

94,000 properties. How many prosecutions for the crimes...

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George Osborne has said he's going to stop stamp duty avoidance through the use of offshore limited companies tomorrow. And so he should. [According to some reports](#) The Land Registry has calculated that in the past 12 years a total of 94,760 properties have effectively been placed offshore and beyond the reach of the taxman.

Now Osborne says he's going to tackle this issue to collect stamp duty. What interests me just as much is the crime these registrations hide.

There will be money laundering hidden in these properties.

And massive tax evasion.

And the abuse of the people of developing countries.

As well as straightforward theft in the UK.

Osborne says he's going to come down hard on all such property owners. So is he really going to do what has always been essential - and demand that the beneficial ownership of the companies that own all these properties be properly recorded?

And when he finds out who owns them - will he then be prosecuting the money launderers, the tax cheats, the foreign kleptocrats and the lawyers who handled the deals and did not report their suspicions but should have done under money laundering laws? I really hope so. There might be many a sweaty palm right now on this one - especially amongst the lawyers.