ORDNANCE SURVEY GB

BOUNDARY-LINE – OVERVIEW

Version history

Version	Date	Description
1.0	05/11/2021	Initial release.
1.1	09/12/2021	Minor updates.

Purpose of this document

This document provides information about and insight into the Boundary-Line product and its potential applications. For information on the contents and structure of Boundary-Line, please refer to the Product Information and Technical Specification documents.

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Contact details

OS website 'Contact us' page (https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/contact-us).

Contents

1.   About Boundary-Line

Boundary-Line provides a representation of the hierarchy of administrative and electoral boundaries and their names for England, Scotland and Wales. Boundary-Line for England and Wales was initially digitised from Ordnance Survey's boundary record sheets at 1:10 000 scale (or, in some cases, at larger scales).

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) codes are supplied by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and General Register Office for Scotland (GROS).

Appropriate software is needed to use the data for your intended application.

1.1   Boundary-Line benefits

The high specification of Boundary-Line offers you the following benefits:

- Full coverage of Great Britain, supplied as England, Scotland and Wales.

- The key boundary dataset for Great Britain, suited to multiple applications using a geographical information system (GIS) and other digital mapping systems.

- The full hierarchy of boundaries.

- Structured vector format, offering great functionality.

- GSS codes, where available, which allow you to link Boundary-Line polygons with GSS information.

- Area values for every polygon.

- Mean high water (springs) mark, which enables you to build and explicitly identify dry land areas within coastal polygons.

- Documented updates via bi-annual releases allow you to easily identify relevant changes.

- Unique administrative area identifiers are retained at each update, allowing revised boundaries to be related to your existing data.

1.2   Boundary-Line applications

Boundary-Line can be used for GIS analysis to support a wide range of business decision-making, such as:

- Political analysis
- Environmental analysis
- Statistical analysis for social or marketing decision-making
- Geo-demographic analysis
- Asset management
- Planning applications
- Legal work
- Reference and research
- Customised graphic output

1.3 Available formats for Boundary-Line

Boundary-Line is available in the following formats:

- Esri shapefile
- MapInfo TAB file
- GeoPackage
- Geography Markup Language (GML)
- Vector tiles (MBTiles)

1.4 Boundary-Line supply mechanism

Boundary-Line can be freely downloaded under the Open Government Licence (https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/). Data can be downloaded in various formats from the Ordnance Survey Data Hub (https://osdatahub.os.uk/downloads/open/BoundaryLine).

1.5 Boundary-Line update schedule

Boundary-Line is updated twice a year, in spring and autumn, allowing a choice as to which update is preferred.

The spring update represents boundaries (as defined and modified by Orders, Acts and Statutory Instruments) at the date of the May local elections.

The autumn update also represents boundaries at the date of the May local elections and is operative from the previous spring / May to autumn / October release.

Unlike changes to other boundaries, changes to Westminster constituency (parliamentary) boundaries do not come into operation on a defined date, and it is therefore difficult to timetable such changes into the spring or autumn updates. Therefore, any forthcoming Westminster constituency (parliamentary) boundary changes that have been approved by Government will be supplied as a separate file (in MapInfo TAB or Esri shapefile formats only) as part of the updates until they are included in the product.

2. Overview of Boundary-Line data, features and supplementary layers

2.1 Data overview

2.1.1 Basic principles

Boundary-Line is the key dataset of administrative and voting boundaries in Great Britain. It is a representation in computer-readable form of a specialist large-scale map, including real-world objects, which may be tangible (such as the mean high water mark) or intangible (such as a district boundary).

GIS software provides the functionality to store, manage and manipulate this digital map data. The properties of the data make it suitable as a key base for users wishing to develop applications. Boundary-Line is also suitable for use within other digital mapping systems. It's coordinated on the National Grid, which allows for the easy superimposition of other datasets.

Polygons are continuous areas defined by sets of bounding closed lines. They are representational of areas, such as electoral wards, and have relationships to administration collection features in order to convey descriptive characteristics of the polygon. These are explicit within the data and can be viewed and manipulated with appropriate software.

2.1.2 Boundary-Line data source

Boundary-Line is currently updated by mapping against OS VectorMap Local (1:10 000 scale) and, in certain cases, large-scale sources.

2.2 Boundary-Line features

A list of the features within Boundary-Line includes:

- Area measurements

- Civil parish (England) and community (Wales)

- County

- Distinctive names

- District

- Electoral division (county and unitary)

- English region

- Extent of the realm (EOR): either mean low water mark (England and Wales), mean low water springs mark (Scotland) or seaward boundary extensions

- Greater London Authority

- Greater London Authority Assembly constituencies (the London proportional representation voting areas)

- GSS codes in England, Wales and Scotland for all units, with the exception of Greater London Authority, county electoral divisions and non-civil-parish areas

- London borough (including the county of the City of London)

- Mean high water mark (England and Wales) and / or mean high water springs mark (Scotland): both are abbreviated to MHW in product documentation

- Metropolitan district

- Scottish parliamentary constituency and electoral region

- Unitary authority

- Unique administrative unit, link and polygon identifiers

- Ward (district, unitary, metropolitan and London borough)

- Welsh Parliament constituency and electoral region

- Westminster (parliamentary) constituency

2.3   Supplementary layers in Boundary-Line

There are several supplementary layers included alongside the main Boundary-Line product. These supplementary layers sit separately to the main GB Boundary-Line folder and are included as separate directories in the shapefile and MapInfo TAB file formats.

Features included as supplementary in the supplementary directory are:

- Historical counties

- Ceremonial counties

- Historical European regions (frozen as of 1 April 2021)

- Country