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*Dear John*

### **Spring Statement 2018 and the 2017Q4 GDP and labour market datasets**

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has never sought regular pre-release access to statistics. We have periodically sought and received exceptional pre-release access to specific releases to facilitate production of our twice-yearly forecasts ahead of Budgets and other fiscal statements. In these cases, the forecasts that have benefitted from the pre-release access are not published until well after the data in question. We do not use pre-release access to comment on data at the point of publication.

We provide the Chancellor with successive draft forecasts (termed 'rounds') ahead of each fiscal statement. The 2018 Spring Statement forecast timetable requires us to deliver the third round of our economic forecast to the Treasury on the morning of 22 February. This coincides with publication of the February 2018 second estimate of GDP and associated datasets and is one day after the February 2018 labour market statistics are published. These releases contain information that is integral to the production of our economic forecasts. The third round of our economic forecast is the final opportunity to reflect new data before it is published on 13 March.

The OBR is therefore requesting 48 hours exceptional pre-release access to the following datasets:

1. Q4 2017 Second Estimate (22 February 2018)
2. Q4 2017 Business Investment (22 February 2018)
3. December 2017 Index of Services (22 February 2018)

We are also requesting 24 hours exceptional pre-release access to the following dataset:

4. Labour Market Statistics (21 February 2018)

This would provide relevant analysts and decision-makers in the OBR with these four datasets on the morning of 20 February. We would limit the number of recipients to the minimum necessary. This would consist of the three members of the Budget Responsibility Committee, the OBR's Chief of Staff and six OBR officials. In broad terms, the pre-release access will allow one day for processing and analysis by staff, half a day for discussion with the Budget Responsibility Committee and half a day for those judgements to be implemented in the economic forecast.

*With thanks and best regards,*



Robert Chote  
Chairman