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**11th United Nations Conference
on the Standardization of
Geographical Names** New
York, 8 -17 August 2017

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical
names since the 10th Conference (for distribution only).**

**Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland**

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

* E/CONF.105/1

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

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Document prepared by the UK Permanent Committee on Geographical Names
and Ordnance Survey of Great Britain

National Geographical Names

Ordnance Survey (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) is the national mapping agency of Great Britain and as such is responsible for collecting geographical names information for national maps and geographic databases of England, Scotland and Wales. Formerly a non-ministerial Government Department and Executive Agency, Ordnance Survey has operated as a public corporation since April 2015. The share capital of Ordnance Survey Limited is held by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Land and Property Services (LPS) (www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps) performs similar functions in Northern Ireland.

Names Policy

The collection of consistent, definitive and authoritative descriptive annotations and proper names / postal numbers of buildings, places and features forms part of Ordnance Survey's public task. In 2015 Ordnance Survey introduced a new Names Policy¹ which is published on the organization's web site.

Ordnance Survey places particular emphasis on standardizing Welsh-language names in Wales, and Gaelic names in the Gaelic-speaking areas of north-west Scotland. A Gaelic Names Policy², established in 2000 and updated in 2015, led to the setting up of a Gaelic Names Liaison Committee; now known as Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba (Gaelic Place-Names of Scotland). The Gaelic Names Policy was updated in 2015. A Welsh Language Scheme³, approved in 2001 and amended in 2006, sets out Ordnance Survey's commitment to the provision of information in Welsh. An update to the organization's Welsh Names Policy⁴ in 2016 facilitated the capture of more Welsh names in the natural environment where it could be shown that they were in use. This has led to an increase in Welsh names attributed to bays, cliffs, estuaries and rocky outcrops.

Database management

Ordnance Survey has invested in database systems that enable names to be associated with the objects to which they relate and also to ensure consistent naming across scales of mapping. A names consolidation programme has reconciled place names held at 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale; thousands of discrepancies have been resolved.

Products

Ordnance Survey makes a number of datasets available free of charge under the terms of the Government Open Data Licence, including OS Open Names. Introduced in 2015, OS Open Names contains over 870,000 named and numbered roads, nearly 44,000 settlements and over 1.6 million postcodes, all matched/mapped to the National Grid. The same data is available via the OS Names API, a place, road and postcode verification tool that users can plug into a web site or API free of charge.

¹ <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/os-names-policy.pdf>

² <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/ordnance-survey-gaelic-names-policy-in-english.pdf>

³ <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/welsh-language-scheme.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/docs/policies/os-welsh-names-policy.pdf>

UK Country Register

The United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office⁵ and UK Government Digital Service⁶ has in the course of the past year published in beta version a new Country Register⁷ and Territory Register⁸.

The aim of the registers is to provide a canonical dataset that can be used by UK government digital services and potentially any private sector digital services which require country names data. The open dataset is available in a range of formats and can be linked to or downloaded for use.

This work is the first stage of a project to create a range of Registers⁹ which will be a key component of the UK's future digital infrastructure.

The register is a dataset of current country names in line with UK Government policy. It also includes a number of historical country names. The register includes ISO 3166 codes as well as short form country names and official state titles in line with Permanent Committee on Geographical Names policies.

Foreign Geographical Names

Established in 1919 at the Royal Geographical Society, the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) is the United Kingdom's authority on foreign geographical names. It has a cross-government function to formulate and coordinate policies and procedures for the proper writing of geographical names for places and features outside the United Kingdom and ensure the implementation of those policies across the UK Government. It gathers information on names standardised by national authorities in order to carry out its principal objectives which are listed below:

- To establish and apply the principles by which foreign geographical names should be used by UK government departments;
- To develop, maintain, disseminate and promote policies and standards based on these principles;
- To supply geographical names advice and approved names in accordance with these policies and standards;
- To analyse developments and identify and evaluate key issues of toponymic and wider geopolitical interest using a range of sources, including those in different languages and scripts, in order to ensure the timely provision of appropriate geographical names and related geopolitical information;
- To improve cross-government awareness of geographical names issues, actively promote PCGN policies and procedures and ensure targeted provision of geographical names advice;
- To raise the profile of geographical names at the international level and improve working relations with other geographical names authorities and individuals with appropriate expertise.

UK Toponymic Guidelines

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>

⁶ <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/>

⁷ <https://country.register.gov.uk/>

⁸ <https://territory.register.gov.uk/>

⁹ <http://www.openregister.org/>

A second edition of the “Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” is presented to this present Conference, under item 9(e) of the provisional agenda. It includes minor updates and additions to the previous version presented at the twenty-fifth session of UNGEGN, May 2009.