

# Press Release

**- Embargo: 00.01hrs, 1 April 2008 -**

**1 April 2008**

## **Statistics Free of Politics: New UK Statistics Authority Launches Today**

The new UK Statistics Authority comes into existence today. It is an independent body, with powers and the obligation to promote, improve, and safeguard official statistics across the UK. Its aim is to rebuild public trust in Government statistics.

Amongst the powers of the UK Statistics Authority it will:

- **award or remove the 'National Statistics' kite mark**



The 'National Statistics' kite mark will be awarded to figures that meet the highest statistical standards. Where the UK Statistics Authority finds deficiencies in any statistics it will have the power to name and shame and if necessary deny 'National Statistics' status.

- **through the new UK Statistics Authority Publication Hub, separate statistical analysis from political comment**

The new Publication Hub (live from 1 April on [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)) will be a one-stop shop providing statistics which are accessible, clear, and free from political commentary.

The level of trust in official statistics is currently very low in Britain, a fact recognised by Government through the introduction of the legislation, with cross-party support and support from the devolved Administrations, to establish the new Authority. A recent survey released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 17 March 2008

found that only one in five people think figures are compiled without political interference. The UK came 27<sup>th</sup> out of 27 in a recent survey within European countries of trust in their Governments' statistics.

From today, the UK Statistics Authority, and not Government Ministers, will be in charge of the nation's main economic and social statistics produced by ONS – on prices, labour market, household income, population estimates and so on. The Authority will be fully independent and will report directly to Parliament, not through Government Ministers or departments: so that the public can be confident that, from now on, these figures cannot be subject to political interference or manipulation.

In addition, the Authority will have oversight of all UK official statistics, with statutory powers and the obligation to promote, improve and safeguard official statistics across the UK.

**Speaking today Sir Michael Scholar, the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority said,**

“Good and honest statistics are vital for understanding our society and our economy, and for well-founded policy making. If you can't trust official statistics you are in the dark, not knowing where you are or where you are going. We need to have good numbers – accurate and accessible, comprehensive and clear, and we need to be able to trust them.

“The UK Statistics Authority will not shy away from taking difficult decisions. We will ensure that the public are given access to the facts, without political commentary. The Authority has been granted its statutory powers by Parliament, with cross-party support and support from the devolved Administrations. We are mandated to perform this role in the public interest in order to restore trust, and that is what we mean to do”.

**- ENDS -**

**For more information please contact Suzanne Halls  
on 020 7261 8327 or 07971 186710.**

## Notes to Editors

1. The Statistics and Registration Service Act gained Royal Assent in 2007: [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga\\_20070018\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070018_en_1)

2. Sir Michael Scholar KCB was appointed Chair of the new Authority in September 2007 in open competition, and with Parliamentary approval under the new procedure. He is President of St John's College, Oxford. He has been a governor of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research since 2001. Previously he was Permanent Secretary to the Department of Trade and Industry (1996 to 2001), Permanent Secretary to the Welsh Office (1993 to 1996) and Private Secretary to the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1981 to 1983).

3. The non-executive members of the authority were appointed in open competition and are:

Lord Rowe-Beddoe of Kilgety (David Rowe-Beddoe), who will occupy the Deputy Chair post with responsibility for the governance of the Office for National Statistics.

Professor Adrian Smith FRS, who will occupy the Deputy Chair post with responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of all official statistics across the UK.

Professor David Rhind CBE, FRS, FBA who was Chairman of the Statistics Commission and was Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the City University in London until July 2007. He is a non-executive director of the Bank of England's Court of Directors, and until 1998 was Director-General of the Ordnance Survey.

Partha Dasgupta who is currently Chief Executive of the Pension Protection Fund and a former Managing Director at Barclays Global Investors.

Sir Alan Langlands FRSE who is Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dundee. He was Chief Executive of the National Health Service in England 1994-2000.

Moirra Gibb CBE who is Chief Executive Officer of Camden Borough Council

Professor Steve Nickell CBE, FBA who is Warden of Nuffield College, Oxford. He was a member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee from June 2000 to May 2006.

4. The Authority also includes three executive members. These are: the National Statistician, Karen Dunnell; the ONS Finance Director, Steve Newman; and the Head of Assessment once appointed.

5. The new Publication Hub will list each day's new National Statistics releases from all Government Departments as they are published at 9:30 am daily. There will in each case be an electronic link to the relevant page of each Department's website. The hub will therefore permit direct access to the statistical releases produced by statisticians in Departments, without political commentary. This is an interim version of the UK Statistics Authority's Publication Hub which is currently under development.

6. On 17 March, 2008, the ONS published the latest survey on public confidence in official statistics. This showed that only one in five thought figures were produced free of political interference; and only one in six agreed with the statement "the Government uses figures honestly when talking about its policies".

7. The postal address for the UK Statistics Authority is, Statistics House, Tredegar Park, Newport, NP10 8XG.