

Scottish Postcode Directory 2023/1

March 2023

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. 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 2023 release of Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF) and contains:

	All postcodes	Live postcodes	Deleted postcodes
All postcodes	243,868	160,414	83,454
Small User	193,842	154,959	38,883
Large User	50,026	5,455	44,751
<i>Small User Linked¹</i>	19,256	3,656	15,780
<i>PO Boxes</i>	30,770	1,799	28,971

The number of live, digitised small user postcodes² is 153,760.

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 2022/2

1.1 NRS Services

Like all organisations, NRS has been on a considerable journey since the pandemic began. Throughout this period our organisational response has been to focus on protecting customers and our staff, whilst continuing to deliver our essential services.

From 31 January 2022, Scottish Government guidance encouraged employers to consider the implementation of more flexible and collaborative ways of working, balancing the needs of individuals and their wellbeing, with those of the business. NRS is taking the opportunity to consider how best to adopt these redesigned ways of working and how best to deliver our services.

Please be assured that NRS Geography will continue trying our best to keep things moving in a timely manner.

1.2 Geographies

The following geographies have changed on the Postcode Index:

- IslandCode

Island – the map has been updated to remove the inhabited status field as advised in the previous bulletin. By implementing this change there will be no further changes to the Postcode Index in relation to the Island geography. When a new island (that has never had an island code before) is introduced it will be highlighted in the SPD Bulletin.

The map is available on the NRS website [Islands product page](#).

Users will be able to find inhabited islands using the postcode index by selecting all live digitised small user postcodes (Date of Deletion and Never Digitised fields are null) and the island code.

1.3 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.

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 There were no errors identified in the SPD 2022/2 release.

3. Changing Geographies

3.1 Review of UK Parliament constituencies

The Boundary Commission for Scotland began the 2023 Review of UK Parliament constituencies in January 2021.

Scotland has been allocated 57 constituencies for the 2023 Review, two less than at present.

The Boundary Commission published their initial proposals for an 8-week consultation on 14 October 2021. This was followed up by a 6-week secondary consultation (10 February to 23 March 2022). A final 4-week consultation followed from 8 November to 5 December 2022.

Responses to the consultations, along with revised and existing constituency boundaries can be viewed on the consultation site www.bcs2023review.com.

3.2 Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries

Boundaries Scotland started their Second Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries on 1 September 2022 and expect to publish provisional proposals for consultation in spring 2023.

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

The First Review reported in 2010 and the current boundaries have been used in the Scottish Parliament elections of 2011, 2016 and 2021.

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

3.3 National Parks

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

Consultation on an evaluation framework will take place in 2023.

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 Scotland's Census outputs consultation which was launched in October 2022 has now closed. The consultation asked users for their views on our plans for publishing census outputs.

We have received completed surveys from more than 130 users and this has included users in central and local government, academic institutions, charity organisations and individual responses. This highlights the diverse range of users who rely on census data to inform their work and research.

We are now reviewing the feedback received from users and will use this to update our plans for publishing census outputs. As part of this work we will also produce a summary report responding to the feedback received, which will be published on the [Scotland's Census website](#) once completed.

4.2 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 Postcode boundaries 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; 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.

6. Differences in Scottish data between the Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD) Postcode Index and the Office for National Statistics Postcode Directory (ONSPD)

6.1 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	

6.2 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.

6.3 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.

- Boundary files Shape format
Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PGSA) members only
- Index files CSV, or Microsoft (MS) Access 2000 compatible format
- Lookup files CSV, or Microsoft (MS) Access 2000 compatible 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

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.

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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](#)

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](#)

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