

EU in kilt climb-down

Officials from Europe have backed down over a decision to classify the kilt as "womenswear" on official forms.

The questionnaires, sent to Scottish firms by EU statistical agency Eurostat, did not allow kiltmakers to register the national dress as men's clothing.

Instead, they were told to fill in how many kilts they had sold in the space provided for women's skirts.

Leading kiltmaker Patrick McGroarty, director of Caledonian Highland Dress Manufacturers in Perthshire, was even warned he faced a hefty fine if he failed to fill in the form.



Hollywood film star Vin Diesel is a fan of the kilt

But following talks between the EU, the Scottish Executive and the UK Office of National Statistics - which sent out the forms on Eurostat's behalf - the form is to be amended to allow the kilt to be classified as menswear.

Mr McGroarty said he was delighted the mix-up had finally been rectified.

He said: "I'm delighted they've backed down because this has been going on for a month.

"I had no problem at all with answering the questions, but I didn't like the way they asked them.

"Why ask a question when there's nowhere to put the correct answer?"

First Minister Jack McConnell stepped into the row and ordered executive officials in Brussels to clarify the matter with EU bosses.

“ It is obvious the kilt is an important symbol of our history and our future ”

Jack McConnell

The Office of National Statistics also got involved and Eurostat agreed to send out the amended forms.

Among those famous for wearing the kilt are Hollywood stars Ewan McGregor, Sir Sean Connery and Samuel L Jackson.

'Nonsense'

The kilt's macho image was further enhanced at last week's MTV Europe Music Awards in Leith when Vin Diesel donned a trendy black leather version of Scotland's national dress.

Mr McConnell said that also showed how vital the kilt was to promoting Scotland abroad.

He said: "This was a nonsense, but I'm delighted we've managed to change the forms.

"Following our successful promotion of Scotland over recent weeks it's obvious the kilt is an important symbol of our history and our future.

"The design and the production of kilts is important for Scotland and its image."

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