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**Director General for Regulation**

Jackie Baillie MSP  
Labour Public Services and Wealth Creation spokesperson  
Member of the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee  
Parliamentary Office  
MG.16  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
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23 March 2016

Dear Jackie

Thank you for your letter of 16 March raising some concerns about corrections to Scottish Government's Government Expenditure & Revenue Scotland 2014-15 (GERS) publication, released on 9 March and arrangements for the orderly release of its Oil and Gas Analytical Bulletin. Both publications share a high profile status and make an important contribution to debate about the economic health of Scotland. We have been noting with interest the discussions of Scottish Parliament Finance Committee about Scottish economic statistics, which has added topicality in the light of the publication of Professor Bean's final report on economic statistics.

As National Statistics, GERS presents important statistics on public sector finances and adherence to the high standards of the Code is imperative. We have investigated the circumstances of the correction following the release of GERS on 9 March. Scottish Government statisticians have reassured us that there was a single error, which was dealt with expeditiously. They have also reassured us that the error was in a supplementary table and had no bearing on the main results in GERS. Scottish Government statisticians informed us that the Scottish Parliament was not specifically informed of the publication or revisions and no particular treatment was provided to users at the Scottish Parliament, either regarding the publication or subsequent revision. The Code of Practice for Official Statistics expects producers to alert stakeholders promptly to corrections of errors.

Our view is that Scottish Government's statisticians could have done more to follow their own revisions and corrections policy in explaining in their note that the error was minor and had no bearing on the main results of GERS. They should also have given more information about the size and direction of the error and what component had been corrected. Scottish Government has acknowledged to us that the note could have given more details of the specific changes in the table. We intend to ask them to improve their note so that users can see the size and direction of the correction, the component which has been corrected and to assure users that the correction has no bearing on the main results in GERS. We will also raise with them the process for alerting stakeholders to corrections of errors, including the Scottish Parliament.

Scottish Government's Oil and Gas Analytical Bulletins do not contain management information, and Scottish Government does not produce these as statistical bulletins. However, the analyses presented are of high public interest - the Bulletin has attracted a significant public profile in the past and is likely to generate public interest. The issue that you have raised relates to the definition of official statistics and the boundaries between different types of information released by Government departments. We would like to explore these questions further with the Scottish Government, and will reply in due course. Given that the Scottish Parliament rises today we will not be able to set out our thinking until after Parliament returns in May.

I am copying this letter to the National Statistician, and to Gary Gillespie, Roger Halliday and Mairi Spowage in Scottish Government

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson