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**Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation**

James Benford  
Director General for the Economic, Social and Environmental Group  
Office for National Statistics  
(by email)

7 August 2025

Dear James

**Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Response to Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR)'s Systemic Review of Economic Statistics**

First of all, congratulations on your appointment as Director General for the Economic, Social and Environmental Group. I wish you every success in the role.

On 26 June, Grant Fitzner [wrote to inform me](#) that ONS had published its [Economic Statistics Plan](#). On the same day, ONS also published its [Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan for Economic Statistics](#).

These plans respond to the findings and requirements set out in [our Systemic Review of ONS Economic Statistics](#), and to the findings of the [Devereux Review of the Office for National Statistics](#).

The OSR's systemic review set out the case for four requirements of ONS:

- Publish a fully resourced plan to recover its social survey operation and reduce risk in its business survey operation to restore the confidence of its users.
- Develop a clearer strategic articulation of the purpose and priorities for economic statistics.
- Develop and publish a regularly updated vision and strategy for the data sources used to compile its economic statistics.
- Take a more strategic and systematic approach to quality reviews of its data sources.

As you know, OSR was consulted on the preparation of the Economic Statistics Plan. Taken as part of a package (alongside the Survey Improvement Plan and ONS's forthcoming revised Strategic Business Plan, and Data Sources Strategy), my view is that it meets OSR's immediate requirements as a plan of activities to restore confidence, ensure strategic transparency and enhance focus on the quality of data inputs.

The plans set out by ONS represent a very ambitious programme of work. OSR anticipates working with ONS to provide a balance of support and challenge as ONS moves to

delivery. The July update to the Board on progress with the actions set out in the Survey Improvement Plan is welcome. To build confidence, it will be important for ONS to publish regular updates on progress and delivery confidence against the milestones set out in both the plans. We propose that such updates be published quarterly. We will review this frequency as the milestone commitments are met to ensure reporting remains effective.

While I have noted that the Economic Statistics Plan and Survey Improvement Plan produced by ONS (referred to as 'the Plan') represent good progress and meet OSR's immediate requirements, OSR expects further action from ONS over the longer term, including:

- Meeting its commitment to publish a data sources strategy, as recommended by the Statistics Assembly. We expect the data sources strategy to set out a clear, if evolving, road map for the data sources used in the preparation of economic statistics, covering in particular the integrated role of administrative and survey data.
- Noting that further information on resource allocation will be forthcoming in the revised Strategic Business Plan, as part of ONS's planning cycle, ONS should include data on the resources allocated to, and between, different key economic statistics. This should include the production of ongoing outputs and planned developments. This information should be sufficiently detailed to inform stakeholder engagement on the trade off's ONS is facing in its prioritisation.
- The Plan gives renewed emphasis to continuous improvement. This is welcome, but further proposals on quality, including providing increased challenge through a prioritised programme of quality reviews, should be set out in future versions of the Plan.

The Plan and the development of future iterations, particularly with these enhancements, should form the basis for more-effective stakeholder engagement, as it will set the consideration of options for developing individual economic statistics in the context of overall resource availability and the inevitability of trade-offs.

The Plan also includes references to the actions being taken to respond to previous OSR review recommendations on individual sets of statistics: [the Producer Price Inflation \(PPI\)](#), [Review of Economic Statistics – Classifications](#), [Price Index of Private Rents \(PIPR\)](#), [UK trade statistics](#), [quarterly GDP estimates](#), and the [Wealth and Assets Survey](#). We will of course continue to engage with ONS to monitor progress against these earlier review recommendations.

I am copying this letter to Emma Rouke, Acting National Statistician; Liz McKeown, Director of Economic Statistics Production and Analysis; and Grant Fitzner, Director of Macroeconomic and Environment Statistics and Analysis.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson  
Director General for OSR