

## 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?**

Shetland Islands Council agrees with the Scottish Government and is against merging the Highlands and Islands with North Eastern Scotland as a single NUTS2 area. It is essential that the geographical, cultural and socio-economic circumstances of areas are given priority over the need to have areas of similar population size for administrative purposes. The Council is not familiar with the circumstances in Argyll and Bute, Arran and the Cumbraes to make informed comment but would only be supportive of these changes if there are sound cultural and socio-economic reasons for doing so.

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

In general Shetland Islands Council is very worried about the principle of putting administrative reasons for making changes in NUTS3 regions ahead of geographical, historic, cultural and socio-economic criteria. While it is pleasing that the Scottish Government accepts that combining Argyll and Bute with Moray to make a single NUTS3 area is not a good idea, there are also similar issues at the sub NUTS3 level, particularly in Highland. The proposals runs against the need to observe geographical, cultural and socio-economic circumstances within the larger Council areas. They also opens a path for future combinations of local authority areas, which would produce an even more confusing pattern of NUTS2 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?**

Scotland is a diverse country with a variety of communities and lifestyles. EU territorial units should reflect Scotland's diversity rather being based on bureaucratic administrative uniformity.

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?**

As above.