NAMES POLICY

Document describing Ordnance Survey's policy
on the collection and recording of Names

Responsibility for this document

Data Governance Manager is responsible for the content of this document.

Change history

Version	Date	Summary of change
1.0a	July 2014	First draft
1.0b	August 2014	Second Draft
1.0c	September 2014	Third Draft
1.0d	January 2015	Fourth Draft – for NGD Board review
1.0e	February 2015	Fifth draft – Comments from review included and recirculated
1.0	June 2015	First Version
1.1	January 2022	Minor corrections

The impacts of the policy described in this document have been assessed and where appropriate, changed, in accordance with the requirements set out in Ordnance Survey's Equality Scheme.

Approval for Issue

David Henderson

Chief Geospatial Officer

Issued by Jonathan Holmes

Trademarks

Ordnance Survey and the OS Symbol are registered trademarks of Ordnance Survey, Britain's mapping agency.

Contents

1   INTRODUCTION

There is no national names authority in Great Britain. Instead, the geographical names as portrayed on hard-copy and digital products of the national mapping agency – the Ordnance Survey – are recognised as being the authoritative geographical names of Great Britain.

The collection of consistent, definitive and authoritative, descriptive annotations and proper names/postal numbers of buildings, places and features forms part of the public task of Ordnance Survey.

This document outlines the policy applied to the capture and recording of proper names within the National Geographic Database. These names are then made available to consumers through products and services.

2   DEFINITIONS

Proper name – A proper name is that given to a feature, building or place to distinguish it from other features or places of a similar nature.

Descriptive text – This describes the nature of a feature. For example track, path, cairn.

Alternative proper name - Some features have more than one proper name. These are sometimes in the same language e.g. Blencathra or Saddleback, but most frequently in another language. E.g. Snowdon or Yr Wyddfa

Vernacular name – A vernacular name is a local nickname or slang name. E.g. The Pregnant Pin rather than the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth

3   GOVERNANCE

This document is owned and controlled by the National Geographic Database (NGD) Board. The policy is in effect from 22nd June 2015 and will remain in force until superseded.

4   POLICY

4.1   PROPER NAMES

The proper names of buildings, streets, geographical features administrative areas etc. are collected and recorded in Ordnance Survey's databases and, where appropriate[1], made available through products and services.

Consistent usage of proper names is important to allow unambiguous identification of places and avoid confusion amongst users. This is all the more important when names are used as identifiers in computerised systems. In making decisions as to what name to record in respect of a place, street or building, Ordnance Survey is guided primarily by local usage and custom. It makes enquiries and consults appropriate authorities in order to establish, with as much authority as possible, the most suitable name, form, and spelling for all places shown. This is important with names of geographical features as there is no other recognised authority within Great Britain for these.

---

[1] In visual representations of the data the placement of cartographic text is dependent upon the space available. Not all names will appear on all products

Sometimes more than one name is in use at local level for a single feature, and in cases where the use of two names is sufficiently prevalent locally it may be necessary to record and/or portray both. The final decision on the recording and publication of any name rests with Ordnance Survey.

4.2   PROPER NAMES IN AN ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE

Names are usually captured in English although there are occasions when it is appropriate to capture names in another language. Great Britain is a culturally diverse country and many languages are spoken, with the vast majority spoken in addition to English. The production of maps, services and products in English only, does not therefore prevent users from understanding the information.

The Welsh Language Act 1993, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 give these languages special recognition under UK, Welsh and Scottish law.

Where these languages are in common use (Welsh throughout Wales and Gaelic within the Outer Hebrides, Highlands, Argyll and Bute), Ordnance Survey will dual name features when both names are accepted and in local use. With all names there needs to be evidence of active use of a name. Ordnance Survey will not record translations of English names into alternative languages, or vice-versa, in the absence of such evidence.

It is worth noting that there are many examples where the name is just shown in Welsh or Gaelic as this is the accepted name. For further information of how this policy is applied to Welsh and Gaelic names see Gaelic Names Policy and Welsh Names Policy.

There are many other languages used in Great Britain including Cornish, Irish and Lowland Scots that are recognised by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages but, in the absence of any UK legislation, are not recorded as the official names in Ordnance Survey data. The same applies for those languages, some of which are spoken quite widely, that are not recognised as official languages of the United Kingdom. The most notable of these are Urdu, Punjabi and Polish although there are some locations where signs have appeared in these languages.

Ordnance Survey will include other languages when they are recognised as a regional or minority language under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages <u>and</u> they are the subject of UK, Scottish or Welsh legislation requiring the official use of the language.

Ordnance Survey may collect vernacular or other local names for use in products and services although it is not obliged to do so under its Public Task remit.