

GERS day

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For those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the acronym GERS is probably pretty meaningless. In Scotland, it is big enough that that annual publication of the Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland statement is enough to give publication day its own name - GERSday.

I admit that this blog may have contributed to this phenomenon. I have written about how rubbish I think GERS is [for some years](#).

I created the acronym 'CRAp', wanting for 'completely rubbish approximations' to the truth to describe it.

I expect to be no more enamoured today than I have been in previous years. That is because:

- * GERS has always been politically motivated to show that Scotland can't afford to be an independent state.
- * To achieve this, the data is rigged. Revenue recorded is that arising in Scotland: expenditure is that for Scotland, even if spent elsewhere. Of course, a big deficit is shown if the expenditure side of the equation is defined to be bigger than the revenue side can possibly be.
- * Although less data is estimated now on the basis of the extrapolation of UK data than when I first commented on GERS, far too much still is. That is most especially true for data linked to GDP when that in Scotland is understated on the revenue side (as it is for all areas outside London and the southeast) because most rents, profits, interest and financial services income is recorded in London based on flows out of those regions when those flows would be taxed at source before remittance to London if these locations were independent of the south-east, meaning their revenues would rise significantly.
- * The resulting claim in GERS that Scotland (and all regional parts of the UK) are massively dependent on the southeast to survive is just not true: it is very largely the data that is wrong by refusing to recognise the role of London in extracting value from

the rest of the UK, Scotland included.

For my commentary on GERS today, see the columns and videos I will be creating for The National during the day. I am not expecting anything good to be in the announcement.