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September 2010

Duncan Macniven
Registrar General
Ladywell House
Ladywell Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7TF

(Sent by email and C.c.'ed to: National Statistician, Norman Caven, Robert Beatty, Peter Scrimgeour, Glen Watson and Pete Benton)

Dear Mr Macniven,

A UK coordinated technical approach to the delivery of 2011 Census outputs

With the Census Offices planning process beginning to focus on the content and delivery mechanisms for outputs, the SASPAC Advisory Panel have asked that I write to you to request a coordinated approach to the technologies to be utilised.

We fully support the original Output Aims set out in the National Statistician and Registrars General Statement of Agreement on the conduct of the 2011 Census. This specifically mentions the desire to produce *consistent, coherent and accessible statistics for the UK* through the production of a joint database (and/or a common data schema). The Annex of this Statement goes on to describe how dissemination is likely to be web dominated and how the adoption of a hypercube approach could provide a flexible table generation tool for users.

ONS' 2011 Census Outputs Strategy has committed to building an Application Programming Interface (API) that will allow partners to directly search and query a backend Census datastore. Indeed, development of this service is well underway and SASPAC will be helping to test this system later this year. Much of this work is being taken forward by the Census Web Services Working Group, a sub-group of the 2011 Census Outputs Working Group.

However, for UK Census outputs to be available in a *consistent, coherent and accessible manner*, users will require similar systems to be available for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Therefore, we strongly request the development of complementary services by GROS and NISRA and would be more than happy to offer any help and support to

achieve this. It may be that you already have plans along these lines and we would be pleased to hear them.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Norris
Local Government Association
Chair of SASPAC Advisory Panel

SASPAC is a software package designed to access UK Census datasets (since 1971) and was used by a majority of the public sector following the release of 2001 Census outputs. It is owned by the Local Government Association and managed by the Greater London Authority. The software is a 'not for profit' initiative and funded purely through subscriptions by users, who have been supporting the project since its inception in 1979.

This letter has also been endorsed by the following organisations:

Dave Martin on behalf of ESRC Census Programme and RSS Census Study Group

The Economic and Social Research Council's Census Programme provides access to UK census data from 1971-2001 to the academic community through a portfolio of online data services and secure settings. The programme's online services currently have around 35,000 registered users comprising students, researchers and academic staff in universities and colleges. The programme funds eight data support services, including CIDER and CDU, and has also supported a range of research and development projects based on the anticipated delivery of 2011 census datasets through web services. ESRC are committed to working in partnership with the UK census organizations to deliver high quality online services to users of the 2011 censuses. The Royal Statistical Society's Census Study Group is a cross-sectoral group focused on matters of broad interest to the census user community. While the specific requirements of different user sectors vary, there is strong support for strong coordination across the UK, allowing users with national requirements to access consistent and comparable data and services.

Oliver Duke-Williams on behalf of CIDER

The Centre of Interaction Data Estimation & Research (CIDER) is one of the data dissemination units funded under the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Census Programme 2006-11, and provides access to the migration and commuting data from the 1981, 1991 and 2001 Census to the academic community through its WICID web interface.

Justin Hayes on behalf of CASWEB

The Census Dissemination Unit (CDU) is one of the units of the Economic and Social Research Council Census Programme, and is based within Mimas at The University of

Manchester. It provides online dissemination, and support for the use of the aggregate outputs from recent UK censuses to the UK academic community via its Casweb interface and related services. The CDU is currently developing data feed approaches to the dissemination of aggregate census information.