

Richard Murphy: a thorn in the side of the Manx government

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There are occasional moments of pleasure in a campaigners life, not least when your achievements are acknowledged. That is especially sweet when it is your opponents who acknowledge it, as has [happened to me in the case of the Isle of Man today](#):

A representative of an organisation that successfully campaigned for the Isle of Man to get less income from the VAT sharing agreement with the UK is to speak in the island next week.

The Tax Justice Network lobbied for the agreement to be changed and its founder Richard Murphy was a thorn in the side of the Manx government.

There's quite a lot of detail wrong in those two paragraphs. I actually ran the campaign on this issue from this blog as Tax Research UK and I was not the founder of the [TJN](#) - but just one those who were founders. John Christensen, who is visiting the Isle of Man next week, has always played a much more important role there and I am no longer formally involved.

But what the heck with the detail? The substance is what matters, and yes, I did [from 2007 onwards run a campaign to remove the UK's VAT subsidy to the Isle of Man](#) that I estimated to be as much as £233 million a year. And the fact is that the campaign worked: the subsidy was [removed in stages from 2009 onwards](#). I am quite sure that would not have happened without my work, and the Isle of Man press is acknowledging that fact.

That did not make me popular in the Isle of Man but I have no regrets about this campaign. It was absurd that the UK subsidised a place to be a tax haven that then meant it stole the UK's tax revenue. In this case that subsidy no longer exists, and rightly so. If I had to be a thorn in the side to achieve that, so be it. I'll take it as a compliment.

PS. For all those who like to criticise my work on the tax gap and my calculation methods based on VAT please note the same criticisms were levied in this case involving the Isle of Man, until it was accepted that I was right.