

Minutes of the Business Population and Demographics Statistics (BPDS) User Group meeting - 13th June 2017.

Attendees

Myrto Miltiadou	ONS (Chair)
Karen Watkins	ONS (Minutes)
Andrew Allen	ONS
Frances Pottier	BEIS
Jiten Champaneri	BEIS
Steve Dempsey	BEIS
Cathy Atkinson	BEIS
James Harris	ONS
Mike Hope	Greater London Authority (GLA)
James Cushing	Central Bedfordshire Local Authority
Matthew Mirecki	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Sian Mellhuish	City of Westminster Council
Diane Telford	Sutton Council
Effie McDonald	Scottish Enterprise
Heather Smith	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Marina Curran	Scottish Government
Alex Morton	South Lanarkshire Council
Lynda Kennedy	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

1. Introductions

Myrto Miltiadou introduced herself as the new head of the Business Register Strategy and Outputs Team at the ONS. She explained that she is responsible for the UK Business: Activity, size and location and Business Demography publications. She asked everyone to introduce themselves and briefly explain their interest in the business data.

Karen Watkins from the ONS explained that she is responsible for the production of the UK Business: Activity, size and location and Business Demography publications.

Frances Pottier explained that she is heading the new team in BEIS and is responsible for the UK Longitudinal Small Business Survey, the UK Innovation Survey and the Business Population Estimates (BPE) publication.

Jiten Champaneri explained that he has recently joined BEIS from the Home Office and is now responsible for the Business Population Estimates (BPE) publication.

Andrew Allen from the ONS said that he is working on the redevelopment of the Statistical Business Register (SBR).

Mike Hope of the GLA explained that he uses a lot of ONS data. The Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) is used in their employment projection and any changes to the IDBR impact on their job numbers.

James Harris explained that he is an ONS London statistician and has used the IDBR for the sample and weighting of the London Business Survey. His analyses have mainly focussed on the London area but they are now expanding this to other major cities.

James Cushing from Central Bedfordshire Council explained that they use the local authority dataset when looking at funding. They use it to help with their forecasting and job models.

Diane Telford uses the local authority dataset to help with producing reports on the local economy.

Sian Mellhuish explained that they use the local authority dataset to help with examining the economic status of Westminster.

Steve Dempsey said that he heads the Data Science Team at BEIS. He is currently working on building a longitudinal IDBR dataset without the time lags.

Matthew Mirecki from Greater Manchester explained that they use IDBR data to help understand the Greater Manchester economy and to develop sector strategy at a local level.

Lynda Kennedy explained that they use the data for the NISRA publication and also they are responsible for updating and maintaining the IDBR in Northern Ireland.

Effie McDonald from Scottish Enterprise explained that they use IDBR data to look at economic indicators at a regional level.

Heather Smith from Highland and Islands Enterprise explained that changes on the IDBR impact on their data.

Alex Morton from South Lanarkshire Council uses the data for economic analysis. He is also involved in the Glasgow City Region Deal.

Marina Curran from the Scottish Government said that she is responsible for producing the Scottish Annual Business Statistics Data and also the Businesses in Scotland publication.

2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed. The following updates were given on the actions:

Action 1 - BEIS and ONS to seek to widen the current membership of the Group by establishing new links with other user groups, academics, LEPS and City regions.

Update - Myrto explained that ONS had started working on expanding the group by inviting all local authorities currently in receipt of IDBR data but she also explained that ONS and BEIS would be working together to find suitable contacts for the LEPs and City Regions.

Action 2 – BEIS to lead on any further discussions about self-employment and the availability of data on this issue.

Update – Frances explained that there was no update yet on this action. BEIS and ONS agreed after the meeting that this action would be removed as, due to a change in staff, it wasn't clear what it specifically entailed and what its purpose was.

Action 3 – ONS (Richard Prothero) to make initial proposals to BEIS on options for providing more guidance for users on the comparability and coherence of the different National Statistics publications

Update – James Harris explained that Richard's team had started work on this and had pulled together links to about 40 outputs. He asked the group if there was still an appetite for this work and if they were willing to engage with this process. Mike Hope at the GLA said that it is useful to see how the statistics fit together and that this would be a good building block. The group in general agreed that this was a worthwhile piece of work and were happy to engage where necessary. James said he would feed this back to Richard Prothero.

Action 4 – ONS and BEIS to consider options for expanding the group, including whether to include LEPs in the process and how this would fit with other groups looking at wider data issues.

Update – See Action 1 – ONS and BEIS will work together over the coming months to establish contacts for expanding the group.

Action 5 – Cecilia Campos to provide links on guidance concerning access to secure datasets.

Update – Cecilia was unable to attend the meeting so an update from her will be circulated to the group after the meeting.

3. Update on the Business Population Estimates (BPE) Publication

Jiten explained that he has recently joined BEIS and will be producing the Business Population Estimates this year. The provisional date for publication is October/November. He explained that he will try to keep as close as possible to previous publication dates but will be able to advise better once he has received the data and started working on it. Karen mentioned that if the publication was going to be released later it was important to make sure that it didn't coincide with the Business Demography release date as this can cause confusion for users.

4. Update on UK Business: Activity, size and location publication

Karen explained that the UK Business publication would be published in the week commencing 2nd October. A new data explorer tool was being developed and would be available later in the year. She explained that issues with the old data explorer had been fed back to the developers. During the new development stage the old data explorer tool would no longer be available. The data could still be accessed through a series of datasets but could only be downloaded as a csv file. As there was a risk that the new tool may not be available in time for the October release the data for 2017 was going to be published in an Excel workbook. The data sent to NOMIS had been increased to include turnover sizebands. On publication day this information will be available from 2010 to 2017.

5. Update on Business Demography

Karen explained that the reference period for the publication was changing. Business Demography measures the number of active businesses over the course of a year. Prior to this year's publication this was always done by measuring the number of actives, births and deaths between 1 single point in November one year, to the same point in November the following year. From 2017 the reference point will change from November to December. This will bring the reference period closer to the Eurostat recommended calendar year reference period and also bring it in line with the Annual Business Survey. Analysis will be carried out in order to try to measure the impact of the change in reference period.

Myrto asked if anyone had any feedback as this was a good time to enhance the publications.

6. Businesses in Scotland

Marina explained that the publication was scheduled to be released the first week of November. There would be no significant changes with the publication. The main focus was on developing the Scottish government Open Data platform. The aim would be to provide further breakdowns such as intermediate zones and new indicators on job creation and productivity. They would need to get input from stake holders on this.

7. Future Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) developments.

Andrew explained that the new Statistical Business Register (SBR) will replace the IDBR. The main purpose of the IDBR was to be used as a sampling frame for ONS business surveys. Much more weight will be put on economic analysis. BEIS currently make an estimate of the businesses that fall below the VAT and PAYE thresholds (these are not currently included on the IDBR.) The BEIS estimates are only available down to region level. The aim is to use the new SBR to capture a true picture of the whole UK business population for the first time. Up to date measures of employment and turnover will be available for direct economic analysis. Employment is updated from a regular quarterly feed. ONS are looking into getting a monthly Real Time Information (RTI) update from HMRC (this is not necessarily monthly figures.) They are also looking into improving the metadata i.e. making it a lot clearer where the data comes from and the time frame.

Andrew asked for any feedback, especially from the local authorities present. He said this was an advance warning that there would be discontinuities in the data.

Mike Hope asked if there was a process for user consultation. He asked if there were any mechanisms in place for the wider community. He explained that it is important to understand the implications of discontinuity as what ONS do is key to the analysis they publish on the London economy.

Andrew explained that the project was just starting the alpha phase. The end product could be 3 or 4 years away.

James Harris asked if there would be a way of seeing what would have been on the IDBR and what is there as a result of self assessment and Mike Hope said that an IDBR flag on the data in the Virtual Microdata Laboratory (VML) would be helpful. Andrew Allen confirmed that a lot of analysis would be undertaken regarding any discontinuity. Steve Dempsey asked if he was proposing a back series. Andrew said there would be some parallel running with the IDBR but no back series.

Matthew asked if there was a timeline for rolling it out to the local authorities. Andrew said not yet. There was no legal gateway in place yet to do this.

James Cushing asked if there will be any change in the procedure to access the microdata. Andrew confirmed there will be a similar approach to the process currently in place.

Lynda Kennedy asked if that means that the Business Register Employment Survey (BRES) will become a thing of the past. Andrew explained that the current IDBR and future SBR need local unit information. At the moment there is no admin data at this level. ONS needs the data for regional statistics. Lynda also asked if there will still be a need for the quarterly employment survey in Northern Ireland. Andrew said this will all be picked up in the consultation.

8. "From cupcakes, to caterers, to global transportationers: analysing London's businesses" Sub-national Economic policy, ONS

James Harris presented some of the analysis work he has been doing supporting the Mayor of London. This type of analysis has been used to help with policy making. Please see attached presentation slides.

After the presentation James Cushing asked how suppression was dealt with at Middle Super Output Area level. James explained that when applying disclosure control rules it was important to analyse and group the data appropriately. For example, for this analysis, Science and Technology was presented as a whole and not broken down into categories.

Steve Dempsey explained that he was doing work on clusters and it was going to be published in July. He asked how James links the data to International Trade in Services (IT IS) data. James explained that initially this is done at reporting unit level and then broken down further using enterprise and local unit level. Steve Dempsey explained that he is working on sorting out issues with time lags on the source data. This will hopefully be less of an issue when the new SBR is introduced.

The presentation was well received and the group gave James good feedback. James Harris asked if anyone was interested in carrying out similar analysis. Matthew Mirecki from Greater Manchester said he would be interested with working with James in future. They have data for the creative and digital industries at an aggregate level but want to look into it further. James Cushing from Central Bedfordshire said that they were interested in further analysis on exports data and also more analysis at LEP level. Steve Dempsey explained that his cluster analysis includes LEP level.

Action: Steve to provide link to cluster analysis

James Harris said that he was intending to carry out a consultation to see what users would like to see in future regarding ITIS and exports.

9. Discussion about future BPDS meetings.

Myrto explained that any feedback on the meeting would be welcome. She said to feel free to e-mail her with any suggestions myrto.miltiadou@ons.gov.uk. James Cushing said that he would be happy to invite LEP colleagues to help increase the attendance.

It was suggested that the meeting should be around the same time next year. BEIS will be chairing the meeting.

10. A.O.B

There was no A.O.B.

Myrto thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.