

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?

I fully support Scottish Government's suggestions that Argyll and Bute should be fully included in the Highlands and Islands area and Arran and the Cumbraes should be included in South West Scotland and their proposed resistance to the suggestion that North Eastern Scotland should be combined with Highlands and Islands.

If the pressure to get rid of small NUTS2 areas is particularly strong, then the North Eastern Scotland could be combined with Eastern Scotland, to leave the Highlands and Islands as the only under-target-size NUTS2 area. However, I would strongly recommend maintaining the current 4 NUTS2 areas.

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

I fully support the Scottish Government's three NUTS3 proposals (affecting Dunbartonshire, East&North Ayrshire and Highlands/Moray/Argyll & Bute). I would suggest two further possible changes, namely to include Clackmannanshire with Stirling (rather than Fife) and to then consider whether to split Stirling+Clackmannanshire and Perth & Kinross into two separate NUTS3 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?

As noted above, I fully support Scottish Government's proposed resistance to the 'bonkers' suggestion than North Eastern Scotland should be combined with Highlands and Islands.

If the pressure to get rid of small NUTS2 areas is particularly strong, then the North Eastern Scotland could more-sensibly be combined with Eastern Scotland, with Moray allocated either to the Highlands & Islands or the new 'East & North East' NUTS2 areas. However, I would strongly recommend maintaining the current 4 NUTS2 areas.

The Highland Boundary Fault line is a strong physical feature which can be used to broadly illustrate/explain/justify the broad difference between 'Highlands' and 'Lowlands'. The almost complete lack of shared organisational structures between the relevant North East and Highland authorities provides further evidence of the 'chalk and cheese' nature of these two NUTS2 areas, with the only uncertainty being about whether Moray is 'closer' in nature to Inverness or Aberdeen.

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?

The suggestion to combine Moray with Argyll and Bute is even more crazy than the North East+Highland NUTS2 idea discussed above. These two Authorities have so little in common that combining them would be less sensible than arbitrarily pairing up Local Authorities whose names start with the same letter. If the pressure to get rid of small NUTS 3 areas is too strong to resist then Moray could/should be combined with Aberdeen City/Shire and Argyll and Bute could be combined with Highland, leaving only the three Islands significantly below the 150,000 threshold.