

Memo to Starbucks: paying corporation tax is not like m...

Published: January 14, 2026, 11:18 am

The [BBC's reported](#):

Global coffee chain Starbucks has said it is in talks with HM Revenue and Customs and the Treasury over how much UK tax it pays.

It is one of several well-known firms that were criticised over the level of their corporation tax payments.

The firm admitted that it "needed to do more" in the UK on tax.

I call that a vacuous statement. I also call it contemptuous. After years of what looks like blatant tax avoidance to ensure almost no tax has been paid in this country what Starbucks seem to be doing for the sake of PR is asking if they can make a small tax contribution in future as if paying tax was the same as dropping a fiver into the church collection at Christmas and hoping that's enough to preserve your options on a route into heaven for the next year.

I sincerely hope H M Revenue & Customs tell Starbucks that paying corporation tax in the UK is not a voluntary charitable donations box arrangement when it comes to multinational corporations and that nothing less than paying the full tax owing will do. But as yet I'm not optimistic because I very largely share the Public Accounts Committee's view of HMRC's senior management when it comes to these issues, and I'm not expecting their report on HMRC to be too kind when it comes out in the morning.

To put it another way: keep up the boycott. One press release does not change the world. Starbucks need to learn that only the full amount of hard cash on the table will do that.