

Article

# Economic statistics classifications and developments in public sector finances: September 2025

Includes the latest economic statistics classification updates, and information on future developments in public sector finance statistics.

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Release date:  
21 October 2025

Next release:  
21 November 2025

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# 1 . Overview

This article provides a summary of the most recent economic statistics classification decisions and provides transparency around our current methodology work to public sector finance (PSF) statistics, including the implementation of classification decisions.

Most methodological changes to the PSF statistics are prompted by the need to keep pace with the evolving economy, including the need to properly reflect classification decisions in the measurement of public sector fiscal aggregates. Where necessary, this article will outline the impact that our methodological changes have on PSF statistics. For more information about future developments, see our [Looking ahead - developments in public sector finance statistics: 2025 article](#).

Classification decisions facilitate the allocation of UK organisations to sectors of the UK economy based on their characteristics. These decisions are informed by the application of international statistical guidance contained within the [United Nations System of National Accounts 2008 \(2008 SNA\)](#), along with the [European System of Accounts 2010 \(ESA 2010\)](#) and the accompanying [Manual on Government Deficit and Debt 2022 \(MGDD 2022\)](#) where useful and appropriate. More information on classification decisions can be found in our public sector classification guide.

The guide enables the identification of those bodies classified to the public sector to inform the public sector boundary in the UK national accounts. The guide also includes other classification decisions, including transactions and schemes. Information on the organisations and transactions we expect to assess and classify in the next 12 to 18 months can be found in our forward work plan. For more information see our [Public sector classification guide and forward work plan](#).

## 2 . Economic statistics classification announcements

A summary of the most recent classification decisions can be found later in this release. For more information on classification decisions, see our [Public sector classification guide \(734 KB xlsx\)](#). Classification decisions are implemented in official statistics at the earliest opportunity, using sound methodology. All practical considerations are taken into account, including resource availability, within wider prioritisation.

### Organisations - Institutional units

#### Canal & River Trust

The Canal & River Trust manages waterways in England and Wales.

Following a classification review by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Canal & River Trust has been reclassified from the public non-financial corporations subsector to the private non-financial corporations subsector. This is effective from 17 October 2023, the date that public sector control was removed from their new articles of association.

#### Medical Research Council Pension Scheme

The Medical Research Council (MRC) funds medical research based in the UK. The MRC Pension Scheme provides retirement benefits for former and current employees of the MRC.

The MRC Pension Scheme is a defined benefit scheme, and the scheme's pension administrator is MRC Pension Trust Limited. The majority of the board members of MRC Pension Trust Limited, including the chair, were appointed by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) which is classified in the central government subsector.

The ONS determined that UKRI is the MRC Pension Scheme's pension manager, as it bears responsibility for the scheme's policy and strategy, and ultimate responsibility for the scheme. Therefore, the MRC Pension Scheme has been classified to the public pension funds subsector, with effect from 8 July 1975, the date the scheme was established.

## Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner

The Northern Ireland (NI) Climate Commissioner was established as an independent organisation with powers to monitor, advise, and report on the implementation of Northern Ireland's net-zero commitments by 2050. The ONS determined that the NI Climate Commissioner is an institutional unit, subject to public sector control. It is a non-market body, majority funded through grants from the NI Executive Office. Therefore, it has been classified to the central government subsector, effective from 6 June 2022, the date the NI Climate Commissioner was established when the [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#) received royal assent.

## British Tourist Authority

The British Tourist Authority (BTA), trading as VisitBritain and VisitEngland, is the national tourism agency in Great Britain. The ONS determined that it is an institutional unit, under public sector control, as the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport appoints the chairs of the relevant boards. The BTA is a non-market body as the majority of its income comes from government grants. It has been classified to the central government subsector, effective from 25 July 1969, the date the BTA was established when the [Development of Tourism Act 1969](#) received royal assent.

## Transactions and schemes

### Canal & River Trust boat licence payments

The Canal & River Trust provides boat licences for both private and business use. These boat licences are valid for the 96 canals and navigable rivers the Canal & River Trust manages.

The boat licence payments for private use have been classified as follows:

- other current taxes, rerouted as a payment levied by the central government subsector on individuals in the households sector
- other subsidies on production, rerouted from the central government subsector to the Canal & River Trust in the private non-financial corporations subsector

Business boat licences are required for use of the waterways by any kind of business, such as floating cafes, shops, or boats that are rented out for people to live or holiday in. The boat licence payments for business use have been classified as follows:

- other taxes on production, rerouted as a payment levied by the central government subsector on relevant businesses in the private non-financial corporations subsector
- other subsidies on production, rerouted from the central government subsector to the Canal & River Trust in the private non-financial corporations subsector

The classification of private and business boat licences is effective from 2 July 2012, the date the Canal & River Trust was established.

## Forward work plan

You can find information on the organisations and transactions we expect to assess and classify in the next 12 to 18 months (as changing priorities allow) in the [Forward work plan \(44 KB xlsx\)](#). However, it does not contain everything that may be classified.

There are no additions to or deletions from the forward work plan this month.

For more information on our classification process, as well as our forward work plan and public sector classification guide, see our [Economic statistics classifications web page](#).

Please email the Economic Statistics Classifications team at [econstats.classifications@ons.gov.uk](mailto:econstats.classifications@ons.gov.uk) with any queries about the classification decisions or the classifications process.

## 3 . Improvements and data updates in public sector finances statistics

The latest improvements and data update changes were implemented and explained in [the previous edition of this article](#), published on September 19, 2025. Routine data updates made this month are explained in the main [Public sector finances bulletin](#).

## 4 . Review of emerging issues in the economy

### Train Operating Companies

On 26 September 2025, the Department for Transport announced that [Greater Anglia, West Midlands Trains, and Govia Thameslink Railway will transition to public ownership](#) on 12 October 2025, 1 February 2026, and 31 May 2026 respectively. This is because their current contracts are expiring.

The announcement does not affect the statistical classification of these companies within the public sector.

The classification of train operating companies is determined by the nature of their contractual and financial arrangements with government, rather than ownership alone. This is outlined in our article [The ONS classifies train operating companies now running under emergency measures agreements](#) (published 31 July 2020).

Under emergency measures agreements (EMAs) and the subsequent National Rail Contracts, operators are subject to public sector control over their activities, revenues, and costs. This level of control meets the criteria for classification as public sector non-financial corporations.

Greater Anglia, West Midlands Trains, and Govia Thameslink Railway were already classified to the public sector before their formal transition to public ownership. As such, their treatment in the economic statistics will not change.

### Jaguar Land Rover

On 28 September 2025, the UK government announced [support for Jaguar Land Rover \(JLR\)](#). This provides a guarantee on a commercial bank loan of up to £1.5 billion to support their supply chain following a recent cyber-attack.

The loan from a commercial bank, backed by the Export Development Guarantee (EDG) provided by export credit agency UK Export Finance, is to be paid back over five years. This isn't direct government lending; it is a guarantee provided to a commercial bank to help it lend to exporters for working capital or investment purposes.

In economic statistics, most types of guarantees are not treated as liabilities unless they are called. As such, there is no immediate impact on the fiscal statistics from this intervention.

## 5 . Related links

### [Public sector finances, UK](#)

Bulletin | Released monthly

How the relationship between UK public sector monthly income and expenditure leads to changes in deficit and debt.

### [Looking ahead - developments in public sector finance statistics: 2025](#)

Article | Released 27 June 2025

What the Office for National Statistics sees as areas for future development in the public sector finance statistics.

### [Public sector classification guide and forward work plan](#)

Methodology | Released 21 October 2025

The public sector classification guide sets out a list of bodies that have been classified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as public sector bodies within the National Accounts. The forward work plan sets out the organisations and transactions that the ONS expects to assess and classify in the next 12 to 18 months.

### [Statistical classification to the public sector](#)

Article | Released 8 July 2024

Explains why entities are classified to the public sector, and the concept of public sector control and how this differs from the notion of independence.

### [Taxes and fees for sales of service: how they differ and why it is important](#)

Article | Released 31 May 2019

Defines and explains the main characteristics that lead to the classification of a transaction as a tax or a fee in the national accounts and public sector finances, and describes the effect that these classifications can have on economic indicators and the operation of government.

### [Classification review of universities in the UK](#)

Statement | Updated 19 December 2024

A further statement about our intention to review the transactions in which UK universities engage.

## 6 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), 21 October 2025, ONS website, article, [Economic statistics classifications and developments in public sector finances: September 2025](#)