

Let's not beat about the bush: Hartnett did dodgy deals

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As the [Guardian reports this morning](#):

Britain's most senior taxman has admitted making "governance errors" when agreeing multibillion-pound settlements with large companies.

Dave Hartnett, HMRC's head of tax, has conceded that Revenue officials did not follow correct procedures in two high-profile cases that could have left taxpayers millions of pounds out of pocket.

Bluntly, although I make no suggestion at all of personal wrong doing it is now very clear that Hartnett did not follow the rules on Vodafone and Goldman Sachs and both got away with millions or even billions in tax as a result, and we still have no way of finding out why, and what action is being taken to put matters right.

In that case where UK Uncut right to protest that something very serious was going wrong inside our tax system? Unambiguously, yes they were - not least because this would not have come out otherwise.

And are those who say the tax gap is much bigger than it need be because senior management at HMRC are firstly not doing what is needed to address it and secondly aren't even making the case that they should be doing something about it justified? Absolutely yes.

There is a choice right now. We could spend £1 billion to recruit 20,000 new staff at HMRC to tackle tax evasion and tax avoidance. I believe that would yield at least £10 billion and maybe quite a lot more. It gets people to work too. And in the process it will help create a level playing field between honest and dishonest business and help close the deficit. It's a no brainer. But it's not happening.

That's dodgy too.

HMRC needs radical reform - and unless Hartnett shows he's up to the job soon he's definitely a major part of the problem, and cannot be part of the solution.

