

20 June 2007

Dear Mr Martin

UK HISTORIC SECTOR NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

You wrote to me on 12 March 2007 enclosing a memorandum entitled 'UK Historic Sector National Accounts'. It has taken us a while to establish all the necessary background and I apologise for the delay in offering you a formal reply.

The Commission secretariat has considered the issues raised in your memorandum, and discussed with ONS, and the attached note sets out our findings. In preparing this, we have consulted ONS on various points and you will have seen their reply to our questions, in a letter from Colin Mowl (11 June), which was copied to you. Our assessment takes account of the ONS response.

Our main findings are:

- Your memorandum points to persuasive evidence of data corruption for pre-1987 data amongst the individual data series of the sector national accounts. We believe that ONS should address this, either by replacing the corrupted data (where possible) or by leaving pre-1987 data locations empty if no other course is practicable.
- The quality problems with the pre-1987 data are not flagged up in the metadata on data quality that ONS provide for users. We believe that ONS should supply users with a specific quality statement about pre-1987 data for sector national accounts, and place this in an appropriate place on the ONS website where it is likely to be seen by potential users of the data.

On both these issues, ONS have indicated, in Colin Mowl's letter, that they will be taking action in the near future to address the problems. We welcome this.

Thank you for raising this topic with the Commission. I understand that ONS has invited you to visit them to discuss these issues in more detail; I hope that these discussions prove fruitful.

I am copying this letter and attachment to Colin Mowl at ONS.

Yours sincerely

