

Tackling 'the boys'

Published: January 13, 2026, 10:21 am

I have written about tax barrister Jolyon Maugham and his emergence as one of the new thinkers on tax reform in this country before. Today I have a simple recommendation to make with regard [to a blog he has written about one of the core problems in tackling tax avoidance in the UK](#). Please read it.

In the blog Jolyon turns on some in his own profession, who he euphemistically calls 'the boys'. These are the six or so, all male, tax barristers in the UK who sign the opinions that suggest that the abusive tax avoidance schemes peddled by a relatively small number of purveyors might actually work. It is these 'opinions' that are used to validate these schemes to the unwary punters, many of whom are now discovering that the opinions are not worth the paper they are written on but that they have no claim against 'the boys' for redress.

Jolyon is right: there really are a handful of so of barristers engaged in this disreputable trade, most of whom are well known for doing so. Their rewards are high. The damage they cause is significant, to the tax system, to the reputation of the tax profession and to their victims, which is the role in which Jolyon paints those with very limited knowledge of tax who have been sold these schemes believing them to be entirely legal because of the existence of such opinions. He suggests Katy Melua and Gary Barlow are amongst such victims.

I think Jolyon may be generous on that point but not wholly without reason. What I am quite sure about is that, as Jolyon says, action needs to be taken against these 'boys', as he calls them.

Jolyon has written a courageous blog. [Please read it](#). This is an issue whose time has come.