

Labour reports Boris Johnson to statistics watchdog over misleading comments

Keir Starmer MP, Labour's Shadow Brexit Secretary, has today written to Sir David Norgrove, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, following comments made by Boris Johnson that Vote Leave's claim the UK sends £350m a week to the EU was 'grossly underestimated'.

- A copy of Keir Starmer's letter is below.

Dear Sir David,

Foreign Secretary's comments about the UK's financial contribution to the EU

I am writing to seek clarification on comments made by the Foreign Secretary yesterday [15 January] about the UK's financial contribution to the European Union (EU).

In an interview with The Guardian the Foreign Secretary said: "There was an error on the side of the [Vote Leave] bus. We grossly underestimated the sum over which we would be able to take back control."

The newspaper reports that "Johnson argued that the UK's EU contribution was already up to £362m per week for 2017-18 and would rise annually to £410m, £431m, and then to £438m by 2020-21 – 'theoretically the last year of the transition period.'"

The £350m a week claim made by the Vote Leave campaign has been widely condemned as inaccurate and misleading. For example, in September of last year the Statistics Authority wrote to the Foreign Secretary saying, "it is a clear misuse of official statistics." And yet, Mr Johnson has chosen to repeat this statement and expand on the claim even further. I do not believe this to be acceptable.

I would therefore be grateful if you could make a statement on the accuracy of the Foreign Secretary's most recent comments.

Yours sincerely

Keir Starmer
Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union