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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for August 26th, 2016

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/>

### Electric Scotland News

#### GERS Report 2016

The aim of GERS is to enhance public understanding of fiscal issues in Scotland. The primary objective is to estimate a set of public sector accounts for Scotland through detailed analysis of official UK and Scottish Government finance statistics. GERS estimates the contribution of revenue raised in Scotland toward the goods and services provided for the benefit of the people of Scotland. The report is designed to allow users to understand and analyse Scotland's fiscal position under different scenarios.

GERS captures the entire public sector in Scotland and includes activity by each of the constituent sub-sectors of the public sector: central government, local government and public corporations. In addition to providing an analysis of aggregate expenditure and revenue, the report contains a detailed breakdown according to individual expenditure and revenue components.

You can download this report at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/gers2016.pdf>

There are also a number of press comments which you can see below. As you can imagine the press was full of articles on GERS so I've just highlighted a few for you to read but have made this the Story for this week.

#### Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

Note that this is a selection and more can be read in our ScotNews feed on our index page. I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines. I might also add that in newspapers such as the Guardian, Scotsman, Courier, etc. you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish.

#### Are you tough enough to take on The Heb?

There's still time to sign up for The Heb – Race on the Edge, a gruelling adventure race which takes place in the Outer Hebrides.

Read more at:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/outdoors/274064/tough-enough-take-heb/>

#### Scotland's problems are bigger than Brexit

The latest Gers figures will make Indyref2 an even harder sell for First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/bill-jamieson-scotland-s-problems-are-bigger-than-brexit-1-4211925>

#### Poles are the biggest migrant group in Scotland

One in five of the non UK-born population in Scotland is Polish, new figures have shown.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-37185308>

Michael Russell appointed Scottish Brexit minister

Michael Russell has been appointed as the Scottish government's new minister with responsibility for Brexit negotiations with the UK government

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-37187854>

Contempt of Court

Scottish Government's controversial named person scheme

Read more at:

<http://www.scottishreview.net/AlisonPreuss75a.html>

GERS: A Story Told Through Graphs

Today saw the publication of the Government Expenditure & Revenue Scotland (GERS) report for the fiscal year 2015-16.

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2016/08/gers-story-told-through-graphs.html>

Scottish councils hold record debts of £14.8bn

Guardian identifies further £472m of capital projects funded through Scottish Futures Trust that will add to debt repayments already costing £1.5bn a year

Read more at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/dec/15/scottish-councils-hold-record-debts-of-148bn-and-are-still-borrowing>

Student numbers fall

Overall student numbers have fallen as Scotland's colleges continue to adjust to major reforms, a report has found.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-37180131>

Wings' Idiot's Guide for GERS Deniers

There's a new offering from Wings Over Scotland - what we might call an idiot's guide for GERS deniers

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2016/08/wings-idiots-guide-for-gers-deniers.html>

It's a little bit midge

Viewers are swarming to watch this video of Scotland's greatest pest

View this at:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/scotland/273596/little-bit-midge-viewers-swarving-watch-video-scotlands-greatest-pest/>

Holyrood and Westminster must work together on energy

Holyrood and Westminster must collaborate on their energy policy

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/ilona-amos-holyrood-and-westminster-must-work-together-on-energy-1-4209831>

Auchmithie weekend celebrates centuries of history

The annual Auchmithie heritage and art festival celebrating a thousand years of history took place in fine weather over the weekend.

Read more at:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/angus-mearns/272883/auchmithie-weekend-celebrates-centuries-history/>

Scottish Olympians savour record-equalling Games

Eilidh Doyle's 4x400m relay bronze means Scottish Olympians in Rio have equalled the country's best ever medal tally from any Games, matching the 13 from London four years ago.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/sport/scotland/37148223>

The Earls of Orkney and the Kensington Rune  
Kensington Rune may have originated in the Orkneys and Caithness Scotland

View this at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlaiYwgSwnY&feature=em-subtitle\\_digest](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlaiYwgSwnY&feature=em-subtitle_digest)

## Electric Canadian

Got rather tied up with the GERS report in Scotland but did manage to get up a couple of items...

Fruit Farming in Ontario

You can view this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/transport/agriculture/fruitontario.htm>

Infants Prayer Book

With Texts and Simple Hymns for Infant Minds by Mrs. C. P. Traill (1873) which you can download at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/religion/prayerbook.htm>

## Electric Scotland

The Story of the Barony of Gorbals

By John Ord (1919).

I added the Preface to this book and a link to it at the foot of the chapter dealing with the Gorbals in our book on Kilsyth at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/kilsyth/chapter22.htm>

Katie Liu Leung

Added a wee profile of this Harry Potter Actress to our Women in History which you can find at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/women/wh62.htm>

Arbroath cliffs to Auchmithie walk

Added a 2 part video to our Gazetteer page for this village. This was as a result of reading the news story about this village. You can get to this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/gazetteer/vol1page86.htm>

Memories of Arbroath

Added this video to our Arbroath page at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/hiStory/arbrough/index.htm>

Clan Wallace Society

Got in the Summer 2016 newsletter which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/wallace/index.htm>

Hylton Newsletter

More information from Caithness which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/hylton/index.htm>

The Life of Henry Calderwood

By his son and the Rev. David Woodside, B.D. with a special chapter on his Philosophical Works by A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, LL.D. (1900)rwood, LL.D., F.R.S.E.

He also visited America and Canada. You can read this book at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/calderwood\\_henry.pdf](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/calderwood_henry.pdf) and I also added a link to one of his books "The Parables of the Lord".

Life of John Eadie

Scottish theologian and biblical critic. As he was featured in the above book on Calderwood I searched for more information on him and found this book which you can read at:

[http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/eadie\\_john.htm](http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/eadie_john.htm)

I download the full report and so if you want to read it you can get it from:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/independence/gers2016.pdf>

## The Story

I decided to take this full article from the Scotsman newspaper as I believe it's important to realize how important the GERS figures are when Scots decide on whether Independence is doable. I recommended a yes for independence but in the hope the SNP would only form the first government and there after would not hold an overall majority. Since that time I've been personally unhappy with the way the SNP have run Scotland and I believe they have simply no idea on how to run an Independent Scotland in the World and so are relying on the EU to do that for them. I also note that for all their words they simply have not grasped that of all the EU exports from Scotland 70% of those go to England alone and so having the EU run our foreign policy is not in Scotland's best interest and thus my vote was for Brexit.

Given the level of debate in Scotland I am quite sure there will be a number of you that won't agree with this article but it's not often I do this so perhaps I'll be forgiven this time around?

Bill Jamieson: Scotland's problems are bigger than Brexit

The latest Gers figures will make Indyref2 an even harder sell for First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, writes Bill Jamieson.

Cling, clang and seconds out for the latest round of the annual Scottish heavyweight title fight over the Government Expenditure and Revenue Statistics (GERS). Are we solvent? Are we bust? And does it matter?

Few sets of figures have been more quoted – and more hotly disputed – than this summary of Scotland's finances. This year's will be no exception: they are dreadful. But I can offer some comfort.

The incoming orthodoxy is that debt seems to be yesterday's worry: big budget deficits and high spending finance ministers are back in fashion. But for now – and especially for a First Minister who continues to insist that a second independence referendum before too long is “very likely”, the figures will make “Indyref2” a very hard sell indeed.

Two years ago the GERS figures were at the centre of the independence referendum battle. With the oil price over \$100 (£75) a barrel and tax revenues buoyant, the SNP made great claim on the health and strength of our national finances on independence.

Today, with oil tax revenues having collapsed, it's a far less positive story. The official Scottish Government statistics show we spent £14.8 billion more in 2015-16 than we raised in taxes. The figure is equivalent to 9.5 per cent of Scotland's Gross Domestic Product – more than double the four per cent figure for the UK as a whole. As economist John McLaren points out: “Key claims from the 2013 White Paper that, compared to the UK, Scotland contributes more tax per head; has stronger public finances; and has much higher GDP per head, are all out of date, with the reverse now being true in most cases.”

And the reason? Scotland's illustrative share of North Sea revenue has collapsed from a peak of almost £11bn in 2011-12 just ahead of the 2014 referendum to £1.8bn in 2014-15 – and now to just £60 million. For reference, the SNP had predicted £7bn of oil revenues in 2015-16 in its blueprint for independence. Surely spending cuts and/or tax revenues (“fiscal consolidation” is the whispered euphemism on the SNP back benches) could not be avoided on independence?

But that's not the full measure of our worries. On Tuesday, ahead of the release of the GERS numbers, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon unveiled an analysis of possible Brexit consequences, saying the Scottish economy could lose between £1.7bn and £11.2bn a year by 2030. This, she said, could have a severe impact on public spending.

Cynics charge that this estimate was released to detract attention from the fiscal gap that would be glaringly exposed by the GERS numbers. From the First Minister's viewpoint it has certainly provided an alternative explanation for misery ahead. While she asserted that “the foundations of the Scottish economy remain strong” she added this qualifier: “However, Scotland's long-term economic success is now being directly threatened by the likely impact of Brexit.”

How seriously can we take this estimate? Can the foundations of Scotland's economy really be described as strong when independent economists were downgrading their forecasts last year and when figures for the first quarter – before the Brexit vote – showed growth in Scotland's GDP had slumped to zero? The projected gulf between £1.7bn and £11.2bn a year is so wide as to be laughable. This also assumes credibility can be attached to estimates stretching 14 years ahead. Few would sign up to those – especially economists.

In her determination to rev up the grievance machine to generate support for a second independence referendum, Ms Sturgeon shows scant regard for the effect such further political uncertainty would have on business confidence, still less on the effect

estimates of Scotland's economic underperformance stretching to £11.2bn might have on investment and spending decisions. Who would want to invest here on such a miserabilist view of our prospects from no less than the First Minister?

Unfortunately for the SNP – but mercifully for the rest of us – the doom-laden predictions made by the Remain camp two months ago about Brexit have failed to materialise. On the contrary – unemployment has continued to fall while numbers in work across the UK have risen to a record high. A business investment slump?

Net lending to non-financial businesses hit £2.3bn in July – the largest increase since January and more than double the average monthly increase of £1.0bn over the first seven months of 2016. An export tumble?

The CBI reported this week exports of manufactured goods have risen to their highest level in two years. And the overall picture is of an industry with orders that remained “comfortably above the long-run average” and with output growth “at a healthy pace”. A consumer panic?

Retail sales figures UK-wide show retail sales jumped by 1.4 per cent month-on-month, smashing expectations of a rise of just 0.1 per cent to 0.2 per cent. And on an annual basis, retail sales were almost six months higher than in July 2015. As for tourism, the UK will “hold up well” in 2016 according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, which predicts growth of 3.6 per cent – higher than the predicted global growth in the sector of 3.1 per cent.

Whatever ails Scotland's economy, the First Minister can hardly blame a raw deal from Westminster. Total expenditure by the public sector in 2015-16 was £68.6bn, equivalent to £12,800 per person – £1,200 per person greater than the UK average. Scotland contributed 7.9 per cent of UK tax and received 9.1 per cent of UK spending, demonstrating how Scotland receives secure and stable levels of spending irrespective of the volatile tax revenues from the North Sea. And our borrowing is almost £1,700 per person larger than the UK average. Scotland's deficit is now more than three times more than what is widely seen as a safe level of deficit.

That may be a problem for EU purposes: Eurozone rules state the ceiling for deficit should be three per cent of GDP. The original idea behind Barnett was that this extra spending would in time enable Scotland's economy to narrow the gap. But clearly that has not happened. So why is that higher spending not yielding better outcomes?

The SNP administration would do better addressing this than doom-laden posturing over Brexit. The First Minister has painted herself into a corner on her insistence of a second referendum and cannot now escape without loss of face. The one comfort I can offer is that tackling this budget deficit now would be to turn against the swell of economic opinion.

Central bank measures to sustain growth by monetary loosening here and overseas are widely seen to have failed. Now policymakers are turning towards fiscal stimulus – tax cuts and/or spending increases: “helicopter money” in unofficial parlance. It is a measure of how desperate economic thinking has become that we may now need to add to those debt and deficit totals. Thus, while GERS matters politically in blowing a hole through previous SNP independence assertions, it may not matter much given the greater problems we face.

You can of course read all the comments this article spawned at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/bill-jamieson-scotland-s-problems-are-bigger-than-brexit-1-4211925>

And that's it for this week and hope you all enjoy your weekend.

And as we're talking about the weekend there was a BBC article you may wish to read which starts...

They clock off at 9pm on a Friday – but their last email is logged at 3am. They take conference calls on holiday, wake up in cold sweats over looming deadlines – even their sleep talk is peppered with business jargon. By Monday morning, they look like they've spent the whole weekend hunched over their laptop, wired on coffee. It's hard to believe they ever left the office.

Why is it that some people just can't relax at the weekend? Read about this at:

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20160728-this-is-why-you-cant-switch-off-at-the-weekend>

Alastair