

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?

Comments

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

I would ask you to recognise that Arran has a very different geography and history to that of Ayrshire, and consequently has challenges and opportunities that align it better with the Highlands & Islands of Scotland. This has been recognised in past administrative arrangements, such as being included in the Argyll & Bute NUTS 3 area, and therefore in the Highlands & Islands European Structural Funds programmes, and being covered by Highlands & Islands Enterprise rather than Scottish Enterprise for its development needs.

Historically, Arran has formed part of Argyll, being in the County of Bute. The establishment of regular ferry traffic from Brodick to Ardrossan has brought the island politically, if not geographically, closer to Ayrshire and Arran became part of Strathclyde Regional Council during the 1975 local government reorganisation. However, Arran continues to be a distinctive place:

- Island status and transport links – Arran is obviously an island, requiring a one-hour ferry crossing to reach Ayrshire (or a 30 minute ferry crossing to Argyll), this relative remoteness in turn affects social and economic links.
- Population – Arran, with a population of 5,058 (2001 Census) and a landmass of 432 km², Arran falls into the European Commission's definition of a low population density NUTS 3, at 11.7 inhabitants per square kilometre compared with the North Ayrshire figure of 152 inhabitants per square kilometre. The basis for Arran's social and economic conditions are therefore those of the Highlands and Islands – peripherality, combined with a sparse population.
- Culture – Arran has historically been part of the Highlands, and Gaelic was the majority language up until the turn of the 19th century. Cultural links with the Highlands and islands of Scotland, and with other island and mountain communities elsewhere are still in place and being developed, for example participation in the Fèisan movement or the Arran Mountain Festival.
- Economy – Arran has an economic base characteristic of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, with a strong dependence on the primary sectors and on the visitor economy. In recent years, Arran businesses, supported by the Highlands & Islands European programmes and by

Highlands and Islands Enterprise, have had some success in diversifying, and public support tailored to the nature of the island's economy should be continued.

- Environment – Arran's topography, flora and fauna are characteristic of the Highland & Islands, and pose similar management challenges. For instance, The National Trust for Scotland has had the experience of having to manage an outbreak of the plant disease *Phytophthora kernoviae* at Brodick Country Park – support for which was more readily available in the Argyll Regional Policy Advisory Committee area, than in the Ayrshire RPAC, reflecting the different environmental conditions of those two sub-regions.

The value to Arran of being included in the Highlands & Islands area, and therefore receiving appropriate recognition of its challenges and opportunities is illustrated by the types of project that have been supported through the Highlands & Islands Structural Fund Programmes, and which are much less likely to have been supported under the relevant Lowlands Programmes. These include: Scotland's Mountain Heritage; Mountains for People; Upland Footpath training course; Upland footpath repairs; Arran Wildlife Festival; and the Arran Mountain Festival.

The arguments made for placing the island of Arran within the proposed East and North Ayrshire NUTS 3 are that statistical reporting will be easier and that the risk of disclosure will be reduced.

For the first, the purpose of statistical analysis is to support decision making and must therefore deal with situations as they are, providing the insight needed to develop appropriate policies. In the case of small geographies such as Arran, this may be more complex, but it is not insurmountable and it is essential if effective public policies are to be applied.

For the second, the risk of disclosure is only present if separate statistical treatments are produced that allow Arran to be considered in isolation. Should the status quo continue, Arran would be incorporated into the reporting for Argyll & Bute and no such accidental disclosure would be possible using the NUTS 3 level as the basis for the analysis.

The Scottish Government has already declined Eurostat's proposal to merge the Highlands & Islands with the North Eastern Scotland NUTS 2 on the grounds of their unique geographical, socio-economic and cultural circumstances. I would urge you to take the same circumstances into account in the case of the island of Arran, where these differences are still more sharply pronounced, and to continue to include the island within the wider community of the Highlands & Islands of Scotland.

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?

Comments

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?

Comments