

# Preface

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The National Statistician, Len Cook, asked me in December 2003 to conduct an independent review of the measurement of government output in the National Accounts, with a Final Report to be produced by the end of January 2005. An Interim Report was published in July 2004. This volume constitutes the Final Report.

Both the task and the timetable were challenging. The fact that it has been possible to produce these reports is due to two important inputs. The first is the remarkable quality of the team assembled for the Review. This team has been headed by Joe Grice, Deputy Head of the Government Economic Service, with Aileen Simkins from the Department of Health as co-director. It has consisted of ONS staff and of staff seconded from the Bank of England. The team are:

Liz de Freitas, James Hemingway, Ben King, Phillip Lee, Michael Lyon, Nicola Mai (until July 2004), Sukwinder Mehmi, Alwyn Pritchard, Janet Snelling, Amanda Tuke, Lorraine Watson, and Georgina Fletcher-Cooke as a consultant.

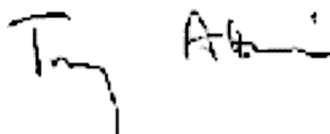
The review team has consulted extensively with other branches of ONS, in particular with the National Accounts Group. While I take full responsibility for the contents of the reports, and their limitations, I should stress that their production has been a team effort, and I am most grateful to the members of the review team and ONS staff for their many contributions over the past year. At Nuffield College, I have been greatly helped by Lin Sorrell, Warden's Secretary.

The second important ingredient has been the advice and help that we have received from a wide variety of quarters, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. The review has benefited greatly from the help of an Interdepartmental Co-ordination Group, chaired by Len Cook. The list of members is in Appendix A. We are grateful to members of the Co-ordination Group for their views and for facilitating work within their departments. In the review, we have sought to consult widely. We organised an open consultation meeting at the Bank of England in May 2004, to which interested parties were invited. I have had meetings with the Cabinet Secretary, the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England, the Statistics Commission, the Chair of the Audit Commission, the Comptroller & Auditor-General, and the Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. We had a valuable meeting with representatives of the Royal Statistical Society. Members of the review team have made presentations at a large number of conferences and seminars, from which we have received useful comments.

The review team consulted the Devolved Administrations, visiting Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh. In September 2004, we organised a seminar to discuss how to take work forward with the Devolved Administrations, and were greatly heartened by the positive response.

The review team paid particular attention to international consultation, in view of the importance of international guidelines and because we wished to learn from the experience of other countries. The team visited Eurostat on two occasions. We visited the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and participated in the October meeting of the National Accounts Working Party. The team visited the Statistics Offices of Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden – all of whom are in the vanguard on this particular agenda. Appendix A gives details of international contacts. We are most grateful for the time and welcome given to us. The team had very helpful discussions with Steven Keuning, Director General of Statistics at the European Central Bank, with Rob Edwards, Australian Deputy Statistician, during his visit to the ONS in March 2004, and with Jack Triplett, formerly of the US Bureau of Economic Analysis. None of these bodies or individuals should, of course, be held in any way responsible for the views expressed in this report.

The publication of the Interim Report in July 2004 was intended to generate discussion. We are most grateful to the many people who sent us comments. In particular, we would like to thank Sir Jack Hibbert and Rob Edwards. We have not always been able to resolve the issues raised but we have attempted to address them.



**Tony Atkinson**  
January 2005