

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

SCOTSTAT Board meeting update (8th meeting)

Introduction

1. This note reports back to PAMS members on the business of the eighth SCOTSTAT Board meeting.
2. Papers from the meeting will be available on the SCOTSTAT website at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board/papers.asp>
 and the minutes at:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/scotstats/board/minutes.asp>
 These have not yet been added to the website (as of Monday 14th November), but I have asked for this to be done.

Meeting report

3. The eighth meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board was held on Tuesday 23rd August 2005 at St Andrew's House. The Board was chaired by Rob Wishart, Chief Statistician, Scottish Executive.
4. There was a better attendance at this eighth meeting than at some previous meetings. Once again however, local authority reps were prominent.
5. The agenda for the meeting was as follows:
 - Committee plans and progress (Paper SCOTSTAT 4/05)
 - Statistician Group strategic discussions (Paper SCOTSTAT 5/05)
 - SCOTSTAT Board priorities (Paper SCOTSTAT 6/05)
 - Presentation on Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.
 - Update on disclosure control
 - AOCB items on
 - (a) Target setting
 - (b) Results of SCOTSTAT survey
 - (c) Review of SCOTSTAT website
 - (d) Update on population surveys
6. Paper 4/05 Summary of Committee Workplans 2005/06
 This paper set out a summary of the workplans submitted by the individual SCOTSTAT Committees together with an appendix containing the detailed reports which the Committees had submitted. This included a report from PAMS.

There remain concerns about the operation of some of the Committees. A number have yet to meet, or do not meet as regularly as is really required, while others, like PAMS, appear to be working quite effectively in their particular areas. There are also a number of areas of statistics which do not appear to be covered by any committee – in particular, life-long learning.

These workplans are a useful tool for the Board to keep an eye on the work of the Committees.

7. Paper 5/05 Statistician Group Strategic Discussions
 This brief paper outlined the current and proposed arrangements within the Executive for the Senior Statisticians to discuss cross cutting issues. A list of topics for future discussion were given which included:
 Methods; quality; Partnership Agreement monitoring; efficient data collection; internal and external use of statistics; National Statistics Framework and Code of Practice; Internet/intranet.

A list of cross office groups and planned training and development seminars were appended to the paper.

8. Paper 6/05 SCOTSTAT Board Priorities

It had been agreed at the previous meeting that Board priorities would be reviewed. A number of issues were raised in the paper:

- Is there a need for a more fundamental review of SCOTSTAT;
- Role and status;
- Relationship with Statistics Commission;
- Relationship with UK user interests;
- Broader analytical services.

9. Possible development priorities were also listed, expanding on the list of priorities originally agreed and outlining progress made so far. In the resulting discussion, it was agreed that no changes were necessary to the Board's priorities. These are set out in the Annex to this paper.

10. A presentation was made by Robert Williams on Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). He talked about the improvements which are planned – including the addition of the small area population estimates which were added at the end of October. The 2006 SIMD is due in October 2006. Possible additional data sources and the review of geography were discussed.

11. Paper 7/05 Disclosure control

This paper outlined work which is going on within the Executive to look at disclosure control. Software has been identified which could be used to apply disclosure control procedures to existing data before release. This is being evaluated.

The Executive are planning a review of their disclosure control by the end of 2005. Standards and guidance will be issued. This does not include GROS and ISD who have their own procedures.

12. AOCB (Any Other Competent Business)

The only AOCB item which generated any interest was on the Population Surveys where a lot appears to be happening. There is a review of the Scottish Household Survey and the Health Survey ongoing. They are not moving towards integration as such but there is to be more harmonisation of questions and consistency between surveys.

The ONS process to integrate surveys as the Continuous Population Survey continues to develop and the Executive are awaiting results with interest.

13. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 25th January 2006.

Conclusion

14. This paper summarises the issues discussed by the SCOTSTAT Board at its meeting in August 2005. I should be happy to provide further information if required.

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ANNEX A - Agreed priorities for SCOTSTAT Board

Initial priorities

- Neighbourhood Statistics
- Dissemination and use of SE statistics including use for research purposes
- Performance information and key statistics
- Data protection, data sharing and use of administrative data

To be dealt with in other ways and if appropriate re-considered as part of next year's plan.

- Range of statistics produced
- Equality/diversity statistics
- Code of Practice

No early Board action but Board members should be kept up to date with developments

- Statistical methodology
- Costs and value for money
- Electronic data capture
- Broadening the scope of ScotStat to include other organisations
- Surveys