



Independent advice on the Postcode Address File

4 November 2013

The Provision of County Information in PAF®

A consultation by the PAF® Advisory Board

1.1 Royal Mail (RM) no longer requires county information in postal addresses for delivery purposes. However, counties are used by some of the companies that take PAF® data. Therefore, currently RM continues to provide this information as part of PAF® using the three types of designation (former postal counties, traditional counties and administrative names). They are supplied as part of a separate alias file within PAF®.

2 County Information – What is available?

2.1 The alias file provides, where possible, three versions of a 'county,' the traditional name, the administrative name and the former postal name. For example,

Traditional	-	Yorkshire
Administrative	-	East Riding of Yorkshire
Former postal	-	North Humberside
Traditional	-	Sussex
Administrative	-	Brighton & Hove
Former postal	-	East Sussex

2.2 Of these, the administrative name is the only one that changes (with amendments managed with the help of the Office for National Statistics (ONS)) and is the most current.

3 Issues and requirements

3.1 For many years, a small but committed group of customers have pressed for the use of a particular version of a county name within PAF® addresses. They have especially objected to the inclusion of obsolete counties. However, we understand that the main data re-sellers (Solutions Providers) use the former postal name in software solutions despite its unpopularity in some geographical areas. For example, North Humberside, the former postal county, may be used by a Solution Provider rather than the East Riding of Yorkshire, which is the up to date administrative county or Yorkshire as the traditional county; Leicestershire rather than Rutland etc.

3.2 All three county designations continue to be included in the Alias file and this can be both confusing and misleading. Thus, North Humberside is an out-dated and inaccurate location the deletion of which would improve the accuracy of the file. However, the impact of any changes is not fully understood and in order to assess the impact of any possible action taken by Royal Mail, the PAB is sponsoring a short customer consultation on a range of possible actions.

3.3 There are 6 options to consider:

- A Retain the status quo and provide all three designations
- B Provide only the administrative county within the alias file
- C Provide only the traditional county within the alias file
- D Provide only the former postal county within the alias product
- E Provide any two of options B, C and D
- F Drop the provision of all county information in PAF®

4 Review of options and key questions to be considered

4.1 Option A would not resolve the issue for those who object to their address being designated using an obsolete name but it would leave the choice of designation to the sender or other originator of the address use rather than to the subject or recipient.

4.2 Option B would remove the now obsolete names and encourage originators to use the up to date administrative name (which is the only designation that is maintained, albeit via the ONS).

4.3 Option C would leave just the traditional county in PAF®.

4.4 Option D is similar to options B and C above, but from feedback received to date, is thought unlikely to be preferred.

4.5 Option E offers a combination of any two designations from B-D

4.6 Option F applies the strict postal position. RM says that counties are not required for delivery purposes and do not form part of a postal address. The option would not encourage the use of any county designation but may have adverse consequences for non-postal uses of PAF®.

4.7 If provision of some or all county data in PAF® were to cease, the information would still be available from other sources such as the ONS, the Association of British Counties and from existing software applications; and Solutions Providers could, if necessary, obtain data from these sources rather than from Royal Mail.

5 How to respond

5.1 The PAF® Advisory Board wishes to understand the impact of possible changes to the 'county' alias data and therefore wishes to encourage Solution Providers and other PAF® users and customers to offer their preferences. Please respond either by email to the PAB Secretary: pab.secretary1@gmail.com or in writing to The PAF® Advisory Board, PO Box 57983, London W4 9AW. The deadline for responses is 5 pm on 13 December 2013.

For any further information on this consultation please contact the PAB secretary at the above email address or the PAF® Advisory Board at PO Box 57983, London W4 9AW

Q1 Which of the options A-F above do you prefer and why?

	RETAIN	EXCLUDE
Traditional (e.g. Yorkshire)		
Administrative e.g. East Riding of Yprkshire		
Former Postal (e.g. North Humberside)		

Q2 Would the omission of any of the three 'county' designations from PAF® cause you significant problems? Please explain.

Q3 On whose behalf are you responding:

Organisation name:

Private citizen:

Yours sincerely



Ian Beesley

Chairman, PAF Advisory Board