

Unthinkable? Hiring more tax inspectors

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The Guardian picks up on the [PCS campaign](#) to hire more tax inspectors - to which I have contributed, saying:

Bingo! A particularly unpopular notion at an especially unlikely time.

Yet hiring more inspectors would be a smart move in these straitened times — the kind of spending that could pay for itself.

Most companies see the men and women who bring in revenue as being vital to their business. But at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs there is a chronic shortage of staff, which has got far worse in the cuts.

The Guardian's Tax Gap investigation last year [quoted an HMRC source's estimate](#) that there were "less than 100 inspectors actually tackling avoidance, against thousands of professionals advising companies on how to do it".

Which is precisely the point: the government is outnumbered and under-resourced compared to the City accountancy firms that help businesses and wealthy individuals to reduce their tax bills. Inspectors still in public service know that they could almost double their salaries by turning private-sector poacher. Hiring more tax inspectors is about improving the public finances in a fairer and more imaginative manner than merely slashing spending.

Governments often talk about getting more cash by tightening up on tax collection; but they can't do that without the people.

The logic is unassailable.