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Your Ref

Our Ref TO.E.34

11 March 2004

Dear Len,

Review of Tourism Statistics – National Statistics approval sought

I have the pleasure of submitting the Tourism Statistics Review report which was endorsed at the final steering group meeting recently.

You may recall, from approaches about the possible establishment of a Tourism Statistics Unit at the time of discussion of emerging findings, that this strategic review was in the pipeline.

I recommend the Review and its report for approval. It was conducted according to the National Statistics guidance on quality reviews. Additionally, the following points reflect the Review's quality and its robustness of examination across the field of Tourism Statistics:

- It was conducted by the experienced former senior government statistician, Denis Allnutt.
- The Review makes recommendations in 14 areas, with a total of 63 individual recommendations.
- The Review had a highly experienced and broad-based steering group including representatives from the Tourism Industry.
- The review was based around broad consultation process. This ensured input from, for example, 10 leading industry associations, as well as from all relevant types of public body, e.g. tourist boards. In total, interviews were conducted with a representative sample of 35 key users, and 60 contributions were received in response to a questionnaire on our website. This success was the result of publicity through industry organisations.

I would particularly like to draw to your attention the following:

- There are a large number of recommendations. It is unlikely that there will be sufficient funds to implement all of them. In particular, the proposed methods for 2 of the key surveys demand over £5 million per annum. All requirements will need to be considered alongside needs for statistics for other sectors for which the Department has responsibilities. The



Implementation Plan may focus on the various lower cost options presented.

- ONS has indicated that, while unable to make a joint bid in the Spending Review, it would support a bid made by DCMS to fund improved Tourism Statistics.
- The Review calls for the establishment of a Tourism Statistics Unit (TSU). This would have a coordinating role, and it would act as the focal point for delivering improvements. One option would be for such a unit to be located as part of ONS. You and your executive directors have indicated that ONS would be prepared to accommodate such a proposal.
- We have had to schedule a 6 month period for the Implementation Plan stage. This has been agreed with NS policy staff, on the condition that this is clearly communicated on the web. It will appear on this page -> http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/research/statistics/tourism_statistics_review.htm This is due to the wide range of organisations that need to be involved and which will need sign up to the actions and roles in the future. N.B. While DCMS has the lead across the field of Tourism Statistics, it produces none of its outputs.

We hope that you will be able give the report your early attention for 2 reasons:

- Firstly, the interest and expectations of the Tourism Bodies and of Industry are high, following the consultation period last summer. We want to maintain momentum with the many stakeholders across the tourism sector.
- Secondly, the Review is an integral part of the Department's Tourism Statistics Improvement Initiative. This is the catch-all description of work to follow up our Secretary of State's pledge to improve data (described in 2.4), following wide-ranging discussion with the Industry in Autumn 2001.

We are therefore keen to move onto the Implementation Plan stage as soon as possible. This stage will take some time, given the devolved nature of survey ownership and the number of organisations involved. We have therefore indicated our intention for this to be underway by May.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Wood
Chief Statistician