

## 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?**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar supports the proposal for the continuation of a separate NUTS 2 designation for the Highlands and Islands. The Comhairle would not be in favour of merging the Highlands and Islands with the North East Scotland NUTS 2 area to achieve the population within the recommended threshold, and requests that because of the unique geographical, socio-economic, and cultural circumstances of the Highlands and Islands that the status quo is maintained and that they be permitted to deviate from the threshold as per (Article 3(5) of the NUTS Regulations).

Similarly, the Comhairle does not favour the expansion of the Highlands and Islands NUTS 2 area to include all of the Argyll and Bute Local Authority area, or the removal of the Isle of Arran and the Cumbraes.

Therefore, the Comhairle supports the continuation of current NUTS 2 arrangements for the Highlands and Islands.

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

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar does not agree with the proposal to align NUTS 3 regions to Local Authority boundaries as this would reduce the ability of Government, local authorities and partners to address the particular socio-economic characteristics, issues and challenges facing existing smaller NUT3 areas.

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?**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar does not favour the combination of these two NUTS areas because the Highlands and Islands have unique geographical

and cultural differences and specific socio-economic challenges which are quite different to those of North East Scotland.

Islands communities and those on the periphery constantly face an extra set of challenges and these are exacerbated at times of recession. Peripherality and the distance from markets in particular and the resultant high costs of goods and services have a disproportionate and detrimental impact on an already fragile local economy. Ideally, the Comhairle would support a special 'islands allocation' which is not NUTS related and which would cater for all islands, large or small, irrespective of their NUTS classification. Failing that, however, the Comhairle supports the continuation of existing arrangements: separate NUTS 2 regions for the Highlands and Islands and North East Scotland.

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?**

N/A