

POPULATION AND MIGRATION STATISTICS COMMITTEE (SCOTLAND)

Report on the Fifteenth Meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board

Introduction

1. This note reports back to PAMS members on the business of the fifteenth SCOTSTAT Board meeting held on 16th November 2009.
2. The agenda, papers and minutes for the meeting are not yet available on the SCOTSTAT website (as at 25th November) but should be shortly at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/scotstat/board/meetings>

Meeting report

3. The fifteenth meeting of the SCOTSTAT Board was held on Monday 16th November 2009 at St Andrew's House. The Board was chaired by Rob Wishart, Chief Statistician, Scottish Government.
4. The agenda for the meeting was as follows:
 - 2009 Statistics Stakeholder Conference
 - Statistics User Forum and Scotstat (Paper A)
 - Update on UK Statistics Authority Assessment Process (Paper B)
 - Update of Single Outcome Agreements (Paper C),

5. 2009 Statistics Stakeholder Conference

This year's conference was held on 29th October in Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh – some of you may have attended the day. The Board received feedback which was generally positive and discussed ideas for next year's event. Any comments from PAMS members either on this year's conference or on ideas for the future would be welcome.

A copy of the report on the membership of the Scotstat network, which was discussed at the conference, was circulated at the meeting. This set out profiles of numbers and types of members and their interests. Can I encourage PAMS members to encourage those they know who might be interested to register with Scotstat so that they can receive updates on the latest publications and be consulted on statistics matters which might be of interest to them.

6. Paper A – Statistics User Forum (SUF) and Scotstat

The Statistics User Forum is part of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) and aims to provide a strategic voice for users of official statistics. Its current priorities are:

- Improved access to official statistics
- Confidentiality and disclosure control

- Geographic coding
- UK wide statistics
- Income statistics

The UK Statistics Authority had funded a post at the RSS to help statistics producers build their engagement with users and this work is largely being driven through SUF.

Scotstat is seen as a means by which the Scottish Government has developed a good forum for engaging with users of Scottish Statistics. SUF is proposing that Scotstat become observer members of SUF, receiving papers, newsletters and other communications and having the opportunity to co-sponsor events.

This proposal was discussed and it was agreed that further information should be sought, perhaps inviting someone from SUF to attend the next Scotstat Board meeting and agreeing to receive SUF papers so that information could be obtained about possible overlaps and common interests. It was not entirely clear who from Scotstat would be appropriate to be involved as the contact person as it would be inappropriate for it to be a member of the Scottish Government and was considered too much of an imposition for another board member to take on the role.

7. Paper B – Update on UK Statistics Authority Assessment Process

The report outlined the work on assessing Scottish Government Statistics products which the UK Statistics Authority has already undertaken. Five assessments have so far been completed and all have successfully retained their National Statistics designation. However a number of issues have been identified regarding user engagement.

For example, the Authority would like to see more effective action plans resulting from user engagement and progress against these plans. They also want to see how issues identified from user engagement are prioritised and developed. They are also concerned to see UK comparable statistics made available, although the Scottish Government have pointed out that policy differences often mean that this does not make sense.

8. Paper C – Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs)

This short report informed the Board that reports on the SOAs for 2008/09 have now all been submitted. There will be no requirement to submit a further SOA next year.

SOLACE had led the “Improving Local Indicators Project” and version 4 of the Menu of Local Indicators was expected to be published shortly (it is now available).

9. Stakeholder activity within the Statistics Group

At the meeting a paper was tabled which set out a brief summary of consultations and stakeholder engagement which had recently been taking place within the Scottish Government Statistics Group. This included a note on the proposed Census output consultations and the PAMS conference on 30th October.

This was the first time for several meetings that this sort of report had been presented and it was very much welcomed by Board members who felt that one of

the roles of the Board was to ensure that there was a proper level of user consultation going on between the Scottish Government and statistics users. It is hoped that a similar report can be produced for each meeting in future.

10. Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament Financial Scrutiny Unit

This was another paper tabled at the meeting from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe). The Financial Scrutiny Unit was been set up within SPICe at the end of October to aid the scrutiny of the public finances in Scotland within the Parliament.

The paper outlined the protocols which have been agreed between SPICe and the Scottish Government for access to financial information.

11. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in the spring.

Conclusion

- 12.** This paper summarises the issues discussed by the SCOTSTAT Board at its meeting in November 2009. I should be happy to provide further information if required.

Author: Jennifer Boag, Falkirk Council

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