

NEW OUTPUT GEOGRAPHIES

Statistics relating to small areas have traditionally been released on a ward basis, for example Job Seekers Allowance claimant counts, births, deaths.

Wards have proved an unsatisfactory basis for data dissemination for a variety of reasons:-

- The boundaries change periodically so it is difficult to get a consistent set of data over time to monitor projects or programmes. This has been a problem in the South Wye regeneration area, which was originally based on three ward boundaries that existed in 1999 but were changed in 2003. There are similar issues in parts of South Herefordshire, which had ward boundary changes in 1992, 1998 and 2003. This means that, between the 1991 census and now, there were 4 different sets of boundaries.
- Secondly, there is a great variety of ward sizes throughout the country, from below 1,000 residents in the Scilly Isles to over 30,000 in parts of Birmingham. It is difficult for national and regional funding organisations and government departments to compare wards with very different populations. It is possible that similar sized areas of deprivation of, say, 5,000 residents to be contained within wards of 6,000 or 25,000 people. The smaller ward may be labelled as deprived under some criterion where as the larger wouldn't be. Yet the number of deprived persons is the same.
- Another problem of small wards is that data may be suppressed to protect individual confidentiality – Herefordshire had that problem with parts of the Education Action Zone – some teenage pregnancy data were not released for wards in south west Herefordshire.
- Wards are being used for data dissemination but they are designed for electoral representation. Sometimes ward areas do not mean anything. For many years a ward boundary in Ledbury used to bisect the town. The new housing estates were in the same ward as the Marcle Ridge parishes from Much Marcle to Woolhope. The old part of the town was in the same ward as Eastnor and Donnington. Trying to produce statistics for Ledbury itself was a nightmare!

The Office for National Statistics has devised new “output geographies” to avoid all the problems associated with wards. These are based on a hierarchy of “output areas” which nest within each other. It is intended that these will remain stable over time to allow historical comparisons and be consistent in population size across England to facilitate geographical comparisons.. Work is still in progress on the system but the current position is summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - OUTPUT AREA GEOGRAPHIES

Geographical Unit	Typical Population Size (and minimum)	Number within Herefordshire	Construction Methodology	Data Disseminated
Output area	300 (Minimum 100)	633	Produced automatically by ONS by combining postcodes with similar tenure, respecting ward and parish boundaries	Basic unit for dissemination of 2001 census data
Super Output Area – Level 1 (SOA1)	1,500 (Minimum 1,000)	116	Produced automatically by ONS by combining output areas with similar tenure, respecting ward boundaries	Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004
Super Output Area – Level 2 (SOA2)	Target of 7,500 (Minimum 5,000)	25	Produced automatically by ONS by combining SOA1s respecting LAD / UA boundaries but not wards and modified by local authorities after consultation with other users.	Unemployment numbers, Births, Deaths, all statistics currently released at ward level.
Other levels yet to be decided – possibly a level 3 with a minimum population size of 25,000 which may cross district boundaries (decision yet to be taken)				
Estimates for various data items will be produced for wards based on the SOAs comprising the wards.				
Local Authority District / Unitary Authority	Varies	1	Determined by Act of Parliament after considering recommendations of Boundary Commission	Unemployment Rates, annual population estimates, fertility rates

The Office for National Statistics allocated each of the 116 SOA1s a code name consisting of the letter “E” and a series of numbers. These mean nothing and are difficult to work with – E 01014388 does not conjure up a picture of any particular geographical area. The Research Team has given each of the SOA1s a name, which, it is hoped, people will find useful. One of the criteria in naming the SOA1s was that the names should not have been used for wards since Herefordshire was formed in 1998. Parish names were used if a parish and SOA1 had the same boundaries. The naming conventions used are summarised in table 2.

The first and second levels in the hierarchy, output areas and super output areas level 1 (SOA1s) were calculated automatically by the Office for National Statistics by combining census output areas with similar tenure characteristics. Local authorities were not consulted. SOA1s “nest” into current wards. The next level up, super

output areas 2 (SOA2s), likewise, were produced automatically but local authorities were consulted and were able to make amendments subject to constraints on population size and the need to incorporate whole SOA1s.

It is intended to review the working of the system in two years time and possibly make amendments. There are certainly some areas which are a “nonsense” eg the area the Research Team has christened “Ledbury Spiral”

TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF SOA1 NAMES

Naming Convention	Examples	Parishes / Areas included
Shape of the SOA1	Aymestrey Horseshoe	Buckton & Coxall, Brampton Bryan, Walford, Letton & Newton, Willey, Lingen, Stapleton, Kinsham, combe, Byton, Aymestrey, Elton, Leinthall Starkes, Pipe Aston, Burrington, Downton
	Ledbury Spiral	Rural parts in the west and south of Ledbury parish, Eastnor, Donnington, Worcester Road and Southend, spine road through Deer Park estate.
Parts of urban areas	Ledbury Masefield	Area centred on John Masefield High School in Ledbury
	Hereford Yazor Plain	Area surrounding the field by the Yazor Brook
Geographic Area	Forest Edge	Aston Ingham, Hope Mansell, parts of parishes of Lea, Linton and Weston under Penyard
	Black Mountains	Llanveynoe, Craswall, Michaelchurch Escley, St. Margaret's, Turnastone, Vowchurch, Newton, Longtown, Walterstone
Whole parishes	Clehonger	
	Burghill	
Less than whole parishes	Lesser Colwall	Southern part of Colwall parish
	Lesser Cradley	Eastern part of Cradley parish
Whole parishes with neighbouring parishes	Greater Orleton	Orleton, Richard's Castle, part of Croft & Yarpole
	Greater Docklow	Docklow & Hampton Wafre, Pudleston, Hatfield & New Hampton, Hampton Charles, Grendon Bishop, Humber, Ford & Stoke Prior
Historical or Geographical Feature	The Slip	Much Marcle, Woolhope, Sollers Hope, Yatton
	Arthur's Stone	Clifford, Cusop, Dorstone, Bredwadine
Combinations of Names	Mad Bishop	Madley and Eaton Bishop
	Leintadmore	Leintwardine, Adforton and Wigmore
Other Meaningful Names	Trumpet	Little Marcle, Aylton, Putley, Pixley, Munsley, Canon Frome, Castle Frome, Eggleton, Stretton Grandison, Yarkhill, Ashperton
	Tollbridge	Brilley, Whitney on Wye, Willersey & Winforton, Huntington, part of Eardisley, Almeley

A map of the areas is shown in Figure 1.

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Figure 1: Map of Super Output Areas (Level 1) in Herefordshire

