

To: Sir Bob Kerslake

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## UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH REPORTS BACKLOG – UPDATE

### Summary

1. This submission provides an update on the backlog of unpublished reports from research projects commissioned by DCLG under the previous Government and sets out the issues surrounding these reports. It seeks advice on securing publication of the remainder of the backlog.

### Background

2. Following the election in May 2010, the then Analytical Services Directorate compiled a list of all unpublished reports from externally commissioned research projects. These projects were commissioned by the previous administration and the list was compiled with a view to publishing all the reports after consideration by new Ministers.
3. **159** reports were identified that had been commissioned by the previous administration, but remained unpublished as of May 2010. These reports are the outputs of commissioned research projects totalling £21.8 million.
4. David Rossington (the then acting DG) agreed a publication strategy with the Secretary of State in December 2010. It was agreed that Sheridan Westlake would scrutinise all the reports before being sent to Ministers in policy-themed groups for publication approval. Once Sheridan and Ministers have approved them, the reports have been published on the archive section of the Department's website alongside a Written Ministerial Statement. All reports are clearly marked as providing data from research commissioned by the previous administration.
5. Where reports are relevant to current policy they have been submitted to the relevant Minister for clearance and published under the appropriate policy area on the DCLG website.
6. Since this approach was agreed **80** reports have been published leaving a further **73** to publish in order to clear the backlog. A list of the remaining unpublished reports is at **Annex A**. Published reports may be found here:  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/general-content/corporate/researcharchive/>

## Consideration

7. We are concerned at the time it is taking to work through this backlog and ensure all reports commissioned by the previous administration have been published. All 73 remaining reports have been cleared for publication by the policy and analytical colleagues responsible for them and none of them contain controversial findings.
8. While appreciating it is time-consuming for the Sheridan to scrutinise all these reports in detail, we have been pressing him to clear the next set of reports for some time now. There are reputational risks to the Department in not clearing the backlog in a reasonable time frame.
9. The Department routinely publishes the outputs of all commissioned research to comply with obligations placed on us by: 1) the Freedom of Information Act and 2) EU procurement directives. **Annex B** contains the full guidance on publishing research in DCLG.
10. The delays in publishing the backlog means we are well behind the deadlines set by this guidance and need to get back on track. This issue is particularly acute for social research outputs as these should be published within 3 months of the projects completing to conform to the professional guidelines set by the Government Social Research service.
11. The Department is now receiving regular queries from the authors of several reports asking when we intend to publish their work. They are all keen to have their reports published and the continuing delay is damaging the Department's relationships with our contractors. This may have consequences for the future if we wish to use these contractors again.
12. We have also received a Freedom of Information request specifically asking about our report backlog. The reply to this request stated we would be publishing the reports in due course, but this is not happening at present. We would anticipate receiving similar Freedom of Information requests in the future.
13. All the remaining 73 unpublished reports are typeset and ready for publication as soon as we receive the necessary clearance from Sheridan and from Ministers. Amongst the draft submissions currently with Sheridan is one covering thirteen reports on communities and decentralisation issues. Policy and analytical colleagues are particularly keen to see these reports published as soon as possible.
14. **We have regularly chased Sheridan – who is keen to see the backlog cleared – but without success. Is there anything more you think we could or should be doing? I would be happy to discuss.**

**Stephen Aldridge**  
Director, Analysis and Innovation

Unpublished reports from projects commissioned under the previous administration

See attached file

20120221 Unpublished Research Reports - Annex A Unpublished Reports.xls



## PUBLISHING ANALYTICAL OUTPUTS IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Research reports

1. The Department for Communities and Local Government routinely publishes the outputs of **all** externally commissioned research projects. This will usually take the form of a report and summary in PDF format on the DCLG website:  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/publications/research-stats>
2. This is to comply with **two legal obligations** placed on us by: 1) the Freedom of Information Act and 2) EU procurement directives.
3. We are required to publish research results in order to meet our **Freedom of Information obligations**. These are set out in the science and research schedule of our publication scheme which states that:  
*"Research project reports (with effect for projects completed after November 2002) will be published within six months of project completion or, at the latest, when quality checks, including relevant peer review, are completed or when a policy decision based on its findings is publicised."*
4. There are **no exemptions** for withholding completed research publications. We can only delay the timing of a publication if it is linked to a policy announcement.
5. Under the **EU procurement directives**, research is exempt from the requirement to advertise in the OJEU provided that the benefit (or results) of the research do not accrue exclusively to the contracting authority (i.e. CLG). We meet this requirement through publishing our research. If a project is commissioned under these exemptions, we are in breach of the EU directive if we do not make the results public in this way.
6. These publication protocols for research have been in place **since 2002**. Details of all current and past DCLG research projects, including any associated research publications, are also publicly available through our **Research Database** website:  
<http://www.rmd.communities.gov.uk/programmes.asp>

### Social research

7. From February 2010, the Government Social Research Publication Protocol requires **social research outputs to be published within three months** of receiving the final report. All other research publications must continue to meet the 6 month FOI deadline.

### Official statistics

8. The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires the UK Statistics Authority to prepare, adopt and publish a **Code of Practice for Official Statistics**. It is designed to ensure the integrity, impartiality and objectivity of UK official statistics. All National Statistics and official statistics are covered by this Code, which is available here:  
<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>
9. The Code applies to all UK bodies responsible for official statistics. This includes DCLG, HCA and the TSA. Among other things, the Code requires all such bodies to:
  - *"Release statistical reports as soon as they are judged ready, so that there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed"*.
  - *"Ensure that those producing statistical reports are protected from any political pressures that might influence the production or presentation of the statistics."*
  - *"Draw public attention to any change to a pre-announced release date and explain fully the reasons for the change at the same time. The relevant statistical Head of Profession has the final decision and should not be influenced by non-statistical matters."*

Analysis and Innovation  
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