

# Time for the Isle of Man government to say it as it is

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It would be so good if there was some candour offered by those in charge in the Isle of Man. But as yet there is no sign of it. Take this from [Isle of Man Today](#); quoting Malcolm Couch, the Isle of Man Comptroller of Income Tax:

*Mr Couch does not accept that completely scrapping zero 10 is inevitable, however. He said: 'The key thing is that no decisions have been taken. There is no requirement put on the Isle of the Man that certain things have to happen.'*

*He said: 'We have received briefings by the UK about the lie of the land and this is an appropriate time to look to see if there is a need to make any change.'*

This is hard to equate with Guernsey and Jersey having been told zero-ten is dead. The Isle of Man system is remarkably similar to Jersey's. So why not admit it too is dead in the water?

And why not admit as well that the problem is not a zero per cent tax rate — which is quite acceptable to the EU? The problem is the ring fence abuse within the Isle of Man that means that local companies are taxed (albeit by deliberately convoluted methods designed to appease critics, but which the system failed to do so) and companies that are owned by non-residents are untaxed. But Couch never mentions this, instead saying:

*The question, of course, is if we do move away from the zero rate, what rate should we set if we are to remain competitive? Gibraltar's rate is 10 per cent, Ireland's is 12.5 per cent. 'The question is what rate would pass muster with the EU,' said Mr Couch.*

This is utterly misleading — and I genuinely think Malcolm Couch knows that. Tax rates are not the EU's business and the Code does not address them.

Why not be honest Malcolm and actually say what this is about — which is that you are being told to stop being abusive as a tax haven / secrecy jurisdiction? Surely, at a time when the massive misinformation that has been fed to the people of the Isle of Man has resulted in a financial crisis for the island now is the time to state things as they

actually are and not pretend the problem is with the tax rate?

Or is such candour too much to ask for?