publish a finalised PaNS development plan for 2023/2024 in early 2023.</p>

	<p>d. Natural England will continue with its current plan to publish data via the UK Data Service in spring 2023. This will allow additional variables that are not currently being published to be shared with approved researchers with a legitimate interest in accessing them. Natural England will consult with users on these plans at the Research User Group meeting and invite ongoing feedback after launch.</p>
<p>Requirement 2: To help users develop a coherent understanding of people and nature across the UK, Natural England should assess the similarities and differences between each country’s surveys and explain these to users.</p>	<p>a. Natural England will build on its positive relationship with Natural Resources Wales and Nature Scot by working collaboratively with them to identify the similarities and differences between PaNS and the equivalent surveys in Scotland and Wales to the surveys and the extent to which cross-national comparisons can be drawn.</p> <p>Natural England will publish a report summarising the findings of this work, communicating to users whether and how surveys can be compared in autumn 2023. If this work shows that it is feasible, Natural England will work with Natural Resources Wales and Nature Scot to develop UK-wide composite indicators.</p>
<p>Requirement 3: To help users understand the differences between the PaNS and MENE, Natural England should investigate the discontinuity between the two timeseries and publish their findings.</p>	<p>a. To assess what comparisons can be made between PaNS and MENE, Natural England will commission a scoping study to identify analysis that can be done to provide a statistically robust comparison of PaNS and MENE across key variables in January 2023.</p> <p>b. Natural England will publish the results of the study and any follow up work alongside the adult’s annual report in autumn 2023. This will include guidance for users on whether and how to make comparisons across the two surveys.</p>

Requirement 4: To help provide a more robust set of data, Natural England should work with the data supplier to understand the reasons behind survey participants answering 'Don't know/Prefer not to say' and look at how these can be addressed where this would be practicable and valuable. In the interests of transparency any findings should be communicated to users.

- a. Natural England has worked with data supplier to add an additional question to the survey to ask respondents why they have responded 'don't know' to 'Q6 (No_Of_Visits) in the adult's survey: How many times, if at all, did you make this type of visit to green and natural spaces in the last 14 days?'

Natural England will report on the findings from this question in summer 2023 and – if required – implement improvements to Q6 to provide more robust data.