

Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland has to go

Published: January 13, 2026, 9:25 am

I was pleased to note these headlines in an email from The National in Scotland over the weekend:

THE NATIONAL
THE NEWSPAPER THAT SUPPORTS AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH BUSINESS DAILY



David Simpson: Why we should ditch GERS and the myth of Scotland's 'fiscal deficit'

EVERY year the Scottish Government publishes in GERS an estimate of what it calls Scotland's "net fiscal balance". Since the balance has been negative since the oil era, it has become commonly known as "the fiscal deficit". That measure does not correspond to the measure of a fiscal deficit used by other countries. It is widely misinterpreted and provides political ammunition to Unionists.



GERS figures 'are widely misinterpreted and should be scrapped', top economist says

A LEADING economist has called on the Scottish Government to stop publishing the Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures, insisting they do not reflect the country's financial position.

The David Simpson referred to in the articles [was the founding director](#) of the powerful Fraser of Allander Institute at the University of Strathclyde. This body is frequently seen as one of the main proponents of the notorious Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland statement these days, [which I have spent so much time exposing as the farce that it is](#).

David Simpson's [comments can be boiled down to three things](#).

The first is that there is no entity that can be accountable for the income and expenditure that is supposedly reflected in GERS. The Scottish government is not, and nor is the UK government in the way that the data is presented. So this stuff is, in that case, simply made up. There is no other polite way to put it.

Worse, to suggest that this has anything to do with the Scottish government is wrong: it has to balance its budget and does.

Third, in any event, the accounting used for the GERS statement is, as I have long argued *CRAp*, which stands for a 'completely rubbish approximation' to the truth, not least because of the inconsistent methodologies used.

What this then all means, as David argues, is that anyone using this statement to claim Scotland is running deficits, or cannot afford independence, or any other such line is simply wrong. A wholly artificial account created for a political goal cannot do anything except, perhaps, discredit those who created it.

Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland has to go. I am glad David Simpson has joined in with that call.