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Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Eighth Conference

Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland**

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** Prepared by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain.

Summary

There is no national names authority in the United Kingdom. Instead, the geographical names as portrayed on hard-copy and digital products of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland are recognised as being the authoritative geographical names of the United Kingdom. This paper outlines the function of the Ordnance Survey as the national mapping agency and its role with regard to toponymy, highlighting developments since the 8th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The paper pays particular attention to developments in Wales and Scotland.

A new edition of the United Kingdom's *Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors* is planned. As an initial step, a few items of information relevant to that publication are included within this present national report; in particular a note about geopolitical terminology and an outline of the current administrative divisions of the United Kingdom.

The Ordnance Survey as the national mapping agency

Established in the 18th Century, the Ordnance Survey (OS: see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>) is the national mapping agency of Great Britain and as such is responsible for collecting geographical names information for portrayal on national maps. The Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI: see <http://www.osni.gov.uk>) performs a similar function in Northern Ireland. The OS operates as a government department, executive agency and trading fund, producing digital data products and paper maps for business, leisure, administrative and educational use covering England, Scotland and Wales.

The OS MasterMap® (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/osmastermap>) is the digital map of Great Britain, launched in 2001. It is derived from the OS Digital National Framework (DNF: see <http://www.dnf.org/Pages/home/default.asp>). The DNF began with a Topography Layer, but since 2002 further layers have been incorporated. In 2002 a first Address Layer was added, followed by an Integrated Transport Network Layer and an Imagery Layer in 2003. Then in 2006 Address Layer 2 was launched, building on the 2002 Layer and containing almost 29 million postal addresses with a unique identifier cross-referenced with the existing Topography Layer. This Layer includes usage descriptions for every address (*eg* residential or retail), geographical addresses, objects without a postal address (*eg* churches and community centres), and multiple occupancy properties (*eg* flats/apartments and university halls of residence). In addition, the Ordnance Survey provides a free cross-reference table, enabling customers to join up addresses across different datasets, including Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF) and the Valuation Office Agency's non-domestic rates data and council tax data (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/osmastermap/layers/addresslayer2/index.html>).

An electronic version of the OS Place names Gazetteer is now available on the Ordnance Survey website (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/50kgazetteer/>). Derived from the 1:50,000 Landranger® map series, this place name search facility provides access to names and locational information, including administrative division, grid reference and latitude/longitude, through *specific search* and *wider search* options.

Since 2004, the OS has added a number of new products to its portfolio including OS Locator™. This is a fully searchable national gazetteer for use with the Ordnance Survey's range of mid-scales raster map data products. It has been compiled from a number of OS datasets and includes

information from the roads database, which is part of the latest generation of sophisticated and detailed OS geographical data (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/oslocator/>).

The Ordnance Survey and geographical names

There is no national names authority in the United Kingdom. Instead, the geographical names as portrayed on hard-copy and digital products of the OS and the OSNI are recognised as being the authoritative geographical names of the United Kingdom. Toponymic information is updated by the OS as an integral element of its map product revision, and is achieved in consultation with local authorities, reliable organisations and expert individuals. Common local usage, preservation of historical form, and the current relevant language for the name are all factors taken into account. Particular emphasis is placed on standardising Welsh names in Wales and Gaelic names in the Gaelic-speaking areas of north-west Scotland, since Welsh and Gaelic are official languages in those respective areas (the English language does not have official status anywhere in the United Kingdom). The 2001 census of the United Kingdom reported that about 20% of the population of Wales was in some way familiar with the Welsh language (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=447>), and 2% of Scotland's population was similarly familiar with Gaelic (see <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/press/news2005/scotlands-census-2001-gaelic-report.html>).

Geographical names in Wales

The OS Welsh Language Scheme, approved in 2001, is concerned in part with Ordnance Survey policy concerning the use of Welsh language place names on OS products (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/aboutus/reports/wales/docs/welshlanguageschemefinal.pdf>). This OS policy runs in close association with the work of the Welsh Language Board (see <http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk>), a statutory organisation funded principally by means of grant aid from the National Assembly for Wales. The Board was established in December 1993 under the terms of the Welsh Language Act. Its main function is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language, and since 2001 it has had responsibility for providing expert advice on the standard forms of Welsh language place names. To achieve this, the Board uses both historical evidence and the linguistic knowledge of the Standardisation of Place-names Team, which follows strict guidelines when standardising place-names. There is no legal force to the Board's advice and recommendations; local authorities hold the right to decide on the names of places and streets within their boundaries, though they will usually accept the Board's advice.

In August 2005 the Welsh Language Board invited the Ordnance Survey to consider revisiting and amending the Welsh Language Scheme in accordance with Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act. The scheme was duly revisited, with necessary amendments made, and was finally approved in November 2006. Since adopting the original Welsh Language Scheme Ordnance Survey has advanced its policy of showing more and more bilingual place names and feature descriptions on both large-scale and small-scale products. Small-scale OS Landranger Maps and OS Explorer Maps for areas in Wales now have fully bilingual covers, and digital products such as the recently launched OS MasterMap Address Layer 2 are enabled to provide Welsh place name alternatives.

Geographical names in Scotland

The Ordnance Survey operates a Gaelic Names Policy, dating from 2000, which sets out how Gaelic names and bilingual English/Gaelic names should be shown on OS products (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/freefun/didyouknow/placenames/gaelicpolicy.html>). The OS

uses recognised authoritative advice and established conventions to determine the correct depiction of Gaelic place names, working principally with the Gaelic Names Liaison Committee (GNLC) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

The Gaelic Names Liaison Committee was established in 2001, bringing together bodies with an interest in the Gaelic orthography of place names in Scotland. With members drawn from a range of backgrounds and different institutions, the GNLC advises and assists the Ordnance Survey with the implementation of its Gaelic Names Policy. It has established a set of Orthographic Principles, designed to ensure a consistency of policy application. These Principles, which were first published in 2001, were extensively revised and expanded in 2006 (see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/freefun/didyouknow/placenames/gaelicprinciples.html>).

At the end of 2006, the GNLC was replaced by a successor partnership known as the Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba – Gaelic Place Names of Scotland (AÀA-GPNS). This partnership brings together bodies with an interest in the Gaelic orthography of place names in Scotland, including local authorities, the Ordnance Survey, academics, and the Scottish Place Name Society, as well as other bodies with an interest in Gaelic development. The AÀA-GPNS has adopted the 2006 Orthographic Principles developed by the GNLC, and has additionally adopted other GNLC policy documents including *Gaelic Street Names – a Standardised Approach* (June 2006). These documents, and further information about the work of AÀA-GPNS, are available on the partnership's website at <http://www.gaelicplacenames.org>.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority originally established a set of Gaelic Orthographic Conventions in 1981, designed to assist in the teaching of Gaelic in schools. These conventions were subsequently revised in 2005 (see <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/7339.html>). In particular, one major revision has involved the use of diacritical signs; whereas both grave and acute accents had been used until 2005, since that date the acute accent has no longer featured in Gaelic language place names on OS products.

The newly revised GNLC Orthographic Principles and SQA Orthographic Conventions will result in greater clarity and consistency in future work on the orthography of Gaelic place names. In particular, it will assist in one of the principal projects of the new AÀA-GPNS partnership; the production of a National Gazetteer of Gaelic Place Names. The Scottish Parliament's Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005 came into force in February 2006 (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2006/02/13130418>) and a National Plan for Gaelic for that Parliament is scheduled for 2007. The National Plan recognises the important role that the depiction of place names has in ensuring the relevance and consistency of the Gaelic language, and supports the production of a National Gazetteer of Gaelic Place Names. The AÀA-GPNS sees itself as being the correct body to take this work forward, and Ordnance Survey is happy to support it in this role.

An important recent publication has been the gazetteer of Scotland produced by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and entitled *Scotland: An Encyclopedia of Places and Landscape* (published by Collins in 2006; ISBN 0004724666). This gazetteer is edited by David Munro, with David Munro and Bruce Gittings as its authors. Comprising over 8000 entries, it is the first comprehensive guide to the toponymy of Scotland for over a century.

Geopolitical Terminology

Timeline

- By about the 11th Century England and Scotland had each become a kingdom, with a geographical extent recognisable today.
- In the period 1535 to 1542 Wales was annexed to the Kingdom of England, and the English monarch also became the ruler of Ireland.
- In 1603 King James VI of Scotland, of the House of Stuart, inherited the English crown and thereby became King James I of England, giving the two kingdoms a single monarch.
- In 1707 an Act of Union signalled a deeper unification of the two kingdoms. The single kingdom was called the **Kingdom of Great Britain**. It was noted in the Act as a “united kingdom” (though the word “united” was not part of the official term) and its people were called “British”.
- In 1801, by a new Act of Union, Ireland was joined to the union to form the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**.
- In 1922 the Irish Free State (later to become *Ireland*) was formed by 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland; as a result the 1801 union title was no longer applicable and since 1927 the union has been termed the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**.

Definitions

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

(usually shortened to **United Kingdom**)

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy consisting of four constituent parts:

- 2 countries: England + Scotland
- 1 principality: Wales
- 1 province: Northern Ireland.

The *abbreviation* is **UK** or **U.K.**; the *code* (according to the ISO 3166-1 standard) is **GB/GBR**. Since 1998, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have possessed a substantial measure of devolved government, by means of a parliament (in Scotland) or an assembly (in Wales & in Northern Ireland¹). Note that the term “Ulster” is not a synonym for Northern Ireland; Ulster is one of four historic provinces of Ireland and has an extent broader than Northern Ireland alone.

Great Britain

Great Britain consists of England + Scotland + Wales. The term is exclusive of Northern Ireland and is therefore not a synonym for the term “United Kingdom”. Note that the word “Great” is not at all intended as an indicator of self-styled “greatness”; it simply derives from the French term *Grande-Bretagne* (“Greater Brittany” or “Larger Brittany”), used since mediaeval times to distinguish the British Isles from *Bretagne* (“Brittany”, the region of north-western France).

British

This is the adjectival form of *Britain*, but the word is also frequently employed as the adjectival form of *United Kingdom*; thus “British government” is used at least as frequently as “United Kingdom government”, and “British citizen” is actually the correct official term for a citizen of the United Kingdom. As an adjective, therefore, the term *British* is frequently inclusive of Northern Ireland; it is only the one specific term “Great Britain” which invariably excludes Northern Ireland. The term *British* has been used with something akin to its current meaning

¹ The Northern Ireland assembly was suspended between October 2002 and May 2007.

since the Act of Union in 1707², though the origins of the word date back much earlier. A Celtic word *Pritani* or *Priteni* may have denoted the inhabitants as far back as the 6th or 7th Century BC, and this word may itself have been based on the 10th Century BC Phoenician word *Baratanic* (= “islands of tin”). The form *Britannic*, presumably derived from *Baratanic*, was apparently first used by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in 340 BC.

Crown Dependencies

There are 3 Crown Dependencies:

- Guernsey full form = Bailiwick of Guernsey
(administratively including Alderney, Brecqhou, Burhou, Herm, Jethou, Lihou, Little Sark, Sark); total population = *circa* 62,000
- Jersey full form = Bailiwick of Jersey; total population = *circa* 90,000
- Isle of Man no full form; total population = *circa* 80,000

The legal/political status of these three entities dates from the early mediaeval era. They are direct fiefdoms of the Crown, with Her Majesty the Queen as Head of State, but they are not part of Great Britain or the United Kingdom; nor are they part of the European Union. Guernsey (with its associated islands) and Jersey together make up the *Channel Islands*, but this term relates to a geographical feature (the island grouping) and not to any legal/political entity.

Population and Area Summary

The estimated total population of the United Kingdom in 2006 was approximately 60,000,000, inhabiting an area of roughly 95,000 square miles (244,000 square kilometres). These figures break down roughly as follows:

England	50,500,000 inhabitants 51,000 sq ml / 130,000 sq km	(84.2% of total UK population) (53.7% of total UK area)
Scotland	5,000,000 inhabitants 31,000 sq ml / 79,000 sq km	(8.3% of total UK population) (32.6% of total UK area)
Wales	2,800,000 inhabitants 8,000 sq ml / 21,000 sq km	(4.7% of total UK population) (8.4% of total UK area)
Northern Ireland	1,700,000 inhabitants 5,000 sq ml / 14,000 sq km	(2.8% of total UK population) (5.3% of total UK area)

Administrative Divisions Summary

The United Kingdom consists of four constituent parts: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As explained in the *Definitions* section above, three of these entities – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – have since 1998 possessed devolved administrative structures. The degree and level of devolution varies from one entity to another; a deliberate policy designed to reflect the distinctiveness and diversity of these three entities. Note that the process of devolution omits England entirely. There is consequently no common stratum of administrative unit encompassing the United Kingdom at this very high level, and England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should not be considered first-order administrative divisions in the conventional sense.

For a commonality of approach to the administrative structure across the United Kingdom, it is necessary to look below the level of the four major entities, and to consider instead the level of the local authorities. These divisions occur in several nomenclatural guises, but they nevertheless possess a commonality of function. It is this level which makes up the first-order level of

² See *Timeline*; fourth bullet point.

administrative division across the United Kingdom. From every administrative point of view, “Alnwick, Northumberland” is far more useful and meaningful than “Alnwick, England”.

There are 229 first-order local authority units in the United Kingdom, summarised as follows:

- **England:** 115 unitary authorities (single-tier authorities, not further sub-divided)
+ 34 two-tier authorities (usually termed *County*, and sub-divided into Districts)
- **Scotland:** 32 unitary (single-tier) authorities, termed *Council Area*
- **Wales:** 22 unitary (single-tier) authorities, termed either *County* or *County Borough*
- **Northern Ireland:** 26 unitary (single-tier) authorities, usually termed *District*.