

**Twenty-third Session
Vienna, 28 March – 4 April 2006**

**Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda:
Reports of the divisions**

Report of the United Kingdom Division

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Document prepared by the Ordnance Survey and the
Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

ORDNANCE SURVEY – THE NATIONAL MAPPING AGENCY

1 Established in the 18th century, the Ordnance Survey (OS) www.ordnancesurvey.gov.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) www.osni.gov.uk performs a similar function in Northern Ireland. The Ordnance Survey 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.

OS MAP AND GAZETTEER PRODUCTS

2 Ordnance Survey continues to improve its range of digital products and has, since 2004, added a number of new products to its portfolio including OS Locator™. This is a fully searchable national gazetteer for use with Ordnance Survey's range of mid-scales raster map data products. It has been compiled from a number of Ordnance Survey datasets and includes information from the roads database, which is part of the latest generation of sophisticated and highly detailed Ordnance Survey geographic data. Further information on this product can be found at <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/oslocator/>.

OS NAMES POLICY

3 Ordnance Survey names information is updated in the course of map product revision in consultation with local authorities, reliable organisations and expert individuals. Since 2000, particular emphasis has been placed on standardising Welsh names in Wales and Gaelic names in the Gaelic-speaking areas of north-west Scotland. A *Gaelic Names Policy* and *Ordnance Survey Welsh Language Scheme* were approved in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

4 As previously reported, during 2004 Ordnance Survey carried out a pilot project to assess the amount of work required to ensure that all text recorded by Ordnance Survey conforms to current Gaelic orthography, and is free from typographical error. This pilot project resulted in mostly minor corrections to the orthography of around 12% of names in the pilot areas. Ordnance Survey is currently considering how to take this work further in the light of resources required and a more adaptable technical infrastructure which will be available in the future.

GAELIC NAMES LIAISON COMMITTEE

5 A Gaelic Names Liaison Committee (GNLC) was formed in 2001 to bring together bodies with an interest in the Gaelic orthography of place names in Scotland. In the course of providing advice to the Ordnance Survey and others, the Committee found it useful to establish a set of Orthographic Principles, both general and technical, to apply in order to ensure consistency. These Principles were updated in January 2006, as a result of the pilot project described in the previous paragraph. Furthermore, during 2005, the Scottish Qualifications Authority updated the Gaelic Orthographic Conventions to be used in the teaching of Gaelic, replacing the previous Conventions which dated from 1981. These two recent publications will result in greater clarity and consistency in future work on the orthography of Gaelic place names.

6 The GNLC is to be reconstituted in partnership with bodies including the Scottish Place Name Society. One of the principal projects of this new partnership is the production of a National Gazetteer of Gaelic Place Names. The Scottish Parliament's Gaelic Act came into force in February 2006 and a National Plan for Gaelic for that Parliament is to be produced. This will inevitably include reference to the rendering of Gaelic place names.

**By the Ordnance Survey and the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names,
UK.**