

MEETING BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES, NITB, DETI AND NISRA

DISCUSSION OF SUB-REGIONAL DATA

11 SEPTEMBER 2013

Attendees – James Gillan, NISRA (Chair) (JG)
Paul Rutherford, DETI (PR)
Stephen Bill, NITB (SB)
Michael Lipsett, Down Borough Council (ML)
Don Wilmont, Causeway Coast and Glens (DW)
Sharon Maheffy, Ards Borough Council (SM)
Brian Connolly, NITB (BC)
Patricia Wyers, NISRA (PWY)
Joanne Henderson, NISRA (JH)
David Leonard, DETI (DL)
Pamela Wilson, NITB (PWI)

A number of Local Authority representatives with a particular interest in tourism statistics met with NISRA and DETI officials to discuss their requirement for local level statistics.

As required by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, NISRA seeks to engage effectively with users of statistics to promote trust and maximise public value and to investigate and document user needs. This document summarises the outcome of this meeting as required by the Code.

In addition to the current minutes NISRA has also published a summary of responses to the recent consultation on tourism statistics at http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/tourism-statistics/user_engagement.htm

Background

- NISRA officials provided an overview of the recent history of tourism statistics and their designation as 'official' statistics. NISRA explained that the priority to date had been to develop Northern Ireland level statistics before developing sub-regional level data.
- The DETI representative provided some background on the policy context of tourism statistics and the role of statistics in monitoring targets. The 9 key destination areas (KTAs) for tourism were also outlined.
- DETI's research agenda that related to tourism was outlined. However, this work would be at NI level and was not intended to be disaggregated to Local Authority (LA) level.
- The NITB Research manager outlined the role of NITB and their remit to conduct tourism research.

Local Authorities information needs

- Local Authority representatives outlined their need for tourism data at an LA level explaining the onus on them to look at the impact of tourism at LA level in an holistic manner.

- It was felt that there was a need to ensure statistics should be available in a timely fashion and comparable at both regional and sub-regional data.
- It was recognised that historically, tourism statistics were limited.

Available data sources

- It was recognised that while NISRA would like to provide data at as low a level as possible, this must be balanced against the robustness of the data and its fitness for purpose. Increasing the sample size of the NI surveys was discussed but it was explained that the increases required to provide local authority data at the level of detail being requested, would be prohibitively expensive and very difficult to justify.
- It was noted that NISRA are not responsible for the administration of the RoI surveys.
- NISRA offered to provide estimates on the number of trips, the number of nights and visitor expenditure in each of the LAs and provided mock up tables for a number of possible presentational models. The consensus of the LA representatives was that (LA) statistics on a 2 year rolling average and at KTAs (for the most recent year) would best suit the immediate need. It was agreed that NISRA would provide these data following the publication of the 2013 Quarter 1 data for NI and the responses to the consultation. All published data will include associated confidence intervals, where these are available to inform users about the quality (including the volatility) of the estimated data.
- Local Authority representatives indicated they were content to have the single year KTA estimates presented, even though individual District Councils might appear in several KTAs. NISRA agreed, but undertook to make this clear in the notes to such tables.
- It was explained that even the combined visitor survey datasets would not support disaggregation below the District Council level. However, NISRA would consider whether this was feasible for the employee jobs surveys (Census of Employment / Business Register Employment survey).
- The availability of LA data on hotels, guesthouses, guest accommodation and bed & breakfast establishments and on employment in tourist related industries was also discussed. It was agreed that data on employment in tourist related industries would be further investigated with a view to providing at LA.
- More information on self catering statistics was requested and NISRA agreed to consider this.
- Users preferred to continue to have the existing Occupancy Statistics reported on the current geographical basis (i.e. not as KTAs) as these were mutually exclusive categories. It was pointed out that this might limit the ability to also report these on a KTA basis, because it might create disclosivity issues. NISRA agreed to consider this.
- It was also recognised that the new LA boundaries that are to be introduced in 2015 will impact on how local authority data will be provided in future.

The Way Forward

- It was agreed that NISRA would seek to provide the data agreed at the meeting, by the end of October if possible. The priority of ensuring Northern Ireland level statistics were produced to a consistently high standard and establishing the quarterly statistics series established was the next priority for NISRA.
- The group agreed that there was a need for NISRA data to be supplemented with local level data but they would need to work together to ensure consistency in approach.

- NITB agreed to seek approval to deliver a Regional Visitor Attitude Survey, providing information at Destination level, on a biennial basis. NITB also offered to share some of their expertise in conducting evaluation of local tourism events.