

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

NUTS boundaries are used for reporting of regional statistics to Eurostat and those statistics are used to inform regional policy. The Scottish Government is proposing to make minimal changes beyond aligning existing NUTS boundaries to Local Authority Boundaries.

Do you have any comments on the Scottish Governments proposals for NUTS 2 regions?

These appear minimal and sensible, making for easier administration.

Do you have any comments on the Scottish Governments proposals for NUTS 3 regions?

Aligning the boundaries of NUTS 3 to local authorities seems sensible and straightforward, allowing a more efficient statistics delivery as well as allowing local authorities further opportunities to compare statistics and policy outcomes.

Eurostat have requested we consider merging the Highlands & Islands with North Eastern Scotland to create a new area that's closer to the recommended population thresholds. The Scottish Government plan to request that these areas should be allowed an exemption under Article 3 (5) of the NUTS Regulations, i.e. because of particular geographical, socio-economic, historical, cultural or environmental circumstances, especially in the islands and the outermost regions.

Please provide any evidence in favour of or against an exemption under Article 3 (5) of the NUTS Regulations for Highlands & Islands and North Eastern Scotland NUTS 2 areas?

The distribution of population in the two areas is markedly different; the sparsity of population in much of the Highlands & Islands being one example; the particular problems associated with island living being another. The infrastructure needs of the Highlands & Islands to serve that population obviously also differ from the North East and the sometimes severe weather conditions affect them.

Culturally the two regions have substantial differences; the Highlands and Islands encompassing a number of cultures including the Scots Gaelic and Nordic cultures which differ between mainland and island communities. The North East has other distinct cultures dominated by the Doric culture. Languages affected by those cultures also have notable differences. Those cultures and the differences between them result from differing histories and differing environmental influences throughout those histories.

The economies of the two regions are very different with the wealth in the North East being derived to a great extent from the hydrocarbon extraction

industry of the North Sea and from fertile agricultural areas as well as a historic royal connection while the Highlands & Islands sees many areas of poverty and deprivation, partly as a result of the practical difficulties of setting up and operating businesses in remote communities, partly as a result of the greater expense of moving people, goods and services around the area.

Keeping communities alive in the Highlands & Islands requires greater support than in the North East (where relatively little support is needed, in the main). The threat of population collapse in some communities makes the difficulties around living and prospering in the Highlands & Islands substantially greater; threatening the moves taken so far towards more equality between the majority of Scotland and the Highlands & Islands.

Eurostat have suggested that the Scottish Governments proposals for NUTS 3 should include merging Moray with Argyll & Bute Local Authority to create an area that meets their recommended population ranges.

Please provide any evidence in favour of or against an exemption under Article 3 (5) of the NUTS Regulations for the proposed Moray and Argyll & Bute NUTS 3 areas?

These two areas are not coterminous which makes for administrative difficulties. They are, also, distinct and distinctive areas with differing economies, differing histories, and differing social issues requiring attention. The change to defence institutions in Moray will require particular attention over the next few years, for example, while the transport infrastructure in Argyll & Bute will be a pressing concern there.