Roundtable 18: Devolution – what are the impacts for the disaggregation and merging of local authorities?

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Table 18 discussed the varied experiences authorities have had with different gazetteer systems. While some users were highly satisfied with their chosen systems, most acknowledged that all gazetteers have both strengths and limitations. Attendees agreed that these differences should be considered when selecting a gazetteer, especially during or after reorganisation.

System selection influences

One key factor influencing the choice of LLPG (Local Land and Property Gazetteer) system post-LGR was the prevalence of a particular system among neighbouring authorities. Where the majority of former districts used the same platform, this often guided the decision for the new unitary authority. Consistency across borders was seen as a practical and strategic advantage.

Integrating LLPG and LSG

The group also discussed the potential to adopt a single, unified solution for both LLPG and LSG (Local Street Gazetteer) systems—particularly relevant for authorities transitioning from a two-tier to a unitary model. While this approach offers clear benefits in terms of simplicity and integration, it was recognised that successful implementation would require agreement across multiple teams and stakeholders.

Technical and vendor considerations

Attendees highlighted that some gazetteer platforms face technical issues, such as difficulties uploading validated CSV files. These limitations are important to consider when systems need to be merged or split following LGR. Vendor support was flagged as a crucial factor—especially given that gazetteer transformation is rarely a straightforward process. However, participants also noted that, despite the challenges, all authorities that had previously undergone LGR managed to have their gazetteers operational in time for the launch of their new unitary councils.

First-hand experience

A representative from a former two-tier authority shared their journey transitioning from several district councils into a unitary structure. While they now operate a consolidated LLPG system, they are still feeding data into it from multiple legacy district systems. These legacy gazetteers serve as data sources for the corporate LLPG.

Challenges of merging gazetteers

Ideally, new unitary councils would have fully integrated LLPG and LSG systems from day one. However, where several legacy gazetteers are involved, setup and management can remain complex for some time after reorganisation. A phased approach and strong governance are often required to ensure data quality and consistency during the transition.

Street Data and Boundary Issues

Merging street records (NC17 Errors)

The issue of NC17 errors—caused when streets with the same name cross former district boundaries—was briefly discussed. In a two-tier system, such streets often had different locality names and USRNs. Post-merger, these should be rationalised by combining ESUs (Elementary Street Units) under a single USRN, retiring the duplicate, and standardising the naming where needed.

Disaggregating LSGs Post-LGR

When county-level LSGs are split between two or more new unitary authorities, deciding which authority retains the original USRN can depend on factors such as the length of street within each boundary or the number of properties attached. This process requires close coordination between street and address custodians in the affected authorities.

GeoPlace support and advice packs

At the event, it was noted that GeoPlace provides an advice pack to support local authorities preparing for LGR. Authorities were encouraged to contact the GeoPlace Helpdesk for this resource. However, it was also clarified that GeoPlace will directly contact all affected authorities following official announcements about future mergers or disaggregation.

Next Steps

Review published case studies for insights and practical lessons:

- [Completing an Authority Merger in Somerset](#)
- [The process of splitting an authority's gazetteer in Cumbria](#)

- Engage with colleagues in neighbouring authorities, regional chairs, and the GeoPlace Helpdesk to share knowledge and prepare collaboratively for change.