ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY
DATA | EVIDENCE | DECISIONS

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Sent by email

2 November 2026

Dear André Loranger,

Re. Royal Statistical Society priorities for the statistical system

We are writing to congratulate you on your appointment as National Statistician and to introduce you to the Royal Statistical Society and our work on public statistics.

The RSS is a membership society and chartered body for statisticians and data scientists. We have more than 7,000 members working across academia, industry and the Government Statistical Service. We are a charity with strategic objectives to improve the use of statistics and data in decision making, and to improve public understanding of statistics. We work closely across the statistical system and seek to engage constructively with both producers and regulators to help ensure that official statistics are high quality, trustworthy and responsive to the needs of decision-makers, users and the wider public.

The National Statistician has an important role to play both in providing visible professional leadership across the statistical system and in performing an important public leadership role for the statistical profession. As the statistical system is entering a new phase following a period of significant challenge and reform, visible leadership, engagement with users and stakeholders – as well as working closely with the UK Statistics Authority Board – will be important in maintaining trust and confidence in official statistics and supporting continued improvement across the system.

We look forward to working with you during your tenure as National Statistician and, in that context, we thought it would be helpful to set out our key priorities for the statistical system. We will soon publish our response to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's review of the statistical system, in which we welcome the Committee's analysis and set out a number of recommendations on leadership, governance, user engagement, parliamentary accountability and data sharing. The priorities outlined below reflect those wider themes, alongside areas where we believe the statistical system can continue to strengthen its service to users.

We do not expect immediate progress in all these areas – especially as we recognise and support the ONS's current focus on improving economic statistics, where it is of paramount importance that the UK has an accurate picture. We would support you in initially focusing on ensuring that the UK's economic statistics reach the required standard. Alongside those efforts, we would like to see plans established to help move towards delivery of our priorities – which we will believe will strengthen the UK's statistical system and help ensure that the type of recovery plan needed for economic statistics now is not required again.

1. Putting users at the heart of the statistical system

Official statistics are a public asset that serve government, business, researchers and citizens alike. While the UK statistical system has made significant progress in engaging users, we believe there is an opportunity to build a stronger and more transparent partnership between producers and users of statistics. Users should be able to understand how priorities are set, how needs are considered, and how decisions are made about what statistics are produced and how they are developed. The RSS has recently published a paper setting out our views on how to strengthen user engagement across the system. We would welcome continued progress towards a statistical system in which users play a



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meaningful role in shaping priorities, identifying emerging needs and informing the development of official statistics.

We also believe it is important to recognise the breadth of the user community. Official statistics are vital for researchers, businesses, civil society organisations, journalists, local organisations and individual citizens – as well as for government. Effective engagement with these users is essential if statistics are to meet the needs of all those who rely upon them.

As part of this engagement, we would encourage continued attention to how statistics are accessed and used in practice. The ways in which people discover, consume and reuse information are changing rapidly, creating opportunities to improve accessibility, discoverability and understanding. Statistics should be easy to find, interpret and use, whether by policymakers, researchers, businesses, local organisations or members of the public.

2. Ensuring statistics support place-based and devolved decision making

The new government has set an ambitious agenda for devolving decision-making. As local governance structures evolve there will be a growing need for high-quality statistics that support decisions at a local level. We would encourage a focus on producing accessible and reliable statistics for meaningful local geographies, enabling policymakers, local authorities, community organisations and citizens to understand the places in which they live and work.

It will be important to ensure that any changes to local government structures do not diminish the availability or usefulness of local statistics, and that users can continue to access information at the geographic levels most relevant to decision making. High-quality population, migration and demographic statistics will be particularly important in supporting this agenda.

3. Maximising the long-term value of investment in the statistical system

The UK statistical system faces a significant period of change, as it develops new approaches to population statistics, makes greater use of administrative data, and responds to evolving user needs. A major challenge facing this work is the need to improve data sharing across government departments – we would be happy to support you in making the case to Cabinet Office to emphasise the need of prioritising this. We would also encourage continued focus on building long-term capability across the system, ensuring that official statistics remain relevant, trusted and fit for purpose in the years ahead. As a first step. this will mean improving understanding of capacity and capability across the statistical system. We would be pleased to support this work through bringing people together across the system, while drawing on our members' expertise, where that would be helpful.

Major statistical programmes represent significant national investments, and we believe their value should be measured not only by the statistics they produce, but also by the lasting improvements they create across the wider system. While the 2021 Census delivered hugely valuable outputs, many users had hoped that more of the infrastructure, data assets and methodological developments associated with the programme would be reused more broadly. As decisions are taken on the future of population statistics, we would encourage a continued focus on creating lasting benefits across the statistical system and ensuring that public investment delivers the greatest possible value for users.

We hope that this indication of our priorities is helpful ahead of our initial meeting on 9 November and look forward to meeting you then together with RSS President-elect Guy Nason who will take up office on 1 January 2027.



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Yours sincerely,





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