

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

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Table 18 briefly discussed the different idiosyncrasies of the gazetteer systems. Whilst people using certain gazetteers had very positive opinions, most gazetteers were felt to have both positive and some negative points. One of the main drivers determining which gazetteer system(s) to use following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as a result of devolution, was felt to be where the majority of neighbouring districts used the same LLPG gazetteers and that this would likely determine the LLPG gazetteer solution for new unitary authorities. Attendees agreed however that idiosyncrasies of gazetteer systems is nevertheless a consideration to bear in mind.

The possibility of using the same gazetteer for both LLPG and LSG was also mooted as a possible way forward where two tier authorities are changing to be unitary authorities. The table agreed that there are obvious advantages to having one combined gazetteer solution for both LLPG and LSG and that it is a worthy consideration, but recognised that this kind of change involved the agreement of many different members of staff.

The possibility of some gazetteer solutions having problems with uploading validated CSV files was also highlighted as an important consideration when determining the way forward where gazetteers needed to be split or merged following LGR. Given that merging or splitting gazetteers isn't always a straight forward or simple undertaking the level of support from vendors was also considered to be an important factor when considering which gazetteers to use going forward. Although not a completely straight forward process it was noted that the various authorities that have previously been through LGR all had their gazetteers up and running in time for the start of their new unitary authorities.

One former two tier authority, who kindly joined the table, that had many former district councils when a two tiered authority, confirmed that whilst they now have one combined LLPG software, that they were still currently using a variety of former district council LLPG gazetteer software systems, which are being used as slave gazetteers that feed into the corporate LLPG gazetteer at the current time. Although the ideal would be to have LSG and LLPG gazetteers for unitary councils set up and in place for the start of new unitary authorities, where there are a considerable number of district LLPG gazetteers being merged, it is important to understand that there may well be more complexity to gazetteer set up and management in the years immediately after LGR.

Although LGR as a result of devolution is likely to affect tens of district and county councils it remains on the horizon for many local authorities at the moment pending

definitive splits and mergers into two or three new unitary authorities being officially announced by central government.

Attendees were encouraged to read the case studies about authorities that have previously split and or merged their gazetteers, as they are good guides and were also encouraged to have discussions with fellow custodians in neighbouring authorities and county councils, GeoPlace Helpdesk and regional chairs.

[Completing an Authority Merger in Somerset | GeoPlace LLP](#)

[The process of splitting an authority's gazetteer in Cumbria | GeoPlace LLP](#)

Data considerations

Streets split at former district boundaries (NC17 errors) following merges were briefly discussed. This error being caused by a street with the same name that crosses from one former district into a neighbouring former district that would have had different town and or locality details and different USRN when a two tier local government set up was in place. Following the merging of district councils the ESUs for these neighbouring streets can be added to one of the USRNs, whilst the other USRN is end dated, with town and locality details rationalised where required.

The splitting of streets where county LSGs are disaggregated into two or three new unitary authorities was also discussed. Where existing streets are split by new unitary boundaries, which authority retained the original USRN within its new authority boundary was to some extent likely based on how much of the street was in each new unitary authority or the number of properties which were attached to the USRN. Determining this and the set up of new USRNs in the neighbouring unitary authority requiring liaison between street and address custodians was noted.

Correction

At the conference the table chair advised that GeoPlace have an advice pack for local authorities to guide them through LGR and to seek this from Helpdesk. Please note that GeoPlace will however contact all the affected local authorities following official LGR announcements about how local authorities will be disaggregated and merged.