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► **ONS Census 2011 Output Consultation**

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Dear Sir,

I refer to the invitation in 'Census Web' circulated on 14 December 2009 to comment on proposals for 2011 Census output, and attach a submission from the Output Area Classification User Group (OACUG - more information in the submission). As a group which promotes the use of the Output Area Classification (OAC) and acts as an umbrella organisation for those who use it, we felt that it was more appropriate to respond with key requirements for a new OAC classification based on the 2011 Censuses than to comment in detail on tables.

We discussed this approach with our contact, Joe Traynor, who confirmed that it would be helpful. We were also influenced by the fact that we liaise closely with ONS through Stephen Bond, who is a member of our steering group, and has confirmed that plans are in hand for a 2011 classification, with the necessary input to be available. Our submission is therefore to underline requirements on behalf of the wider user community in the UK; we will be making a similar submission in response to the current GROS consultation, and to NISRA in due course.

As our submission may be somewhat distinctive, I should be most grateful if you would let me know that it is being taken into consideration. We would of course be happy to provide further information or comment if further consultation is required.

With Regards,

Dr. Alex Singleton
Chair of OACUG
3/19/2010

ONS Output Consultation: Submission

▶ About the Output Area Classification User Group (OACUG)

The Output Area Classification User Group (OACUG) promotes the use of the OAC National Statistic and acts as an umbrella organisation for those who use it. OACUG is affiliated to the Statistics User Forum of the Royal Statistical Society. Our overriding aim is that OAC should be freely available to all users - helping to create a return from the investment in the Census - through what we term 'open geodemographics'.

More information on our website <http://areaclassification.org.uk/>

▶ About the Output Area Classification (OAC)

OAC distils key results from the 2001 Censuses for the whole of the UK at output area (OA) level in order to describe the characteristics of local areas. It is one of the few readily available Census based sources for the UK. Encoding data with OAC helps structure other data for further analysis, allows resource targeting, and provides a rapid, intuitive appraisal of general socio-economic and spatial trends in datasets that would otherwise be missing. OAC is one of a group of area classifications which are National Statistics, and are available in the public domain.

The view of our Group is that there is a strong case for OAC to be repeated using results of the 2011 Censuses to reflect the changes that will have taken place over the decade, and we wish to ensure that the key elements for this will be in place.

▶ Requirements for a 2011 UK Output Area Classification

The Group understands that plans are in hand in the ONS for a 2011 classification, and for the necessary input to be available. Our submission is therefore to underline requirements on behalf of the wider user community. We appreciate that some of the stated requirements may be outside the specific scope of the current consultation, and that some major decisions on output policy are still to be made. However, we feel that the value of the detailed output now under discussion will only be fully realised when combined with optimal arrangements for use, and that these should be agreed at the earliest possible opportunity.

General approach to 2011 output

The group welcomed the statement in the White Paper on the 2001 Census, that the main output of the Census would be free at the point of use, as crucial to the aim of open geodemographics, given that results for small areas are a uniquely valuable output.

It also welcomes the approach of replicating the 2001 table templates for 2011 in both England and Wales and in Scotland, as this should ensure that the range of data used in OAC 2001 is available for OAC 2011. In addition the Group is seeking the maximum stability of OA boundaries, and has submitted views accordingly in the consultation on output geography.

Key Requirements

Essential to OAC 2011 are:

- ▶ Counts - suitable counts covering the full range of census output topics on a UK wide basis.
- ▶ Input data for 2001 summary at:
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/methodology_by_theme/area_classification/oa/variables.asp

- ▶ for the input data, and hence the derived classification, to be freely available in the public domain, without restriction on use.
- ▶ for the boundaries of OAs in digital form - for visualisation, and supporting codes and look up files - for linking other data to OAC, to be similarly available in the public domain without limitation on use.

Highly desirable are:

- ▶ for the data input - key statistics - for OAC to have high priority in the output programme, and for the data to be released concurrently for all OAs.
- ▶ for the input data and method for OAC, as well as the classification, to be readily accessible on the Census organisation websites in the interest of transparency.

The Group would also welcome the production of 2001-11 time series at OA level, or at least ONS guidance on the creation of statistically valid time series, as the basis of potential analysis of change in area characteristics.

Submitted by:

Daniel Lewis

OACUG Secretary

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19/03/2010