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The Allsopp Review Team
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Rd
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Dear Mr Allsopp,

Thank you for providing this opportunity for the Association of Regional Observatories to set out some of our views and concerns about the current regional statistical framework.

Regional organisations are delighted to have this opportunity to outline some problems with the current supply of information needed to inform policies designed to promote regional growth. Drawn as they are from such a variety of regional organisations, the expert data users of the Association of Regional Observatories have many thoughts about the state of regional statistical provision.

This submission has been written by a number of analysts¹, from across the regions. Many more have contributed thoughts and observations; it is a consensus view from the Association, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of each Observatory in every case. Amongst the points we would like to make most strongly are that:

- Regions have different needs. These could be met by routinely allowing for sample sizes to be boosted by interested regions, and by releasing data for some regions even where figures are not available for all;

¹ My thanks go to Joby Blume (ARO) who coordinated this response; and to Kate Aulman (SEERA), David Ewens (GLA), John Hollis (GLA), Margaret O'Brien (NWRIU), Chris Owen (WMRO), Neil Powell (GO-IN), Will Rossiter (EMDA), Lorna Spence and Rachel Leeser (GLA), and Hilary Stevens (SWO) who wrote sections. A large number of regional analysts - from regional observatories, RDAs, and GO-IN - have commented on this draft, although the product is ultimately the responsibility of the Association of Regional Observatories.

- Regional bodies should be encouraged and enabled to have access to datasets such as the IDBR;
- More robust data on inter-regional migration are needed;
- Allocation of greater resource to the production of regional accounts is welcomed, but must not come at the expense of responsiveness to regional needs;
- Expenditure figures by region are welcomed and should be regularly produced, but must distinguish between productive and non-productive expenditure;
- We particularly welcome the efforts by ONS to produce robust income data for small areas, and look forward to the results;
- Information is needed on businesses below the VAT threshold;
- Regional LMI requirements must be given more attention, and agreements on LMI should be enforced;
- The LFS should receive a further boost to its sample;
- Improved data on housing, land use, transport, and commercial floor-space are key to planning for regional growth;
- ARO has a significant role to play in ensuring research in the regions evolves in a coordinated way, and in enabling the flow of information from the regions back to Central Government.

We hope that this submission is considered valuable.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.N.J. Tucker', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

P.N.J. Tucker,
Chair, Association of Regional Observatories

ARO Submission to the Allsopp Review

The Statistical Framework

Policies that Promote Economic Growth

It is vital to distinguish between information that enables the making of macro-economic policy designed to deliver regional economic growth, and the information needed to inform regional policies that drive that growth. Regional observatories are committed to supplying data and intelligence that can inform regional economic and spatial strategies, which in turn promote regional economic growth. Regional economic and spatial strategies are required by statute, and require significant data about the economy, skills and the labour market, ICT, demography, housing, transport, the environment, culture, social exclusion and deprivation, crime, and education. Regions also need information to inform their sustainable development frameworks. **If Government is to charge regional bodies with implementing economic and spatial strategies that deliver regional growth, they must also provide the information needed to design those strategies effectively.**

Different Regions, Different Needs

Regional policy makers have differing information needs. These are often met by commissioning regional surveys. However, often boosting the regional sample size of a national survey would meet this need more efficiently – delivering research of high quality without the need for additional (often incompatible) design, or an entirely separate sample. **Regional organisations should be able, as a matter of course, to boost the regional sample of national surveys at cost price.**

All-or-Nothing Approach to Release

ONS do not routinely release information for one area if it cannot be released for all areas. Therefore data broken down by ethnic group or by a certain industrial classification, which would meet confidentiality and robustness criteria in one region, would not be published if they could not be published for *all* regions. Unfortunately, it is precisely those regions with higher numbers of a certain ethnic group or certain industry that would be most interested in using these data. **Data should be released for those regions for which they are available, where this will not compromise confidentiality requirements.**

Administrative Data

Regional policy making usually requires information at a sub-regional or local level. This is particularly the case for urban and rural renaissance policies. In addition to the possibility of boosted sample sizes for selected surveys, greater use must be made of administrative data to inform

regional policy. In particular, **a greater range of National Statistics should be produced to support regional economic strategies using HMCE and Inland Revenue data.**

Access

Regional agencies ought to be encouraged and enabled to utilise business data to which their access is currently extremely restricted. A lack of access to the IDBR has led regional agencies to purchase lower-quality data from private providers. Given their role in promoting business development and growth, regional agencies ought to be able to inform their policies with suitable evidence. Similar issues exist in relation to access to some of the data from the Annual Business Inquiry.

Full access to Labour Force Survey datasets has been severely restricted in recent years due to concerns over disclosure and confidentiality. This has made analysis difficult and much more time consuming for professional data users and in effect is limiting use. This is ironic given the increased funding that has been used to boost sample size. **A more workable and practical solution to the issue of disclosure must be found, especially when dealing with local and regional government users** (who are highly responsible and often highly expert data users). Withdrawing access to LFS databases must be seen as a step backwards, and alternatives provided by ONS, while appreciated, are unfortunately a poor substitute for some professional data users.

Sub-Regional Reporting

Consideration should be given as to whether some regions should routinely be broken down into sub-regions when releasing data, where these data can remain robust and confidential. For example, Inner London (which is smaller than Outer London) is larger than the North East region in population terms, but information is not routinely made available for this sub-region. As a general principle, regional bodies have a considerable need for sub-regional data to inform their policies.

Urban-Rural Coding of Data

A comprehensive range of datasets should be readily disaggregated by urban and rural areas, following the conclusion of current efforts to establish urban and rural definitions. These data ought then to be made available to users in a routine fashion, at least at a regional level.

Recognised Research Centre Status

Regional research bodies have significant but different areas of expertise, which could be used to produce work of national importance if sufficient funding were available. **A discussion involving the ESRC should take place about allowing suitable interested regional research bodies to bid for recognised research centre status.**

Information Loss

Regional observatories collect and signpost a great deal of information that is not 'fed back' to the centre for use in policy. This exchange failure ought to be addressed. **A system for quality assurance of data collected in the regions should be investigated, along the lines of the 'National Statistics' badge. In addition, we would welcome support for Association of Regional Observatory (ARO) attempts to align the storage and coding of regional information, in order to facilitate access to regional intelligence by central and regional government policy makers.**

Coordination

A coordinated approach to regional data and intelligence will enable inter-regional benchmarking, sharing of good practice, and collaborative working – but this coordination role must be resourced. Regional observatories have a significant role to play in drawing together and disseminating research from national, regional, and sub-regional sources. **Centrally provided match-funding for the ARO should be provided, to help ensure a single point of contact for regional analysts and prevent haphazard evolution of research in the regions.**

Statistics Underpinning Economic and Labour Market Information

The Importance of Demography

Demographic statistics are the backbone to many other items in the regional statistics menu. They provide the basis for secondary statistics on event rates and other measures that assist in providing valid inter-regional comparisons. A good demographic database will also provide the basis for the preparation of projections that link into the general spatial and economic planning functions. Improved regional statistics will also provide a springboard for improved local area estimates.

Internal Migration

For most regions the flows of migrants from and to other UK destinations are the most important demographic variables. The flows are highly correlated with changing economic and housing circumstances and the age and gender make-up is critical to developing local projections, as well as local economies. Data on flows of migrants between urban and rural areas are also required. The present system of measurement – based upon changes of address of persons registered with the NHS – has known flaws. There is a time-delay between moving and registering a new address (whether or not this involves registering with a new GP) that is most marked amongst young single males. The NHS does not cover the entire population, including newly arrived migrants from overseas prior to their own initial NHS registration. **Internal migration statistics should be improved.** Moreover, there is an unmet need for data on reasons for relocation.

International Migration

International migration has an unequal impact upon regions. Although the origins of *emigrants* are more evenly spread around the UK, the vast majority of *immigrants* are concentrated in urban areas, especially in the South East and London. The main source for estimating international migrants is the International Passenger Survey. Because this only measures persons who have an intention of being a migrant (i.e. entering or leaving the UK for at least a year) there are huge sampling variances and enormous errors in both number of migrants (particularly emigrants) and the location of immigrants with the UK.

While a (major) part of international migration, asylum seeker and visitor switcher numbers are poorly treated by Home Office statistics. At present there is no ethnic group indicator, and the assignment to location within the UK is speculative at best. **ONS and the Home Office are reviewing international migration statistics in the light of the issues raised by the 2001 Census results, and ARO support this important work.**

Regional Population Growth Projections

Long-term projections should be prepared at regional level at greater frequency than at present (twice per decade), even if the underlying assumptions on migration are not reviewed thoroughly each year. These are basic backbone data to enable up-to-date assessments of demographic trends and to assess potential for growth. Population, and household, projections are vital to underpin the regional planning process, including the development of regional spatial strategies. While population estimates may need to consider a range of population definitions, the projections should concentrate on a single 'usual resident' definition. The development of consistent regional ethnic group population projections is long overdue, although ONS now has a development project on this topic.

Economic Statistics

RDA Submission to Review

ARO support the key themes of the RDA submission to the review, in particular in calling for an improvement in the availability of relevant and timely statistics for the formulation of regional economic policy at national and regional level. While we will not repeat arguments here, we fully support calls not only for improved regional GVA data, but also for a range of economic statistics that will improve the ability of regional bodies to measure the effect of policy interventions and spending decisions.

Regional Accounts

ARO welcome the integration of regional accounts with the production of national accounts, as this ought to enable more timely publication of regional GVA data and permit the allocation of greater resource. However, it is important that this integration is not allowed to limit responsiveness to regional requirements. **Continued reference to the needs of regional bodies ought to be made in producing regional economic statistics, including regional accounts.**

ARO welcome efforts to learn from the difficulties of regional account production, and are encouraged to believe that issues of under-resourcing and under-valuing of regional statistics by ONS will be addressed.

Recently Released GVA Data

ONS recently published revised regional GVA data for 1989-99, along with new headline figures for 2000 and 2001; it is noted that the size of revisions to the data was considerable. It is understandable that ONS are more comfortable with smoothed headline figures as an accurate guide to regional GVA given the extent of year-on-year sampling variation in the 'raw' figures, although this gives rise to concern about the precision of the current accounting methods used.

ARO keenly anticipate the release of sub-regional statistics this autumn, which are particularly relevant to RDA interventions designed to promote regional economic growth; however, although they are needed, concerns exist over the robustness of GVA data at this level.

Regional Trade

The lack of official data on inter-regional trade (and on international trade in services) seriously hampers understanding of regional economies. This gap could be filled by estimating full regional accounts (including Input-Output accounts) for all of the UK regions – this would greatly contribute to improving the quality of GVA estimates. The required information could be obtained at relatively low cost by adding additional trade questions to the ABI, or through a separate trade survey (as is used in Scotland). Reliable official regional IO accounts should greatly improve the quality of policy analysis.

Regional Deflators

Work to produce regional deflators is supported; these will allow a more accurate evidence base to be built. There is also interest in differentiating between urban and rural figures.

Monitoring Regional Economic Performance

There is a strong case for reviewing the indicators used for monitoring regional economic performance. This was a point made in *Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity*, a report of the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, and one that has already

been echoed by the RDAs. **Use of a number of indicators should be encouraged if the robustness of regional GVA data cannot be guaranteed.** Workplace-based GVA might be retained as the headline measure for economic performance, but this ought to be supplemented with data on employment, participation rates, and unemployment. The latter point identifies employment as an economic driver, in addition to the five drivers of regional productivity identified in the Treasury – DTI publication *Productivity in the UK: 3 – The Regional Dimension*.

It would often be helpful to supplement measures of economic performance with measures of standard of living, but these can usefully be kept distinct. In this context, there may be a use for residence-based GVA figures, as well as gross household disposable income data. The application of regional consumer price deflators would enable comparison of real incomes.

Expenditure Flows to the Regions

The focus provided by the Nuffield study into the methodologies and reliability of regional public expenditure allocations, and the strong interest in evidence-based regional policy-making led by the Treasury will, it is hoped, raise the level of commitment to the production of high-quality regional statistics across Whitehall. This work should be continued. **As well as encouraging Departments to make greater efforts to calculate regional expenditure, data ought to be presented in a way that allows a distinction between productive (e.g. transport, education, culture, science) and non-productive expenditure (e.g. transfer payments), which will be of significant interest to policy-makers. Research to calculate regional multiplier effects for productive expenditure of different types would also be welcomed.**

Income Data

A large amount of money is spent on purchasing private sector estimates of income, which are in turn used to underpin a host of regional policy – from housing strategies to urban renaissance plans. The quality of this data is open to question, but not open to investigation, which is problematic. **ARO keenly awaits the forthcoming small area income estimates from ONS. Income data should be produced at small geographies, possibly from administrative sources, and should be expressed in per head and per household terms. Income data ought to reflect total income rather than just that derived from main source, and also take account of sources such as pensions and property.** Furthermore, information on housing and other costs should be provided in order to give a measure of spending power, which can of course vary largely between regions. Lastly, analysis of income by key social groups should be enabled at the sub-regional level.

Earnings Data

The main official source of data on earnings is the New Earnings Survey. In the past, the NES has been notoriously poor at providing reliable data on low paid workers, which can be used to inform a host of policy issues. **ARO welcome efforts to address this issue in the NES, and any efforts**

to produce data on a residence, as well as on a workplace basis. LFS earnings estimates should also be improved, as these allow examination of earnings by social group in ways that administrative data do not.

Business Stock

A lack of information about businesses below the VAT threshold is problematic. Policies designed to promote enterprise require data on micro-businesses. At present many businesses may start and fail without ever being detected by current reporting arrangements. This may be of particular concern for policies designed to promote growth in rural and deprived areas.

Investment

National figures for investment are not available at the regional level. Work to calculate expenditure flows to the regions ought to assist in the production of data for social investment. ABI2 is not currently robust enough at the regional level. **Work to ensure that national headline figures for investment and social investment can be divided by region would be welcomed, and is long overdue.**

Annual Business Inquiry

The Annual Business Inquiry has a valuable role to play in building regional statistics. However, **the sample frame for the Annual Business Inquiry is designed with the production of national sectoral figures in mind, and therefore regional reliability suffers. One way around this problem would of course be to boost the ABI sample size; if sample sizes cannot be increased greater consideration of the needs of users interested in regional economic data should be given, and samples redesigned accordingly.** Greater sample sizes might assist in providing information on the cultural sector, which is currently lacking.

Concerns exist about the quality of data collected by the ABI, particularly with regard to attribution of activity to sites by multiple site businesses. Face-to-face interviews might increase quality for this important data set.

Agriculture

Just over a third of the published (88) core indicators for monitoring the Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy are available at the regional level, illustrating the lack of data on agriculture at the regional and sub-regional level. **ONS, DEFRA, and regional partners should address the paucity of information available to monitor agricultural strategies at the regional level.**

Labour Market, Training, and Education Statistics

Regional Labour Market Intelligence Requirements

The major public producers of labour market intelligence need to develop greater understanding of the data requirements of regional policy making in the field of employment and skills. These requirements should figure much more centrally in the design and delivery of publicly funded labour market research.

The increasing significance of policy making at a regional level in relation to employment and skills (evidenced by the FRESA process) has not been reflected in the resources allocated by Central Government, including ONS, to the production of regional and sub-regional labour market intelligence. This fundamental deficit must be addressed.

Partnership Agreement for Skills and Economic Intelligence

The Partnership Agreement was published in 2001 bearing ministerial signatures from the DTI, DfES, and DWP. The Agreement outlines a series of eminently sensible principles that should govern the production of skills and economic intelligence in order to promote better coordination of data collection, effective dissemination, and the avoidance of duplication. ARO fully support the principles outlined in this document. Unfortunately, the Partnership Agreement has lost much credibility due to failures of implementation and enforcement on the part of the three Departmental signatories and the non-Departmental agencies that they sponsor.

Evidence of this failure is to be found in two recent examples of nationally significant labour market research developed by the LSC, DfES, and SSDA: the National Employer Skills Survey and the SSDA Employment Projections Project. Both projects will provide invaluable sources of labour market intelligence for a range of local, regional, and national partners. However, from a regional perspective, more could have been delivered, more easily, had regional LMI requirements stemming from the Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action informed design and dissemination arrangements. It is welcome that most regional partners have now been promised access to the data that will result from these projects. In future **it is hoped that nationally important skills and economic intelligence projects will be developed with the full participation of regional partners from the design stage through implementation to dissemination, as agreed in the Partnership Agreement.**

The Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey is amongst the main data sources used to produce information on labour market participation. The LFS is one of the largest regular surveys carried out by ONS, particularly now the LFS sample size has been increased. However, in spite of this, the LFS still fails to deliver what is needed at the regional and sub-regional level. Key problems with the Labour Force Survey include:

- Poor reliability of sub-regional estimates (e.g. unemployment estimates are not even available for all Local Authorities);

- Published reports have a heavy focus on national analysis and generally lack detailed regional and sub-regional data and analysis;
- The LFS sample is not large enough to produce robust or detailed information on ethnic groups or disabled people at a sub-regional or even regional level, although these are two of the key groups who face a high risk of exclusion from the labour market;
- LFS data on earnings and benefits is limited and of a poor quality, and there is no data on household income;
- There is a lack of household level data at sub-regional level – currently household datasets are only produced as part of the quarterly figures, which have a much smaller sample size than the annual dataset. A household-level dataset is needed to allow analysis of the dynamics of labour market participation within households. This would also help profile the economic and social circumstances of key groups such as lone parent households;
- There is a large inconsistency between LFS jobs estimates and those from other government surveys like the ABI, particularly for London. This makes designing and monitoring policy problematic.
- The LFS produces no data that applies directly to the cultural sector, despite being the best source of information on self-employment and freelancing.

In addition, **the range of LFS data included on NOMIS is too limited, and ought to be increased** - particularly in relation to groups disadvantaged in the labour market (e.g. ethnic minority groups, part-time workers, disabled workers, and women). **Regular publications and data releases from the LFS should include a wider range of variables reported at regional level wherever sample sizes are robust enough to support this.** Such provision would reduce the need for regional partners to commission such analyses on an ad hoc basis.

ARO would like to see a further and significant increase in the LFS sample size. This should be in the form of a further boost sample for the annual dataset. If a boost to LFS sample sizes is considered too costly, ONS should be encouraged to provide flexibility for regional partners to boost sample sizes for this survey (and others) in their own regions, thereby obviating the need to commission 'stand-alone' regional surveys in order to rectify perceived weaknesses in LFS provision.

ONS Labour Market Framework

The general movement towards the creation of a labour market accounting system is welcomed. The production of job density data has been of particular use.

NOMIS

The NOMIS web service provides excellent access to a wide range of labour market (and demographic) data, and the recent decision to extend the life of this service is very welcome. It is unfortunate that no new data sets will be added to the service. In particular, the failure to include Census data from 2001 is disappointing. The strength of the NOMIS service relative to that offered

by Neighbourhood Statistics and the main ONS website (notwithstanding comments on access, above) lies in its flexibility and utility to the specialist user. Users have much greater control over the selection and configuration of data for download. Furthermore, data are provided in a tabular form that facilitates further analysis.

It is clearly necessary to develop the NOMIS service in a manner consistent with ongoing development of Neighbourhood Statistics. **ARO would advocate the retention and development of the NOMIS service as a service for specialist users to complement the broadly targeted Neighbourhood Statistics service. If this is not done, functionality from NOMIS ought to be made available on Neighbourhood Statistics.**

Benefits Data

Since dissemination of ward level data for benefit receipt has moved from the DWP over to ONS (via NeSS), data have been very delayed. Data for 2000 only became available in 2003. We understand that this was due to disclosure control issues. However, this information is important in monitoring labour supply, as well as the success of local-area regeneration initiatives, and therefore **a radical improvement in the timeliness of benefits data would be welcomed.** In addition, in order to support policies designed to increase the skill levels and labour market position of ethnic minorities, DWP and ONS should collect ethnic background information, as recommended in the PAT-18 report.

Data produced from a 5% sample of benefit receipts, which are more timely than the full dataset, are not made available below regional level. This should be corrected for those widespread benefits where there would be no issues regarding confidentiality.

Self Employment in Rural Areas

Levels of self-employment are often high in rural areas, and this is often assumed to indicate high income levels or high levels of enterprise. However, high levels of rural self-employment may indicate a lack of alternative employment opportunities in rural areas and also a high incidence of poverty as a result of low wage levels and seasonal employment opportunities. **More detailed investigation of the characteristics of self-employment in rural areas is required.**

ICT Skills

Data on Information and Communication Technology skills, and skill gaps, are currently sourced regionally through ad-hoc surveys. **Regionally commissioned surveys on ICT skills ought to be examined in order to determine the issues of concern for regional development, and these issues addressed wherever possible through national surveys.**

Qualifications

Efforts to arrive at a coherent framework for naming qualifications need to be continued.

Learning and Skills Council Data

Reporting from the Learning and Skills Council tends to lag behind the standard set by the DfES. Given the data held in the FE Individual Student Record (ISR), this is surprising and needs to be corrected. Where the range of student background information gathered in the FE ISR exceeds that in the National Pupil Dataset the former should be taken as the standard for the latter.

Higher Education Statistics

The practice in Higher Education statistics of naming institutions should become the norm in all phases of education.

The practice of charging for analyses which have a general relevance to regional government, as in HESA charging for analyses of students by home postcode, should be reviewed. If the charges are unnecessary the practice should stop. If the charges are currently necessary, then the institutions involved should be supported in moving to a position where they are not.

National Pupil Dataset

The National Pupil Dataset consists of individual student records from a range of different sources, and supports a wider range of analyses than is possible with aggregated data. **The development and extension of the NPD to include FE, HE, and AE should be supported.**

The code of practice adopted by the DfES Analytical Services Section attempts to strike a balance between on the one hand protecting the privacy of individual students and schools, and on the other not blocking legitimate research. However, in its present form the code prohibits analyses which identify individual schools. Information which might be regarded as routine, and which would be of value to schools and to regional and local government cannot be made available. **Development of the NPD needs to take place in a context of consultation with regional bodies, and be sensitive to user needs.**

Missing Data on Education

In London, for example, one in twelve school places is in the independent sector. **The paucity of information available on the independent school sector needs to be corrected.** Education is vital to growth, and gaps in information provision must be met.

Information on Infrastructure

Households and Dwellings

Household numbers are important for planning purposes, including the key purpose of monitoring housing supply. ODPM at present estimates numbers of households by using its household projection model and the most recent ONS mid-year population estimates. This process therefore builds on any errors in the mid-year population estimates with any errors in the modelling assumptions. The projection model is quite robust for England but lacks the good regional data inputs it requires to be as robust at and below regional level. The 2001 Census results show that the process needs review.

Regional household estimates should be put together completely separately from the projection model. This may involve survey information, and provide better data for the projection process. The projections are an important adjunct to the population projections, and also require robust regional projections of marital status. At present GAD prepares national marital status projections that have to be 'applied' to regional/local populations.

The collection of housing data varies across England. Some regions collect their own housing data via a survey, while others rely on information collected by ODPM through the HFR and P2 forms. There are resource implications of both ODPM and regions collecting data, as well as issues relating to consistency of data collected.

Estimates of dwellings are reliant upon returns made by local authorities. These are partial at best and hence estimates tend to undercount change, leading to wide discrepancies with high growth estimates of households. **The planning process would be less frenetic if estimates of dwellings were improved using different data sources, including the returns made relating to council tax.** More information on vacancies and second homes would also improve regional planning, and allow more robust projections about changes in house prices.

Density data poses a problem for some local authorities, with many only able to report gross data rather than net. Monitoring of affordable housing is a problem for some authorities; not all monitor this at present and so are unable to supply data. There are no robust data available on the condition of the current housing stock. **A nationally consistent measure of housing affordability is also absent and would be useful,** not least in understanding the dynamics of local labour markets.

Land Use

Regional bodies need to monitor the use of land, including the availability of land for development, and to assess potential for growth. **There are problems around definitions of terms used in relation to land,** which need to be addressed between regions and with local authorities. The importance of the National Land Use Database needs to be stressed to local authorities.

Energy Use

ARO welcome plans by DTI to calculate energy consumption data by region. As well as assisting regional agencies in their role of ensuring that regional economic development is sustainable, energy consumption data also provides a useful indicator of levels of economic activity and wealth within different areas. **Energy figures ought to include *all* energy (including aviation and marine fuel) to enable 'footprint' data to be created for each region.**

Internet Connectivity

Data on Internet connectivity are made available from Internet Service Providers, but are not collected in a way that allows for production of figures at the regional level. **Attempts should be made to obtain Internet connectivity information for each region.** Information is required on type of connection and type of subscription. **Data on broadband take-up would be useful apart from information on other forms of Internet connectivity, and could be sourced separately.** Regional Development Agencies are often heavily involved in ensuring Internet access in efforts to improve productivity.

The Importance of Transport Data

An efficient transport network in any region or sub-region can make a significant difference to the ability of local and regional economies to function effectively. It follows that having sound and detailed data on transport issues will be helpful in ensuring we can understand and monitor relative regional growth rates, and the factors which contribute to improving the growth of the regions. Essentially, regions need to understand:

- How well or how poorly regional transport networks are performing;
- How easily or otherwise people and businesses across each region can access that network;
- The level of investment in transport networks, and the effectiveness of that investment.

Highways Agency Data

There is a need for more Highways Agency data to supplement the useful material already available in 'Regional Transport Statistics'. Ideally this would include data on motorway speeds and levels, times and locations of congestion, sub-regional data, and breakdowns of the current data by vehicle classification (with particular interest in goods vehicles).

Rail Passenger and Freight Data

There is a notable lack of regional and sub-regional rail passenger and freight data, including regional data on the reliability of passenger services, and this should be corrected. Given the number of companies running services in each region, it would seem appropriate for the SRA to co-ordinate the collection of this data, since they would be in the best position to be effective.

Traffic Congestion

Currently there are no satisfactory data available detailing traffic congestion. **Data on the severity, location, frequency and duration of congestion on different types of roads would all be useful in understanding regional, sub-regional and local issues. Data concerning the perception of congestion would also be useful.**

Industrial and Commercial Floorspace

Regions do not all currently have sufficient data on the amount of floorspace available to business, and this should be addressed. This information is important for regional planning purposes, and must be used to inform assessments of the capacity for growth, urban renaissance strategies, and spatial strategies. These data have not yet been collected in all regions; some are collecting it for the first time this year and it remains to be seen whether authorities are able to supply it. Consultation with local authorities has suggested that the monitoring of leisure developments will be a problem. More guidance and assistance should be given.

Development and Transport

In most regions, the extent to which new development is achieved in integration with transport networks, particularly public transport networks, is critical to a number of regional objectives, not least the issue of improved growth. **Indicators which help to measure the level of integration of new development with existing transport networks would be useful.**

Contextual Policy Areas Relevant to Economic Growth

Regional bodies cannot isolate economic policies from their wider context. The following information would help in understanding that context.

Access to Services

Information on access to services provides context for development plans. A great deal of information about access to services is derived from private companies and may therefore be vulnerable to discontinuity in supply or problems with quality. **Further information is required on access to services in many rural areas. Measures of access to services in urban areas are also sought. Information is of course required at a smaller geographical scale than the region, as localised loss/gain patterns may be masked by more general trends.**

Social Capital

The notion of social capital is of increasing interest to policymakers. **Development work on measures of social capital is supported.**

Crime and Disorder Data

Data on crime and disorder are widely used by regional and sub-regional partners as one component for measuring quality of life, and in identifying obstacles to business development in certain areas.

Crime data has particular value when it is available at a small area level, where it can reveal useful, fine-grained detail about individual neighbourhoods.

Supply problems with crime and disorder data arise primarily from three issues:

- Concerns about issues of data protection and privacy, arising at least partially from a lack of understanding and trust between partner organisations. **Protocols should be established specifying basic minimum arrangements for sharing of crime data;**
- Little national integration of data to provide regional and national level benchmarks which provide useful comparators for local data. **Work should be undertaken to integrate crime datasets where possible;**
- Dispersal of potentially useful data sets amongst a number of suppliers, who are often (a) unaware of its value, or (b) unable or unwilling to supply data in a form that has utility outside the organisation of origin.

Cultural Data

Culture plays an important role as a catalyst for development, way of attracting relocations and investment, and in improving quality of life. There is a growing demand among regional and sub-regional organisations for data on the cultural sector. Unfortunately, the range and quality of data currently available from official sources on the cultural sector fall far short of meeting these needs. Some of these deficiencies are apparent only at regional and sub-regional levels while others also apply at the national level.

Defining the Cultural Sector

DCMS is currently testing a prototype Cultural Data Framework (CDF) in an effort to map the cultural sector to SIC codes. However, the CDF contains a number of gaps, where activities that fall within the cultural domain either share a SIC code with non-cultural activities or are not identified within the SIC at all. A key development that could assist here would be the creation of new 5 digit codes, nesting below the appropriate 4 digit codes, in order to differentiate between cultural and non-cultural activities, and for data relating to these 5 digit codes to be made available via NOMIS in the same way that data at other levels are at present. **Support should be given to efforts to improve definitions of the cultural sector.**

Cultural Participation and Spending

There is a paucity of data on participation and spending in cultural activities, including sporting activities. One way of addressing these gaps would be to add relevant questions to existing surveys that cover associated areas. For example the General Household Survey looks at a number of health and health-related areas and could possibly absorb questions relating to

exercise, participation in organised sport, or membership of sports clubs without losing its focus. The Family Expenditure Survey already includes data on household expenditure on 'leisure goods' and 'leisure services', but the cultural sector would benefit from a more detailed breakdown of these goods and services (for example, by introducing a 'museums, galleries, and heritage' category).