

# Information Note

## NRS Spatial Data Coverage

2023  
National Records of Scotland (NRS)

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## Introduction

This information note has been created to inform users on the geographic extents, resolution, release frequency, and formats for several types of NRS spatial datasets.

## Geographic Extent

There are two types of extent that spatial data is provided in.

NRS Geography work on Total Extent boundaries, and provide the majority of spatial data 'Clipped to the coastline' which are to the Mean High-Water Mark, using the relevant Ordnance Survey Boundary-Line High Water Polyline and remove inland water as listed in the Standard Area Measurements produced by the Office for National Statistics

### Total Extent (Extent of the Realm)

The [Territorial Waters Jurisdiction Act 1878](#) and the [Territorial Waters Order in Council 1964](#) confirm that the extent of the realm of Great Britain as used by Ordnance Survey is properly shown to the limit of mean low water for the time being, except where extended by Parliament. This includes all tracts of inland water.

### Clipped to the coastline (Mean High Water with inland water removed)

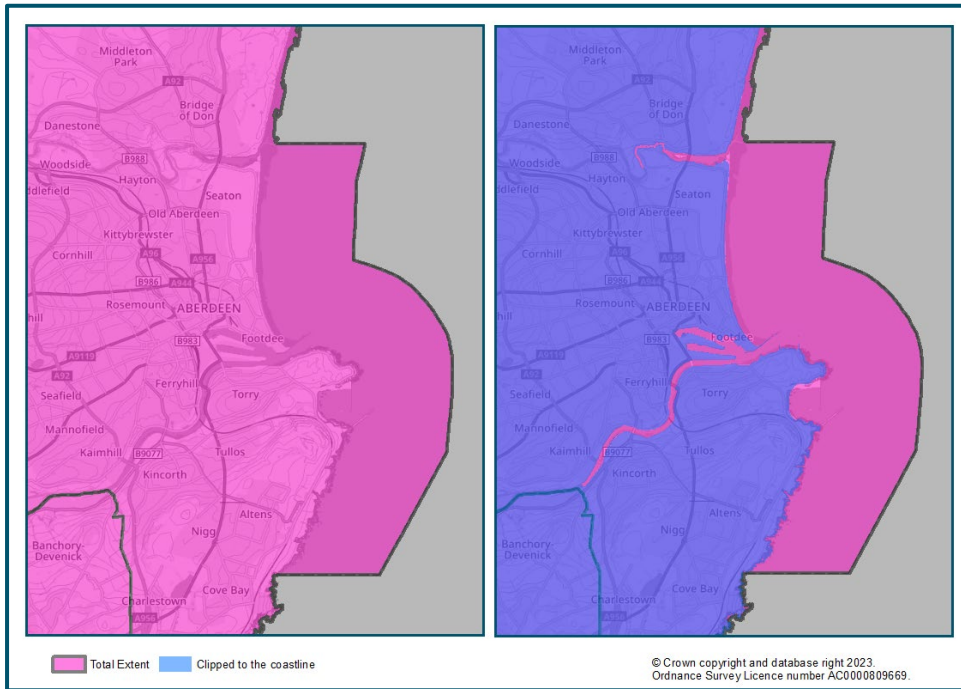
These are to the mean high water shown to the normal tidal limit (the point at which the level of a river or stream ceases to be affected by the tidal flow). Clipped to the coastline boundaries closely represent map users' expectations of how a coastal boundary should look.

Further information on the coastlines used can be obtained in the [Ordnance Survey Boundary-Line User Guide](#).

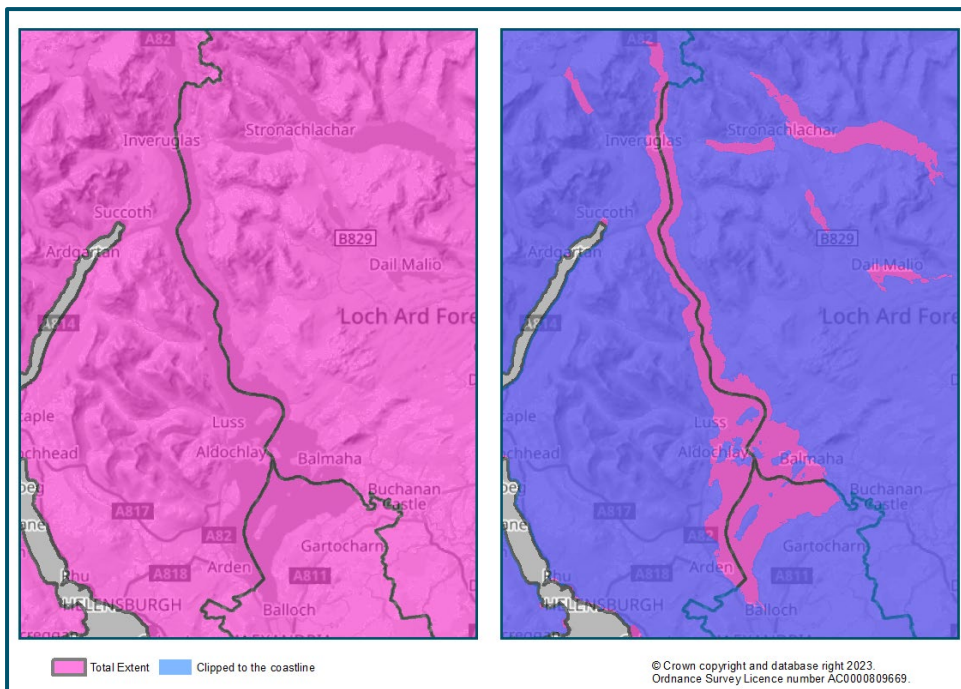
Information on standard area measurements is available in the [Geography Policy](#) section of the National Records of Scotland website.

Examples of the differing coverages

The coastline of Aberdeen City extends out to the statutory seaward extension in the Total Extent, compared with the Clipped to the coastline. The inland water for the River Don and the River Dee, as well as Aberdeen Harbour have been removed in the Clipped to the coastline.



In the next example, the inland water of Loch Lomond is included in the Total Extent, compared with the inland water removed as depicted in Clipped to the coastline where you can see the individual islands within Loch Lomond.



## Resolution

NRS Geography boundary products are produced to full resolution which is the most detailed representation of actual boundaries.

NRS Geography are aware that users will have different requirements for levels of generalisation which is why we do not supply generalised boundaries. If you have access to ArcGIS, you can use the 'simplify' tool. If you have QGIS you can use the 'simplify geometries' tool. There are also free online tools that can be used to generalise a boundary.

## Product Type Release Frequency

### Scottish Postcode Directory

Scottish Postcode Directory boundaries and grid references (postcode unit, sector, and district) are subject to continuous change and are released bi-annually.

### Settlement and Locality

Settlement and Locality datasets are only created at specific time points based on a set of published SPD postcode boundaries.

### Island

The Island boundary dataset is subject to periodic change (e.g., when an island that has never been inhabited is now inhabited) and will be created at the time of change.

### Civil Parish

The Civil Parish boundary dataset is an archived geography and there are no plans for updates to it. If NRS Geography are advised of errors on this map, it will be investigated and fixed, as necessary.

### Census (Output Area, Census Island Groups)

Census boundary and grid reference datasets are based on postcode boundaries frozen at a point in time every ten years.

## Formats

Our spatial data is available on the NRS website in Esri shapefile format within a Zipped file. NRS spatial data is also available as WFS via the Scottish Spatial Data website [SpatialData.gov.scot](https://SpatialData.gov.scot)

Guidance on [Converting Shapefile to MapInfo](#) is available on the NRS website.