

## Why Google's tax matters

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The [Independent](#) has reported this morning that:

*Google chiefs face the prospect of being hauled before MPs to explain themselves over their tax avoidance schemes, the Independent has learned.*

*A member of the Treasury Select Committee called the company's practices, which saw it pay £6m in tax on a turnover of £395m last year, "entirely improper and immoral" and said he expects a Google exec to be called before MPs by next Easter.*

At the same time I noted the following tweet this morning, from a chartered tax adviser:

*Ben Saunders is technically right. He also spectacularly misses the point. Google is tax avoiding: by definition that means what they are doing is legal, of course. And it may even be that what Google is doing is within the spirit of EU law, although that is to simply miss the fact that EU tax laws have now been spectacularly rigged to advantage companies over people so that the spirit of the law has itself been corrupted.*

*But even that is not the real point of why Google needs to be in the dock over its tax. The real reason is that Google has set itself the motto "don't be evil". That means that Google explicitly recognises it has choices about the way it does business. And by choosing to do business as Google does, in a way that ensures it pays little or no corporate tax on its vast profits earned outside the USA in almost any of the countries where they actually arise Google is saying it is willing to free-ride our economies.*

*What that means is that in my opinion Google is saying it has no interest in giving a return back to the societies that are letting it prosper.*

*That's doing evil in my book.*

*The law may have been corrupted to allow this evil: that I acknowledge and it is an*

*issue I can and will argue about endlessly. But if a corporation claims to be moral, as Google does, and then acts to deny those in need the resources required to ensure that their needs can be met - and that's what's now happening in a world where without exception cuts are impacting on the poor, the young, on education, on healthcare and life prospects, then the choice Google has made is, I think, an evil one.*

*That's why Google's tax matters.*

*The campaign on [tax and the Olympics](#) was phenomenally successful because it showed that companies had a choice on tax - and could exercise that choice in ways that mattered to people. Google also have that choice and are getting their tax spectacularly wrong - at cost to us all.*

*That's what the Google tax campaign is about. Google may be sticking to the letter of the law. That law may over time - through corporate lobbying - have been rigged to make sure what they do looks fine. But it's still utterly unethical and we need change if we are to have the better world we all deserve.*

*Google can help make that better world. Or not. It's their choice. But we are sure as heck going to remind them that it's a choice - and they're accountable for what they decide.*