

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?

The Highland Council supports the Government's rejection of the Eurostat proposal to merge the Highlands & Islands and North East Scotland NUTS 2 areas. The Council has grave concern over this proposal as it will result in a distortion of the statistical reporting of the very differing socio-economic realities that exist in the North East and across the Highlands & Islands. The Council fears that the development challenges exemplified by sparsity of population, a scattered population distribution, rurality, insularity and a mountainous terrain, and extreme peripherality in the UK and European context will be lost if the region is amalgamated with North East Scotland. This could have serious deleterious consequences for the Highlands & Islands in terms of future socio-economic development.

In supporting the retention of the status quo concerning the geographies of the NUTS 2 areas the Council is relaxed over the inclusion of Helensburgh in the Highlands & Islands NUTS 2 area as part of the Argyll & Bute NUTS 3.

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

The Highland Council is in favour of aligning the NUTS 3 boundaries with those of local authorities with the exception of the retention of the islands of Arran and the Cumbraes in the Argyll & Bute NUTS 3 area.

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. - ***This is supported whole heartedly by the Highland Council***

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 Council wishes to highlight the significant socio-economic differences between the North east of Scotland and the Highlands & Islands. The Council fears that the development challenges exemplified by sparsity of population, a scattered population pattern, rurality, insularity, a mountainous terrain ,and extreme peripherality in the UK and European context will be lost if the region is amalgamated with North East Scotland. This could have serious deleterious consequences for the Highlands & Islands in terms of future socio-economic development.

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. – ***The Highland Council is not in favour of this proposal***

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?

Whilst this does not affect Highland directly, the Council is not clear as to the logic of the proposal other than from alignment with population guidelines. The two areas do not have any political, administrative or institutional links in common nor a history of bi-lateral cooperation. Co-operation is largely delivered via membership of the Highlands & Islands European Partnership