

I beg to differ, Mr Hartnett

Published: January 13, 2026, 7:36 am

Dave Hartnett, boss of HMRC, was in front of the Treasury Select Committee yesterday defending his appalling and almost certainly illegal deal with Switzerland.

As the [Guardian note](#):

HMRC permanent secretary for tax Dave Hartnett told the Treasury sub-committee on Monday that in the next 10 years breaking down Swiss banking secrecy certainly "seemed very unlikely".

Oh yes? That's why the [EU was confident](#) on making progress on the European Union Savings Tax Directive with it was it?

As the Guardian also notes:

Tax campaigner Richard Murphy has argued that the deal has delayed international efforts to break down Swiss secrecy. "I am not saying Swiss bank secrecy was going to break down tomorrow. But the US is making big progress, the direction of travel is substantially in the direction of openness. This deal has guaranteed that anonymity is reinforced," he said on Monday.

It's true: I did say that, just before cooking supper last night.

And I'm far from alone in thinking that far from Hartnett's deal helping, it's hindering (unless of course you're a tax evader, when it's great news). As [Europolitics note](#):

Luxembourg may well put a spanner in the Commission's works, though. Its finance minister released a statement [following the Swiss deals] noting that "the model of withholding at the source — a model Luxembourg has always defended — is a key element of the agreements," which at any rate will "have an impact on the negotiations under way on the directive on taxation of savings income".

Or, he will use them to scupper advances in tax transparency Europe.

Oh thanks Dave Hartnett, defender of banking secrecy and tax evader's friend as a result. Great work.

PS Why is the deal illegal? Because HMRC are agreeing not to investigate more than 500 crimes a year however many they find, and that has to be ultra vires their powers - which makes the deal illegal.