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Ed Humpherson
Office for Statistics Regulation

Sent via e-mail.

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Statistical Strategic Priorities in Scotland

Dear Ed,

Officials in my office have been in discussion with your colleagues regarding the strategic priorities that we are currently pursuing across the statistical system here in Scotland. Further to these discussions, I am writing to you to inform you of the benefits we aim to achieve, and the impact we expect this work will have on statistics. I would welcome your comments and further discussion.

In 2023 we launched our [Statistical Strategic Priorities](#) with statisticians in Scottish Government and the other agencies that we support. The priorities reflect much of the State of the Statistical System report your office published in July 2024, highlighting the needs to support public sector reform.

Our priorities fall under the four categories of Users, Efficiency, Data and People. The purpose of these priorities is to help develop our statistical system and support a programme of work to improve our data infrastructure by the end of 2026.

The combined ambition of our Statistical Priorities and the data infrastructure programme is to speed up the process of delivering official statistics, ensure interoperability of data to respond to emerging needs and improve the availability of management information and official statistics to support outcomes for the people of Scotland.

The priorities were produced in the context of the independent role of statisticians and the importance of producing statistics for the public good. We see this as important to empower statisticians to feel they have the authority to take decisions to improve their statistics to service a wide range of users, not just Government.

It will be up to each individual analytical area in Scottish Government and the agencies to determine the approach they want to take to deliver on the priorities. My office is supporting each area to develop their priorities. Critical to that delivery is the ability for statisticians to properly resource the work to develop their priorities, and I need to support business areas to create the capacity to deliver.

I am therefore writing to you to inform you of how we are encouraging our statisticians to create that capacity using the priorities. This will include:

- Automating statistical processes where appropriate using reproducible analytical pipelines to speed up processing of statistical data.
- Undertaking user engagement to assess the true value of their statistics, and using this as evidence to reduce the frequency or discontinue publications where appropriate.
- Developing shorter and more focused publications designed to have greater impact for users and potential users of statistics.
- Assessing the value of other work in the collection, processing and publication of statistics, and minimising tasks that adds less value.

As our statisticians progress through this work they may need to temporarily pause publications to make space for some of this transformative work. My office will continue to keep your colleagues updated on progress.

The benefits of this programme will be to potentially create new statistics that are meeting the needs of users, and to improve the overall quality, timeliness, value and impact of official statistics. This will also help us to deploy new technology and practices as we continue to modernise and support public service improvement.

As we place users at the center of this work, I have invited Prof Sir John Curtice and Prof Ana Basiri to co-chair our refreshed ScotStat Board, which met for the first time in June 2024. The Board will provide recommendations and critical challenge to myself and other heads of profession in Scotland. I will be inviting the Board to consider our work on the priorities.

I am copying this letter to the Minister for Parliamentary Business who has responsibility for statistics within his portfolio, Janet Egdell of National Records of Scotland, Scott Heald of Public Health Scotland, and the co-chairs of the ScotStat Board.

Yours sincerely



Alastair McAlpine
Chief Statistician