

Dave Hartnett reveals his true colours - by opposing ta...

Published: January 14, 2026, 12:23 am

Dave Hartnett made himself one of the most unpopular men in the UK when he headed H M Revenue & Customs.

Now [he's working for HSBC](#). And it's clear he's singing his new bosses tune. As many will know, [the European Union is proposing something](#) quite close to full [country-by-country reporting](#) for banks. So who should pop up and oppose it but Dave Hartnett, who is quoted in [the Tax Journal saying](#):

Dave Hartnett, former permanent secretary for tax at HMRC, has warned that country-by-country reporting could result in 'crude comparison' of a multinational's tax bills in different countries.

In an interview with Tax Journal, published last week, Hartnett said: 'There is a strong case for more transparency in relation to the tax paid by companies and at a time of financial austerity, citizens want to be able to see for themselves what tax corporations are paying and judge whether it is fair.

'But I have misgivings about country by country reporting if the aim of those seeking it is to compare tax paid in one country by a multi-national with what it pays in another. Such crude comparison is of very little value unless the reader has a good understanding of the different tax incentives available in each country and other features of each tax system.'

So there we have it; Hartnett's in favour of tax transparency, but not if it's useful.

And he's willing to patronise, I note (ever an ability he possessed, in my experience, at HMRC). Perhaps he'd also like to explain why he assumes the user of accounts aren't able to appraise local incentives? Are we not as clever as him?

A few choice words come to mind. I'll refrain from using them, but reluctantly.