

Independence of ONS

Full independence of the ONS is now essential to protect national statistics from political interference. We have no particular views on the options for reform in your consultation paper but are content to support the principle. We do question the retention of distributed statistical branches in government departments. This would seem to be an expensive duplication of effort. It will also allow ministers to produce figures and analysis countering any, that they don't like, produced by the independent ONS. The use in your document of the argument that it is desirable that these statisticians should be close to policy makers reinforces this view. Our preference would be for all statistics to be independently produced and for there to be no distributed branches in government departments.

Although trade statistics are not covered by this consultation, we and many other trade associations would willingly collate figures for HM Revenue & Customs, effectively allowing that department to outsource work. Has this ever been considered?

The British Contract Furnishing Association is the leading trade association in the UK for companies supplying furniture and furnishings into the contract area. The contract area comprises, offices, hotels, restaurants, bars, educational establishments, hospitals and healthcare establishments and some niche areas. We represent a sector worth around £2 billion annually.

Peter Smith

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