



# Briefing Note

## The Population of Moffat

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### Situation

It is important to understand the size and scale of the population of Moffat in order to inform the future planning of services in the area.

### Background

The estimated size of populations in Scotland is published by National Records Scotland (NRS). Using the most recent Census data, NRS apply calculations taking into account births, deaths and migration into and out of areas, to produce mid-year population estimates. The estimates are published for different geographical areas. From largest to smallest these are National (Scotland), Regional (Dumfries and Galloway), Intermediate Zone (Moffat) and Datazone (North Moffat). These different sizes of geographical area are collectively referred to as 'intermediate geographies'.

The boundaries of intermediate zones and datazones were originally published in 2001. However, there were a number of challenges. Across Scotland, some datazones did not nest neatly into the overlying intermediate zone boundaries and similarly, some intermediate zones did not nest neatly into the overlying regional boundaries. This made it difficult to aggregate data published using a small geography to produce results for a region.

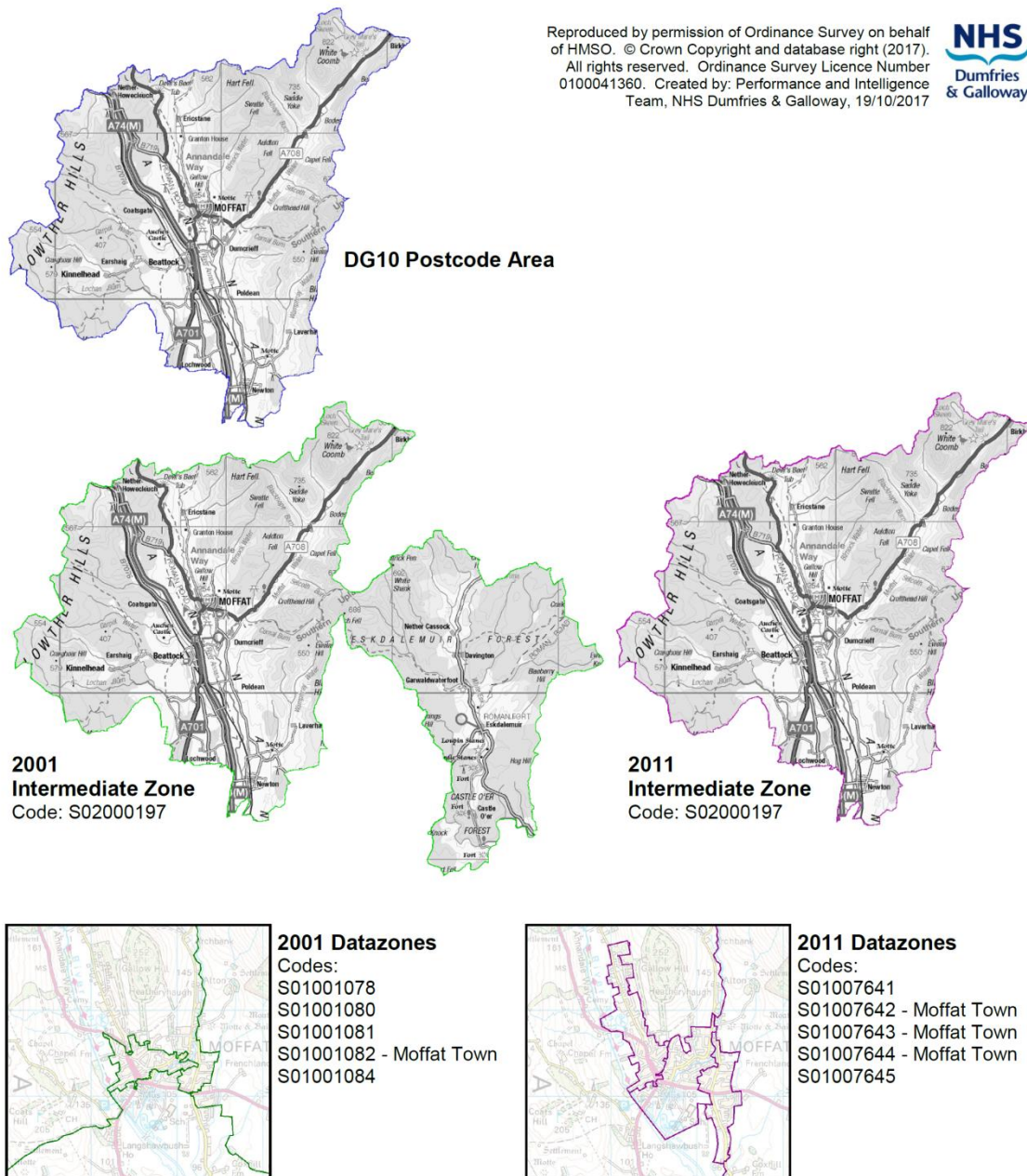
In addition, Scotland's Census also publishes populations for localities. These localities are an attempt to isolate settlements (cities, towns and villages). Unlike the other intermediate geographies, they do not run continuously across Scotland. They are formed from groups of postcodes that have a high population density. The original boundaries for localities are based on data from the 1991 Census.

**Please Note:** The 'localities' used by Scotland's Census are not the same as the 'Localities' used in the planning and delivery of health and social care services.

In 2011 revised intermediate and datazone boundaries were published to coincide with the latest Census. There were some significant boundary changes in the Moffat area and this impacts on how population estimates are interpreted. Figure 1 depicts the different intermediate geographies for Moffat and the boundary changes that occurred between 2001 and 2011. The key changes are:

- The 2011 intermediate zone boundary excludes Eskdalemuir and now follows the same line as the DG10 postcode area
- There are now 3 datazones for 'Moffat town' covering a larger geographic area where previously there was 1. These better distinguish between the settlement of Moffat and the surrounding countryside. Previously, some houses on the edge of Moffat town were included in surrounding rural datazones.

Figure 1: The changing shape of intermediate zones and datazones in the Moffat area

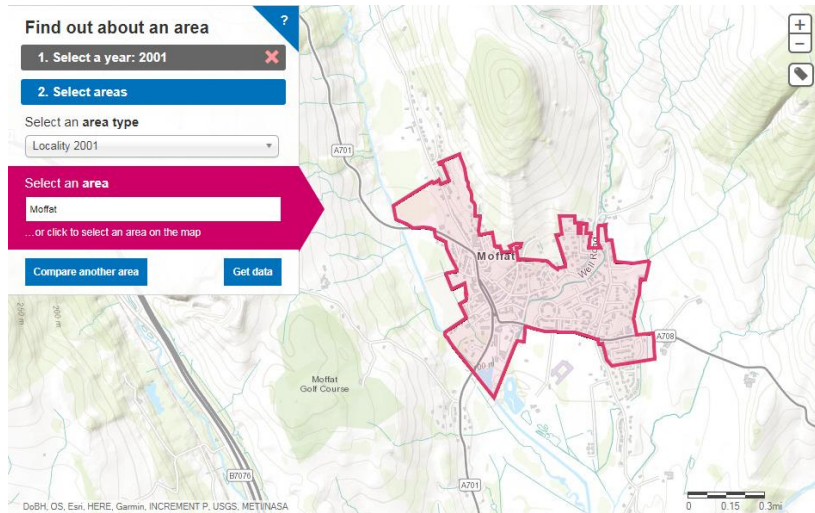


The boundaries of localities (settlements) have also been revised and were published in 2010. The locality boundaries now more accurately follow the boundaries of datazones, as both intermediate geographies now attempt to better distinguish between urban and rural areas. Figure 2 depicts

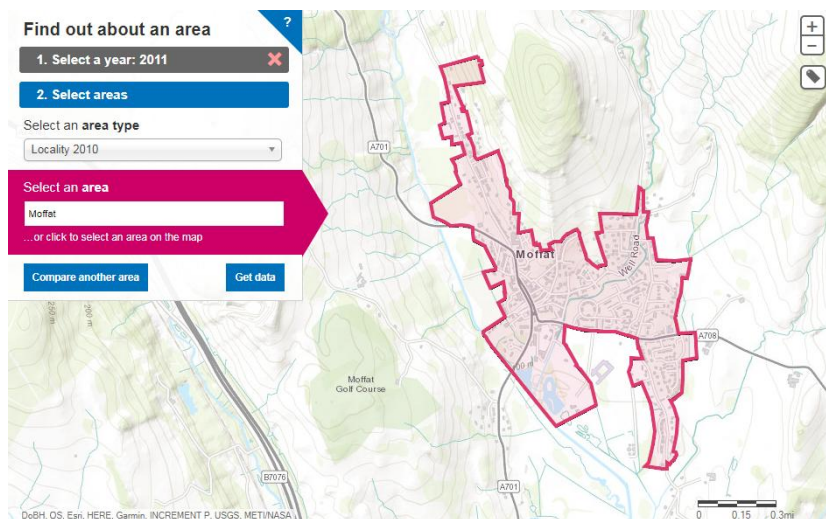
screen captures of the Scotland's Census website comparing the locality boundary for Moffat between the censuses in 2001 (based on 1991 boundaries) and 2011 (based on 2010 boundaries).

The differing boundaries and the different types of intermediate geography impact on how population estimates are interpreted and used, especially when considering changes over time.

**Figure 2: Screen captures from Scotland's Census website depicting the changes to the Moffat locality (settlement) boundary between 2001 and 2011**



**2001 Moffat Locality Boundary**



**2011 Moffat Locality Boundary**

Screen captures taken  
19 October 2017

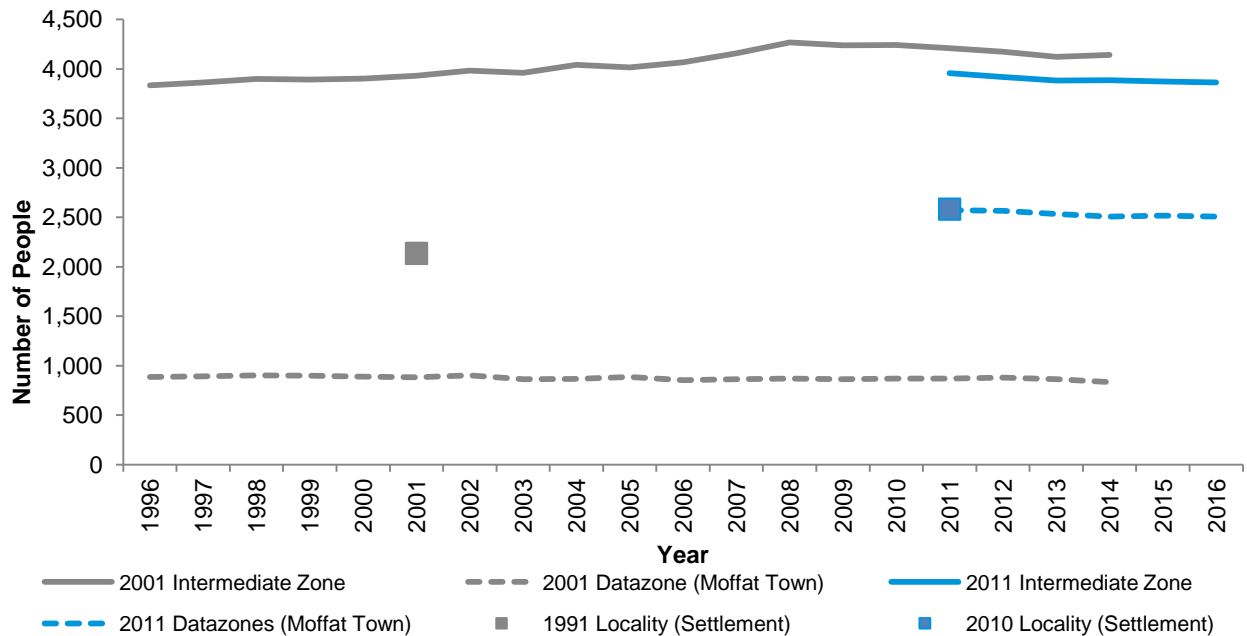
## Assessment

Table 1 and Figure 3 collate the available population figures from censuses and NRS population estimates. They are presented by the different intermediate geographies.

It is clear from this result that the consequence of changing from the 2001 to the 2011 intermediate zone is a drop in the overall population estimate for the Moffat area. This is unsurprising as the intermediate zone was reduced in size. Similarly, there is a clear rise in the population estimates for 'Moffat Town' resulting from the change of using one 2001 datazone to using three 2011 datazones to define the town of Moffat. These revised results are now similar in scale to that of the 2010 locality (settlement). There is also a clear increase between the 2001 and 2011 locality (settlement) results due to the revised boundaries and increased area included.

If the differences resulting from the change in boundaries and use of different intermediate geographies are ignored, considering each trend line in turn, it is clear that there has been little change in the overall population of Moffat, both across the wider area and in the town, over the past 20 years. The population of the wider Moffat area has remained near 4,000 people. Over the past 5 years, the population of Moffat town, using revised boundaries, has averaged 2,534 people.

**Figure 3: Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) by intermediate geography (as described in Figure 1); Moffat; 1996-2016**



**Table 1: Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) by intermediate geography (as described in Figure 1); Moffat; 1996-2016**

Year	2001 Intermediate Zone	2001 Datazone (Moffat Town)	2011 Intermediate Zone	2011 Datazones (Moffat Town)	1991 Locality (Settlement)	2010 Locality (Settlement)
1996	3,834	885				
1997	3,862	892				
1998	3,897	901				
1999	3,893	897				
2000	3,901	888				
2001	3,930	883			2,135	
2002	3,983	902				
2003	3,960	863				
2004	4,041	866				
2005	4,015	886				
2006	4,067	854				
2007	4,158	864				
2008	4,266	870				
2009	4,239	862				
2010	4,240	868				
2011	4,210	869	3,956	2,572		2,582
2012	4,174	880	3,917	2,565		
2013	4,122	863	3,882	2,534		
2014	4,140	833	3,885	2,508		
2015			3,873	2,515		
2016			3,864	2,508		

## Recommendations

- It is important to accurately describe the geography underlying population estimates. Changes to boundaries can significantly impact on these estimates.
- For the future planning of services in and around Moffat, population estimates for the 2011 intermediate zone and the 2011 datazones should be used.
- The mid-2016 population estimate for the Moffat area (intermediate zone / DG10 postcode area) is 3,864 people.
- The mid-2016 population estimate for 'Moffat town' (using 3 datazones) is 2,508 people.
- After discounting changes relating to the use of different intermediate geographies, the population of Moffat has remained stable over the past 20 years.

## References

National Records Scotland (NRS) Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) (2001 datazone based)  
<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/special-area-population-estimates/small-area-population-estimates>  
(last accessed 20 October 2017)

National Records Scotland (NRS) Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) (2011 datazone based)  
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(last accessed 20 October 2017)

Scotland's Census  
<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>  
(last accessed 20 October 2017)