



Paper Title: Stakeholder engagement exercise on draft Census Geographic Boundaries

Presented by: Martin Macfie, Data, Statistics and Digital Identity Division, Scottish Government

Security marking	Not sensitive
Can this be shared wider than PAMS?	Once published on NRS website
Actions for PAMS members ahead of meeting	Please read this paper, to be aware of current progress and delay due in progress to COVID-19.
Aims for discussion	For awareness. To ensure that PAMS members are content with progress, given their involvement in the process and the current COVID-19 situation
Key questions for PAMS members	<p>Have you any concerns with delaying this work due to COVID-19?</p> <p>Are you aware of any risks with this approach?</p> <p>Is there anything you think would help processes in the current circumstances?</p>
What is required from PAMS members	To consider any comments on the approach we have taken, and the delay due to COVID-19

Population And Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee (Scotland)

Stakeholder engagement exercise on Census Geographic Boundaries

Background

1. As part of the work leading up to the 2021 census, colleagues in National Records of Scotland and Scottish Government are producing draft versions of new Data Zone (DZ) and Census Output Area (COA) geographies. These geographic units will be used for the dissemination of both census outputs, and small-area statistics. Boundaries are reviewed once per decade only. As the boundaries which will be set have a direct impact on Local Authority users of census data and official statistics, it is important that we identify any potential issues with the proposed boundaries at an early stage. We have therefore built a panel of an expert local knowledge of relevant people from Local Authorities and from other organisations such as the Improvement Service and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Thank you to all who have participated in this exercise and provided feedback.

Progress so far

2. We have created a draft set of COA and DZ boundaries, using information from the Scottish Address Directory (SAD) and draft population estimates. There will be no change to COA thresholds. This work will test the processes NRS plan to use in the real Census for creating COA, flag up potential issues with COA design and allow the SG to assess the potential impact on DZ.
3. In late November 2019, we shared draft COA and DZ boundaries with the panel we had compiled to get feedback on potential issues. The intention is that we will try and amend the boundaries and minimise any adverse impact of COA boundaries on DZ, wherever it is possible to do.
4. As part of the exercise, we provided a zipped folder containing GIS shapefiles for the draft Data Zones, draft Output Areas and also the postcode boundaries on which the draft Output Areas are based. We asked respondents to identify:
 - Where there are whole Output Areas which they would wish to add or remove from certain Data Zones
 - If it is not possible to achieve the Data Zone boundaries by adding or removing whole Output Areas or postcodes, that they instead draw on a map their ideal boundaries

Impact of COVID-19 on work

5. The deadline for responses to this exercise was the end of March 2020. We contacted respondents at the end of March to acknowledge that it may take longer for some respondents to get back to us due to COVID-19 related pressures. As of mid-April, we have received comments from 16 out of 32 local authorities.

6. Due to COVID-19 pressures, we have been unable to yet respond to individual queries. Our GIS colleagues in Scottish Government who are working with us on this project are currently providing analytical support for COVID-19 resilience work. As such, it is going to take us a bit more time than we anticipated to respond with comments. Please be assured that we will respond, once we have capacity. At present, it is unclear when this will be. We are very grateful for you taking the time to provide comments and feedback.

Next steps

7. We will inform respondents again once we have capacity to respond to these comments.
8. Final COA and DZ boundaries will be based on results from the census, rather than SAD and population estimates used for draft boundaries. It is intended that there will be a public consultation on the final post-census DZ boundaries.
9. However, it is important that we identify any issues with draft 2021 COA which could impact on 2021 DZ, as it will not be possible to change final 2021 COA once the post-census DZ consultation has begun. We hope that extra user engagement based on draft boundaries could help minimise the risk of DZ related issues.

Scottish Government / National Records of Scotland
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