



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH EAST

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Dear Mr Allsopp

Allsopp Review: Government Office for the North East response to the first report

1. The Government Office for the North East welcomes the approach the Allsopp Review has taken in investigating the needs of regional users and supports its recommendations. Demands from regional users are many and diverse and it has been encouraging to see a comprehensive and thorough response to those needs.

2. The Government Office has been instrumental in helping to set up a regional observatory (North East Regional Information Partnership – NERIP) designed to make use of the available skills and knowledge and to suit the region's specific needs. As such we agree with the responses made to the committee by both NERIP and the Association of Regional Observatories, in particular:

- The creation of a regional ONS/GSS presence
- The continued improvements to Regional Accounts
- The enhancement and rationalisation of regional surveys
- Making better use of administrative data

3. The Government Office also supports recommendations relating to improving provision in social and environmental statistics. Although this was not the primary focus of the review, it is important to acknowledge the inter-dependence between these areas and those under scrutiny by the review.

4. We have some specific comments on two aspects of the review, regionally based statisticians and administrative data.

Regionally based statisticians

5. There will be much discussion on the location of these posts but the Government Office considers that the correct approach should reflect, wherever appropriate, the capacity within the region to assist in the utilisation of these resources. As such the Regional Observatory (NERIP)

could provide a useful location that would provide all regional partners with considerable advantages. We are also aware, however, of the operational issues with which the ONS may have legitimate concerns and would be willing to offer the Government Office as a logical outstation for such staff.

6. We also think it would be worthwhile to look at the example of Wales, where the role of statisticians within the Assembly has provided a useful national resource. It is worth noting that one statistician is based in the Local Government Data Unit, one of whose functions is a form of regional observatory.

Administrative data

7. The Government Office strongly supports the increased use of administrative data. It provides a cost effective way of providing better quality data. We have concerns, however, that the issues of disclosure and confidentiality currently being debated have not been sufficiently resolved. Any increase in the availability of administrative data brings increased risk of disclosure and the current interpretation could well mean greater restrictions at meaningful geographic levels. There is particularly an issue due to the fact that there is considered to be 'no indivisibility of the Crown' which may mean the lack of even government departments being able to share data.

8. We would like to see a hastening of the process by which these issues currently being debated instigate processes by which protocols and agreements can be put into place for the correct and fair exchange of meaningful data

Yours sincerely

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