

Richard Hughes
Chair, Office for Budget Responsibility
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

By email

26 September 2023

Office for Budget Responsibility request for pre-release access to ONS statistics

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 26 September 2023 seeking exceptional pre-release for economic statistics to support the work of the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

As you will be aware, when the then National Statistician announced an end to pre-release access to ONS statistics he said that ‘Should there be a need for exceptional pre-release access to particular individuals for a specific release this would be fully transparent’. The overarching principle behind these arrangements is that we should work to ensure the integrity of our statistics but also recognise that in exceptional circumstances, the public benefit likely to result from limited pre-release access significantly outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from such access.

On that basis, and having discussed this with the National Statistician, ONS grants you exceptional pre-release access, as requested, for the purposes of preparing your draft economic and fiscal forecasts for the Chancellor. To be specific:

- ONS will grant you pre-release access to the dataset associated with the second quarterly estimate for GDP in Q2 2023, to be published on 29 September, consistent with the publication of the Annual National Accounts 2023.
- We will make these data available to you from 0930 on Wednesday 27 September – noting that this will enable you to start working with the data around 46 hours before they are published.
- We understand that you will limit the number of individuals who will have access to the data covered by this arrangement. Before access is granted, we ask that you supply to us the names and the positions of those who will have pre-release access, both for the purposes of producing and quality assuring your forecast.

I trust that these arrangements will prove satisfactory, but if you have any further questions or concerns, please come back to me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Keohan'.

Michael Keohan

Deputy National Statistician and Director General, Economic, Social and Environmental
Statistics Group | Office for National Statistics