Postcode to Administrative Geography Specification

Data Files

This product consists of 3 comma separated text files with a header record.

Files **PCL-WRD-UK-CSV_1.csv** and **PCL-WRD-UK-CSV_2.csv** together represent all current live Postcodes in the UK with their associated administrative geography data. Each file contains half of the national file - approximately 870,000 Postcode records – which allows each half to be opened in Excel versions 2007 and later if required. For database applications, both files can be loaded into your choice of database (e.g. Microsoft Access) and appended to create a single national data table of Postcodes.

File **PCL-WRD-UK-CSV-Retired.csv** contains Postcodes which have now been retired from the Postal system and therefore are no longer in circulation. This file is supplied free of charge to provide a comprehensive 'history' of Postcodes and the current administrative areas. It is recommended to use this data file in conjunction with the 'live' files above to achieve the maximum match rates for accurate analysis.

Table Structure

Field	Description
Postcode	The Full Postcode (eg UB7 0EB)
Postcode_Sector	The Postcode Sector (eg UB7 0)
Postcode_District	The Postcode District (eg UB7)
Postcode_Area	The Postcode Area (eg UB)
Country Code	Country Code
Country Name	Country Name
Region_Code	Region Code
Region Name	Government Office Region Name
County_Code	Administrative County Code
County Name	Administrative County Name
District_Code	Local Authority District Code
District Name	Official District Name
Ward_Code	Ward Code
Ward Name	Official Ward Name

The Postcode

Formerly a Postcode could contain between 1 and over 300 addresses. This is now restricted to a maximum of 100 although the average number of addresses per Postcode is 15.

Electoral Wards/ Divisions

Electoral wards/divisions are the key building block of UK administrative geography, being the spatial units used to elect local government councillors in metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts, unitary authorities and the London boroughs in England; unitary authorities in Wales; council areas in Scotland; and district council areas in Northern Ireland.

Electoral wards are found in Scotland, Northern Ireland and most of England.

In Wales, the Isle of Wight and several of the new Unitary Authorities created as part of the LGR in 2009, the equivalent areas are legally termed 'electoral divisions', although they are frequently also referred to as wards.

The only part of the UK without electoral wards/divisions is the Isles of Scilly, which has its own council but no electoral zoning.

For statistical purposes however, ONS treats the islands' five parishes as electoral wards.

The often very small size of electoral wards/divisions can be appreciated from the map below.

Electoral wards/divisions (and the Scilly parishes) cover the whole of the UK; in addition, all higher administrative units are necessarily built up of whole electoral wards/divisions.

They are also used to constitute many other geographies such as the Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) areas, health geographies and Westminster parliamentary constituencies.

English districts (metropolitan and non-metropolitan), London boroughs and unitary authorities average around 23 electoral wards/divisions each, Northern Irish districts around 22, Scottish council areas around 11 and Welsh unitary authorities about 40.

Population counts can vary substantially, even within a single local authority, but the national average is about 5,500.

More populous electoral wards/divisions tend to occur in large urban areas.

Electoral ward/division boundary changes are usually enacted on the first Thursday in May each year, to coincide with the local government elections.

As of 31 December 2011 the UK had 9,523 electoral wards/divisions.

Metropolitan Counties and Districts

In 1974 a new two-tier system of counties and districts was established across England and Wales.

Six of the upper-tier units, all in England and representing heavily built-up areas (other than Greater London), were designated 'metropolitan counties' and were subdivided into 'metropolitan districts'.

As with non-metropolitan areas the respective authorities covered all areas of local government, but the distribution of responsibilities was different to that of the county/district structure.

In 1986 however the metropolitan county councils were abolished, although the county areas (see map) are still recognised, especially for statistical purposes.

The 36 metropolitan district councils were left as single-tier authorities, a status retained to date, and accordingly have more powers than their non-metropolitan district equivalents.

Metropolitan districts are subdivided into electoral wards.

Counties, Non-metropolitan Districts and Unitary Authorities

In 1974 a two-tier administrative structure of (shire) counties and non-metropolitan districts was set up across the whole of England and Wales, except for the Isles of Scilly, Greater London and the six metropolitan counties.

Council functions were divided according to the level at which they could be practised most efficiently.

In consequence, counties took on functions including education, transport, strategic planning, fire services, consumer protection, refuse disposal, smallholdings, social services and libraries, whereas the districts had responsibility for local planning, housing, local highways, building, environmental health, refuse collection and cemeteries.

Responsibility for recreation and cultural matters was divided between the two tiers.

Following the Local Government Reorganisation in the 1990s major changes were implemented to create administrations most appropriate to the needs of the area concerned.

The key feature of this change was the introduction of unitary authorities, single-tier administrations with responsibility for all areas of local government.

Between 1995 and 1998 these were established in a number of areas across the country, especially in medium-sized urban areas, whilst other areas retained a two-tier structure.

There are currently 56 unitary authorities in England, and 27 shire counties split into 201 (non-metropolitan) districts.

Counties, districts and unitary authorities are subdivided into electoral wards/divisions.

Greater London and the London Boroughs

Greater London was established in 1965 as an administrative unit covering the London metropolis. It was not defined as a county but had a two-tier structure, with the lower tier being the London boroughs.

Following the abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986 the boroughs became single-tier authorities, but Greater London was still widely recognised, especially for statistical and mapping purposes. In 2000 however a two-tier structure was re-established when the new Greater London Authority adopted responsibility for a range of citywide policy areas.

There are 32 actual boroughs, with a status similar to metropolitan districts, and also the City of London, which is a City Corporation and has a number of additional roles. Boroughs are subdivided into electoral wards.

Code	Borough
E09000001	City of London
E09000002	Barking and Dagenham
E09000003	Barnet
E09000004	Bexley
E09000005	Brent
E09000006	Bromley
E09000007	Camden
E09000008	Croydon
E09000009	Ealing
E09000010	Enfield
E09000011	Greenwich
E09000012	Hackney
E09000013	Hammersmith and Fulham
E09000014	Haringey
E09000015	Harrow
E09000016	Havering
E09000017	Hillingdon
E09000018	Hounslow
E09000019	Islington
E09000020	Kensington and Chelsea

E09000021	Kingston upon Thames
E09000022	Lambeth
E09000023	Lewisham
E09000024	Merton
E09000025	Newham
E09000026	Redbridge
E09000027	Richmond upon Thames
E09000028	Southwark
E09000029	Sutton
E09000030	Tower Hamlets
E09000031	Waltham Forest
E09000032	Wandsworth
E09000033	Westminster