

Scottish Postcode Directory 2024/1

January 2024

Introduction

The Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD) bulletin contains specific information about each release of the Postcode Index and accompanying spatial data.

The Postcode Index links live and deleted postcodes to administrative, health, statistical and other areas. It also contains the Gridlink® one metre grid reference or National Records of Scotland (NRS) assigned grid references. The SPD is produced by NRS Geography, who provides geographic support to the Scottish Government (SG) and its associated agencies, as well as other organisations.

The Postcode Index uses the Government Statistical Service (GSS) standard 9-character codes for statistical geographies.

- The SG maintains the 'Standard Geographic Codes Register – Scotland' and is responsible for assigning new geographies with a 9-character code for Scotland.
- The register is available on the ['Small Area Statistics – Reference Material'](#) section of the Scottish Government website.

Code ranges for other geographies are those used by the organisation responsible for the geographies where a code range already exists, such as ITL; are historic geographies that pre-date the introduction of the GSS code structure, such as Output Area 1991, or are geographies that don't meet the criteria for GSS code structure, such as Island.

Users are encouraged to adopt these standard names and codes, as they are the recognised standard to be used for National Statistics publications. More information on National Statistics can be found on the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website.

Latest Statistics

The data is based on the January 2024 release of Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF) and contains:

	All postcodes	Live postcodes	Deleted postcodes
All postcodes	245,135	161,016	84,119
Small User	194,768	155,682	39,086
Large User	50,367	5,334	45,033
<i>Small User Linked¹</i>	<i>19,262</i>	<i>3,576</i>	<i>15,686</i>
<i>PO Boxes</i>	<i>31,105</i>	<i>1,758</i>	<i>29,347</i>
The number of live, digitised small user postcodes ² is 154,483.			

¹ Small User Linked: The Small User postcode that contains the grid reference of the Large User postcode.

² Live digitised small user postcodes: There are 1,199 live, undigitised small user postcodes. These postcodes were planned for 'administrative' purposes; and cannot be digitised as they have no distinctive geographical position.

1. Updates since 2023/2

1.1 Postcode Index

There have been no changes to the geographies on the Postcode Index.

1.2 Boundaries

Our continuous postcode improvement work using the latest Scottish Address Directory data is ongoing.

We aim to ensure that the postcode boundary encompasses all addresses that belong to the postcode, and can be distinguished as being either urban or rural. In urban postcodes, we follow the minimum sensible boundary, which is the area necessary to ensure all address content is contained while following features (road center lines, back garden fences, and/or natural features such as rivers and streams); whereas for rural postcodes that have scattered housing and farms, the postcode boundary will normally have fields and open land included. If there are any postcode boundaries you would like reviewed please contact the [Geography Customer Services team](#).

We use Ordnance Survey BoundaryLine product's High Water Mark to produce our clipped boundaries. If you notice any anomalies at the coastline when working with the postcode boundaries please let us know and we can investigate and feed information back to Ordnance Survey.

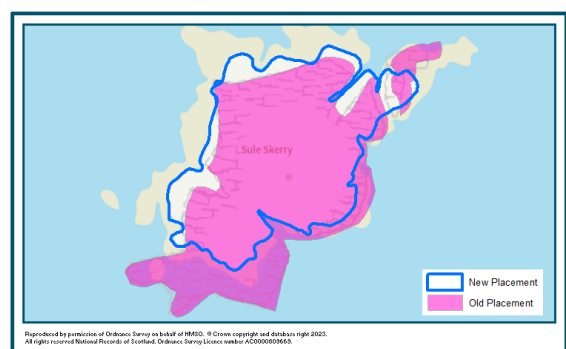
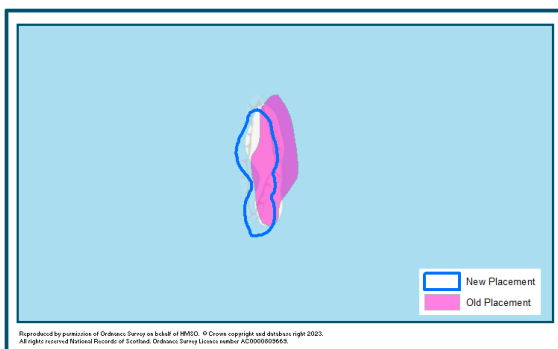
1.3 Island map - Ordnance Survey Positional Accuracy improvement

We were advised in August 2023 that Sule Stack positional improvement had occurred and was released in November OS MasterMap Topography Layer.

New aerial imagery flown as part of Ordnance Survey's National Cyclic Revision allowed them to correct the error on their datasets, which in turn has allowed us to provide a more accurate island map.

The image below shows the placement of Sule Stack before and after the positional improvement

Island code 129 'Sule Skerry' has not moved position however the boundary has been improved, as shown below.



Both of these changes were released in an updated version of the Island dataset in January 2024.

2. Known Errors

Corrections and identified omissions to the data content of the SPD Index and/or Spatial data are included on the subsequent SPD release.

2.1 Island map and look-up – name correction

We have been made aware of incorrect Gaelic conversion for Isle of Lewis & Harris within our Island map.

Island code 080

Isle of Lewis / Eilean Leodhais & Harris / Na Hea

Corrected - Isle of Lewis / Eilean Leodhais & Harris / Na Hearradh

This error is in previous versions of the island map, including the 2011 Census Island Groups map and any corresponding look-up files and statistics that have used either these maps or look-ups. As the previous versions of the island map are 'archived' we will not be updating them retrospectively. The 2011 Census Island Groups map is also due to be archived as a new 2022 Census Island Groups map will be produced, due to this we have decided not to update the 2011 map.

We are currently in contact with both Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Scottish Government Gaelic and Scots Team regarding Gaelic translations for Islands within Na h-Eileanan Siar to ensure that they are correct and also have appropriate English translations.

2.2 Postcode Unit boundaries

The 2023/2 postcode unit boundaries were missing the Date of Introduction attribute. As this information was available via the Postcode Index we did not re-issue the map. Thank you to colleagues in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for alerting us to this, additional checks will be applied.

2.3 Geography Lookups CSV format – Settlement 2022 Lookup

Thank you to colleagues in Registers of Scotland for highlighting a format issue on the Settlement 2022 Lookup in CSV format. We are unsure as to how this file was not in the usual format (UTF-8 encoding), however we will continue to review the situation.

3. Changing Geographies

3.1 2023 UK Parliament constituencies

The Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023 was made on 15 November 2023 and came into force on 29th November 2023.

The news release and boundaries can be viewed on the [Boundary Commission for Scotland](#) website. Note that the new constituency boundaries are provisional and are subject to confirmation by Ordnance Survey. The final boundaries may have small differences.

We are waiting on the final boundaries from Ordnance Survey before updating our systems.

We have however produced look-ups based on the provisional final boundaries from the Boundary Commission for Scotland. A 2023/2 postcode look-up and a 2011 Census Output Area look-up to these boundaries were made available in late November via the following links:

- [Postcode 2023/2 to 2023 UK Parliamentary Constituencies \(Excel format\)](#)
- [Output Area 2011 to UK Parliamentary Constituency 2023 \(Excel format\)](#)

We will continue to create a look-up based on these provisional final boundaries and provide it as a supplementary look-up while waiting on the final boundaries from Ordnance Survey.

3.2 Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries

Boundaries Scotland started their Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries on 1 September 2022. They have published provisional proposals for Scottish Parliamentary Constituencies during a one month consultation (17 May to 17 June 2023).

They plan to consult on revised proposals for constituencies and proposals for regions in spring 2024.

Following this, Boundaries Scotland plan to submit a report to Scottish Ministers by 1 May 2025. If subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament, the new boundaries will be effective at the next Scottish Parliament election, expected in May 2026.

Further information is available on the Boundaries Scotland [Reviews in Progress page](#).

3.3 National Parks

NatureScot was asked by the Scottish Government to work with them in establishing at least one new National Park by 2026.

NatureScot published its [Advice to Ministers](#) in February 2023 on what new National Park(s) could deliver for Scotland and how they could be selected.

On 12 October 2023 individuals, communities and organisations were invited to develop and submit formal nominations for their area to become Scotland's next National Park. The deadline for nominations is 29 February 2024.

Nominations for new National Parks will be appraised in spring 2024. If at least one nomination is selected to become a new National Park, a statutory process will then begin.

Further background on this work can be found on NatureScot [National Park page](#) and the Scottish Government [Landscape and Outdoor access: National Parks page](#).

4. Scotland's Census

4.1 Scotland's Census 2022

The [outputs release schedule page](#) is where we share our plans for publishing census outputs. This includes details on the timing for publications and what will be included in each release. This page will be updated regularly as we prepare to publish census outputs.

4.2 2022 Data Zone and Intermediate Zone

The Scottish Government will develop new Data Zone and Intermediate Zone geographies based on 2022 Census Output Areas, when these are available from NRS.

The 2022 Data Zones and Intermediate Zones will follow the same methodology as used in 2011. A consultation on the new Data Zones and Intermediate Zones is expected to take place in summer 2024, after which the final boundaries will be released

4.3 Census 2021

The Office for National Statistics and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency held their Censuses on Sunday 21 March 2021.

You can find out more about their Censuses via the following Census websites:

- [Office for National Statistics](#)
- [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

5. Postcode FAQs

5.1 Postcode recoding

Wherever possible Royal Mail try not to change addresses and postcodes. Changes are however sometimes necessary to ensure that mail is delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible. It is also possible for a council to prompt change by re-numbering buildings or re-naming roads.

Further information on the process for postcode re-coding is available in the [PAF Code of Practice](#) on the Royal Mail website.

Updates on [recodes](#) are available on the Powered by PAF website.

5.2 Postcode re-use

Royal Mail deletes postcodes for various reasons but most commonly, it is due to the demolition/re-development of buildings or to postcode re-use. Deleted postcodes are occasionally re-used by Royal Mail but not usually before an elapsed period of two or three years. When a postcode is re-introduced, it will not necessarily contain the same addresses or cover the same area as the original postcode.

5.3 Postcodes do not align to administrative and electoral area boundaries

Royal Mail defines postcode areas for sorting mail efficiently; the postcodes have no relationship with administrative or electoral boundaries. Royal Mail requires a stable geography in order to deliver its services, which these areas cannot provide.

NRS split postcodes for statistical reasons when creating postcode boundaries; they are not a feature of Royal Mail. Split postcodes are those with an 'A', 'B', or 'C' suffix and occur when:

- a postcode straddles two or more Council area boundaries. The most populous part of the postcode is identified by suffix A and the smaller parts by suffixes B, C, etc.;
- a postcode straddles the Scottish/English border and the Scottish postcode is allocated a suffix 'A';
- an island and the mainland share a postcode, or a postcode contains property on more than one island.

5.4 PO Box postcodes

PO Box addresses do not have a specific geographic location; instead, the mail is sent to a local delivery office, from where it can be forwarded to the real address or collected by the addressee.

Grid references for PO Box postcodes are assigned to the local Royal Mail sorting/delivery office and are deemed low quality. While the Gridlink® RPC is showing as 1 (which is high quality), this is purely because the address is being matched to the local Royal Mail sorting/delivery office.

6. Differences between data sources

There are known differences in Scottish data between the Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD) Postcode Index and the Office for National Statistics Postcode Directory (ONSPD).

6.1 Postcode Updates

Due to differing update regimes existing between ONS and NRS, the dates for introduction and deletion can differ. The SPD Postcode Index contains quarterly PAF updates, whereas the ONSPD contains monthly PAF updates.

6.2 Postcode Boundaries

NRS create their own postcode boundary polygons within GIS, which are used in the production of the SPD. This is important as where a Gridlink® postcode centroid grid reference is supplied, if it falls outside the polygon an NRS grid reference is used. This scenario is likely to account for small differences in postcode centroid grid references between the two postcode directories.

6.3 Postcode History

The SPD Postcode Index provides full postcode history; the ONSPD provides the most current version of the postcode only (as shown below).

SPD Postcode Index:

Postcode	Date of Introduction	Date of Deletion
G31 4QD	01-Aug-73	01-May-95
G31 4QD	20-Apr-12	06-Jul-12
G31 4QD	17-Apr-13	07-Aug-13
G31 4QD	16-Jan-14	

ONSPD:

Postcode	Date of Introduction	Date of Deletion
G31 4QD	201310	

6.3 Split postcodes

Unlike the SPD Postcode Index the ONSPD does not recognise split postcodes. Instead the ONSPD holds the postcode as a whole record.

7. Supply arrangements

7.1 Data Formats

The 'Cut Version' of the Scottish Postcode Directory is available for free download from the [Scottish Postcode Directory](#) page of the National Records of Scotland website.

- Index files CSV, or Microsoft (MS) Access 2000 compatible format
- Lookup files CSV, or Microsoft (MS) Access 2000 compatible format
- Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA) members only can access the 'Cut Version' of the boundary files which are supplied in ESRI shapefile format.

7.2 Full Version

The 'Full Version' of the Scottish Postcode Directory can be supplied for a charge (a royalty payment to Royal Mail), please contact the [Geography Customer Services team](#).

8. Licence and Copyright Statements

8.1 Postcode Boundaries and Grid References
Available to PSGA members only.

This dataset is being made available for your personal, non-commercial use under the terms of the [INSPIRE End User Licence](#) because it includes Ordnance Survey (OS) Licensed data.

By viewing and or downloading this dataset you will have been deemed to have accepted the terms of this licence. You may not sub-license, distribute, sell or otherwise make available any part of this dataset to third parties (including others within your business), except where expressly authorised in writing by us (the Licensor) and OS (for example, by having a valid licence for the data used in the creation of this dataset).

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For more information, PSGA members should look at the [public sector licensing guidance](#) or contact Ordnance Survey via their [Contact Us](#) page.

8.2 Postcode District and Sector Boundaries and Grid References

You may use this information (not logos) free of charge in any format or medium under the terms of the [Open Government Licence](#) (National Archives website).

8.3 Scottish Postcode Directory - Postcode Index

The following attribution statement must be acknowledged or displayed on any product using NRS data:

'Contains NRS data © Crown copyright and database right [year].'

8.4 Further information of licensing can be found in the geography [licensing](#) page of the NRS website.

9. Open Data

Geographic data is becoming increasingly available as open data throughout the world. This means that it is free to access, use, and share.

9.1 [SpatialData.gov.scot](#)

SpatialData.gov.scot Metadata Portal is Scotland's catalogue of spatial data. The spatial data is covered under EU Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) regulations.

The Scottish Government Geographical Information Science and Analysis team (GI-SAT) manage the portal, which contains INSPIRE data, metadata, and web services from the Scottish Government and other Scottish public sector organisations.

9.2 [Data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk)

Data.gov.uk is the UK's data and metadata portal. Unlike SpatialData.gov.scot, it includes non-spatial datasets as well as spatial data.

9.3 [Ordnance Survey Open Data](https://data.gov.uk)

Ordnance Survey publish free open datasets under their OpenData program, which can be downloaded from their website. Ordnance Survey simply ask that you acknowledge the copyright and source of the data by including the following attribution statement: 'Contains OS data © Crown copyright [and database right] (year)'.

10. Enquiries

Please contact our Geography Customer Services team if you need any further information.

E-mail: geographycustomerservices@nrscotland.gov.uk

All postal enquiries should be directed to the main office, the address is:

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