

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
Office for Statistics Regulation

By email

08 July 2024

Alternative Release Time for Economic Statistics

Dear Ed,

The ONS's initial move to earlier releases of market-sensitive economic statistics was at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic when holding in-person secure media briefings became impossible. We chose 0700 because other market-sensitive announcements, notably company results, are usually made at this time.

Although forced by necessity, we quickly saw significant benefits from the new release time. These include the cessation of pre-release speculation on social media about what our statistics might show, including false allegations of data leaks.

Most importantly it has given an increased ability to explain the figures and provide context around our statistics. It has also given us much greater opportunities to communicate our data and give much more visibility to them, which can support trust in the quality and impartiality of official statistics. Our figures are now being released at a peak time for news consumption with senior spokespeople now able to appear on morning broadcast shows to explain what our figures show and, importantly, put them in a wider context. We believe this is a significant contribution to our statutory mission of producing statistics for the public good.

Noting the points in your letter, we will happily undertake a period of engagement with users across the City, media and elsewhere to ensure that this policy is also operating for the benefit of users generally.

I look forward to speaking with you again soon on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Keoghan

Deputy National Statistician and Director General, Economic, Social and
Environmental Statistics Group | Office for National Statistics