

Scottish Census Steering Committee

Minutes of Meeting

29 June 2010

Minutes of the Scottish Census Steering Committee (SCSC) meeting held on Tuesday 29 June 2010 in the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS), New Register House, Edinburgh.

Present:

Peter Scrimgeour	GROS, Director of Census
Shirley Cameron	GROS, Census Field Operations Branch
Sandy Taylor	GROS, Census Outputs Statistician
Neil Jackson	GROS, Census Processing, Surveys and Quality Branch
Eileen Sinclair	GROS, Census Community Liaison Manager
Prof. Ken MacKinnon	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Prof. Michael Anderson	The University of Edinburgh
Ian Lees	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Sheila Logan	Information Commissioner's Office
Jenny Boag	RSS Statistics User Forum
Jalal Chaudry	Scottish Council for Muslims
Grahame Smith	Scottish Trade Union Congress
Jon Harris	CoSLA
Prof. David Martin	The University of Southampton
Dr Eric Baijal	NHS Borders

Apologies:

Duncan Macniven	GROS, Registrar General
Anne Moises	Scottish Government
Ranald Mair	Scottish Care
Ken Macdonald	Information Commissioner's Office
Ros Micklem	Equalities and Human Rights Commission
Jennifer Wallace	Consumer Focus Scotland
Alan Dickson	Capability Scotland

1. Welcome and introductions – Peter Scrimgeour

- 1.1 Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting, explaining that as Duncan had been called to another meeting, he would chair on this occasion. Peter welcomed Sheila Logan, Information Commissioner's Office who was standing in for Ken Macdonald. Members were thanked for their previous input and for their continued interest.

2. Minutes of the of Meeting – 13 April – Peter Scrimgeour

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate reflection of the discussion and will now be published in the [Scottish Census Steering Committee](#) section of the GROS website..

Matters arising from the minutes – Peter Scrimgeour

- 2.2 Equality Impact Assessment (para 2.2) – The final version was still to be published on the GROS website, taking into account changes required after the approval of the Census Order.
- 2.3 2011 Census Questionnaire – Messages had been reinforced as suggested at a previous SCSC meeting and the questionnaire had now been finalised. Printing of the questionnaire had started. A copy of the questionnaire would be circulated to SCSC members.
- 2.4 Prisons – A meeting had been arranged to discuss the use of administrative data. The use of these data would not necessarily be prevented by the Data Protection Act, however the matter was still under consideration as there were other issues to resolve.

3. 2011 Census Outputs – Report on Consultation Progress – Sandy Taylor

- 3.1 Sandy introduced the paper explaining that the consultation had occurred over 3 months and had been extended for two weeks to allow for late responses to be received.
- 3.2 The consultation was intended to provide the basis for developing, over the course of 2010, an agreed set of final specifications of the main outputs from the 2011 Census that meet the needs of a majority of users and make the best use of the data collected.
- 3.3 Sandy explained the 11 consultation points users had been asked to comment on, giving examples of responses received for each.
- 3.4 Ken MacKinnon asked if the income question would be considered in any future census, as the data lost due to the removal of the question for 2011 Census was regrettable. Ken explained that the question occurs in other social surveys and there may be potential to use these and include questions on areas in the census so that cross tabulation can be done on representative

and large scale sample surveys. Peter agreed that there may be opportunities to explore this with other surveys and would welcome members' input.

- 3.5 Sandy explained the next steps to be taken, with a summary of the consultation findings being published on the GROS website in late summer. This report would include the common messages received from respondents. Thereafter a draft outputs prospectus and timetable would be published followed by a possible further iteration of consultation.

4. Statistical Disclosure Control – Update on progress – Neil Jackson

- 4.1 Neil gave a presentation in support of the paper, to inform members about the GROS plans for protecting personal data in the published outputs from the 2011 Census. A method known as targeted record swapping would be adopted, a pre-tabular method meaning that all adjustments would be made to the data before any tables are produced, a similar method to the one used by GROS in 2001. The plan was that this method would be used by all 3 UK census offices to fulfil the agreement made by the [UK Registrars General](#) to agree a single method of statistical disclosure control for UK outputs.
- 4.2 Neil gave a detailed demonstration of how a table can appear to be disclosive, but that swapping records between geographical areas before tables are produced would provide protection by creating doubt in the mind of the user as to whether a particular cell value in a table was genuine.
- 4.3 Further work, being led by the Office for National Statistics with GROS input, includes:
- The continuing development of an algorithm to determine which records are most at risk of disclosure.
 - Research into the optimum swap rates to use.
 - The method of determining the risk level for a particular record.
 - Which variables to use to identify 'pairs' for swapping.
- 4.4 Other ongoing work includes investigation of the use of hypercubes, which would allow for more detail and flexibility of outputs than in previous censuses.

Discussion on items in the paper

- 4.5 The method of swapping was discussed. All swapping would be done automatically before any tables were produced.
- 4.6 Members commended the method used by GROS in 2001 and welcomed that all UK census offices had now adopted a similar approach as the basis for 2011 disclosure control. Additionally, the method would stand up well internationally.
- 4.7 Jenny Boag commented that record swapping would be difficult in the scenario of unique communal establishments. Neil explained this type of

establishment would be looked at separately and a decision taken on the most appropriate method to avoid disclosure.

- 4.8 The percentage of records being swapped would not be made public, to reduce the risk of sophisticated computer systems being able to identify personal information.
- 4.9 Output areas would remain the base geography for published outputs; the Scottish output areas are smaller than those in other areas of the UK.
- 4.10 Michael Anderson requested that, as far as possible, the boundaries of civil parishes be left unchanged, as there were already issues with consistency over time due to changes made in successive censuses which were not highlighted. He requested that any changes be clearly identified to users.

5. Community Engagement Update – Action Plans – Peter Scrimgeour

- 5.1 Peter introduced the paper explaining that it was an update on the information shared at the last SCSC meeting. Work was continuing to develop the 'hard to count' strategy's action plans. The current phase would involve engaging with the population, including 'hard to count' groups, to get the best response possible from the census. The 22 Census Regional Managers had been recruited and would start training in early August. Tailored action plans for each 'hard to count' group were being developed for the Regional Managers to start working with. Further updates on the progress of this work would be given at future SCSC meetings.

Discussion on items in the paper

- 5.2 Jon Harris asked if Gypsy Travellers would be one of the groups. Peter explained that work had been ongoing over recent years to engage with this community and good links had been made at local levels with local authority site managers. Members suggested that there may be other forums or events where information on the benefits of the census to 'hard to count' groups could be emphasised. Peter asked that members contact Eileen Sinclair, the Community Liaison Manager, with information should they have knowledge of this type of forum.
- 5.3 Other publicity action would be undertaken in the run up to census day to motivate and explain to the population as a whole the importance of completion and their obligation to do so.

6. Any other business – Peter Scrimgeour

- 6.1 No other items were discussed.

7. Date of the next meeting

7.1 A date for the next meeting was still to be agreed. This was expected to be held in October. Members would be canvassed for a date when it became clear if this would be an appropriate opportunity to meet.

7.2 Topics to be considered for subsequent meetings include:

- Outputs update.
- Outputs demonstration of system.
- Action plans for community engagement.

General Register Office for Scotland

August 2010