

Andrew Percy MP

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Richard Hughes
Chair

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obr.uk

Dear Andrew,

Thank you very much for your letter regarding my post-Autumn Statement public engagement activity, and for your appreciation of the role of the OBR.

Part of my role as Chair, alongside the other members of the Budget Responsibility Committee (BRC), is to communicate our forecasts and analysis in a variety of formats and fora. The centrepiece of this is, of course, the *Economic and fiscal outlook (EFO)* document itself, which garners widespread attention in Parliament, the media, financial markets, academia and civil society. However, my BRC colleagues and I also undertake as much external engagement as possible on the day of, and in the days following, publication of the *EFO* in order to explain our forecasts and answer questions about it. We do this through a variety of engagements with the media, civil society, and Parliament. Within the constraints of our legal mandate and the time available in the days after publication of the *EFO*, we aim to accept as many any invitations as we can, so as to allow us to communicate our forecast to, and respond to questions from, as wide an audience as possible.

With regard to our public engagement activities following the most recent Autumn Statement on Thursday 17 November, all three BRC members took part in our usual press briefing immediately after the Chancellor's Statement to Parliament which, on this occasion, was hosted by the Institute for Government. The press briefing was broadcast live and open to all who wished to attend in person or online. It provided us with an initial opportunity to present our forecast and take an initial round of questions from the media, civil society, and the public. Alongside publication of the *EFO* document and supporting material on our website, we also presented the highlights of our forecast on Twitter.

Following our Thursday afternoon press briefing, BRC members accepted invitations from 10 separate media outlets. I was interviewed on the BBC, Sky and ITV television immediately after the press briefing. I then appeared on the BBC Radio 4 PM programme and on Newsnight later that day. Professor David Miles, our economy expert on the BRC, spoke to Bloomberg, Market News, Talk TV and appeared on The Spectator's 'The Edition' podcast on the same afternoon. He also wrote a piece that appeared in the Daily Telegraph on Monday 21 November. Our aim is to agree to media requests whenever possible, but these are inevitably subject to time constraints in the days after a Budget or Autumn Statement.

In the days following the Autumn Statement and our press briefing, BRC members will also have spoken at six events hosted by an array of civil society organisations. David and I spoke at various events, organised by the Resolution Foundation, National Institute for Economic and Social Research, the Institute for Government and the Centre for Policy Studies. These events, all of which were free of charge, open to the public, and broadcast online, provide a further opportunity to explain our forecast and take questions on areas of the forecast that have garnered attention in the days after a Budget or Autumn Statement. And in the coming days I will also be speaking at events held by Policy Exchange and the Fraser of Allander Institute to discuss our forecast. On this occasion, as previously, we have responded positively to all think tank invitations received and all media invites that we were able to accommodate. We received no fee or other compensation for our participation in any of these events.

Finally, all three members of the BRC regularly appear before the Treasury Committee of the UK House of Commons, Finance and Public Administration Committee of the Scottish Parliament, and

Finance Committee of the Welsh Parliament. We have also appeared before the Committee for Finance of the Northern Ireland Assembly upon request. On this occasion, we appeared before the Commons Treasury Committee on 22 November and will appear before the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee on 13 December and before the Welsh Assembly's Finance Committee on 12 January. (Andy King, our fiscal expert on the BRC, also spoke at the Welsh Government's Tax Conference on 23 November.) These sessions provide an opportunity for parliamentarians to ask questions about our forecast for the UK economy and public finances, to explore their implications for those of the devolved administrations, and to hold us to account for the fulfilment of our legal duties. They are also open to the public, broadcast live, and available online.

Turning to your specific questions regarding the Resolution Foundation event on the morning of Friday 18 November, both my predecessor as Chair, Sir Robert Chote, and I have taken part in a Resolution Foundation event following Budgets and Autumn or Spring Statements for a number of years. On this occasion the initial invitation came to me, as were the invitations from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, Institute for Government, Centre for Policy Studies, Policy Exchange, and Fraser of Allander. The event was open to the public, not revenue generating (as no fee was charged for attending), and neither I nor the other members of the BRC were paid for that, or any other, post-Autumn Statement appearance.

With regard to any questions of real or perceived conflicts of interest, the *Budget Responsibility and National Audit Act* requires the OBR to undertake its work transparently, objectively and impartially. To adhere to those principles, we ensure (as set out above) that we speak to a wide range of organisations and individuals both in preparing our analysis and after the publication of our work. The range of stakeholders that we have consulted is recorded in the Foreword to all of our publications. The BRC are also held to account for performing our duties in line with these principles by our non-executive members (Sir Chris Kelly and Bronwyn Curtis OBE) and by Parliament, through our appearances in front of the Treasury Select Committee after each *EFO*.

Thank you once again for your letter and your interest in the post-forecast public engagement activities of the OBR.

Warmest regards,



Richard Hughes
Chair