

Creating the political consensus to fight tax evasion

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My [suggestion that the next, and biggest, issue to be addressed to deliver tax justice](#) in the UK is tax evasion has already [appeared to have had a welcome reception amongst tax professionals](#). There is also very obvious agreement that there can be no success on this issue without more resources being dedicated to tackling tax evasion, which would require a considerable reversal of the trajectory of travel in HMRC's business plan and minister's expectations of it. When I talk to many people with no obvious interest in politics tackling this abuse also appears to be popular. So what is the problem in making progress?

As I explain in [my report for PCS](#), one of the biggest problems appears to me to be a lack of political will on politicians part to tackle this issue. The absence of this will has, to some extent, always baffled me. After all, politicians want to be elected to have power and to keep people happy through the use of that power so that they might be re-elected. You would have thought that in that case firstly collecting all the tax owing delivers power, secondly it stops a majority who are being cheated from being annoyed and third it maximises resource delivery by government at lowest overall cost (as well as creating a fair and level playing field on which all business can operate) and so it has to be a win: win.

And yet when I talk to some MPs (and not all from the same parties) I sense an enormous reluctance to take on what they see as 'white van man' (as the tax evader is almost always, and inappropriately I am quite sure in the majority of cases, described). There is a widespread fear that to talk about tax evasion is a vote loser. Implicitly that, of course, also acknowledges how widespread many realise the problem to be.

The outcome is that we have an apparent tacit agreement between politicians and tax evaders that the actions of the latter will be ignored, which is also, of course, a good explanation for HMRC doing the same.

I think this is ludicrous and believe that is this is the case then the time has come when a cross party platform on this issue should be created. Such cross party consensus exists on many issues, implicitly or explicitly (we will see it in action today on the

perceived need to bomb ISIS). Why isn't it possible for all main parties to pledge to tackle tax abuse?

There is after all, broad consensus on the need to tackle other crime, even if there are some policy differences on occasion on how to then treat the offender. So why isn't there cross party consensus on the need to fund HMRC to beat tax crime? And given that doing so would provide the funds to help beat the deficit that is apparently the highest order issue on most politician's agenda, why hasn't this happened to date?

I have no idea how much a war will cost. But, however much it is, investing in HMRC would pay for it. I am totally confident of that. In that case surely the time has come for all parties to agree that a new consensus be built on this issue?

And if not, why not? Because if it can't be created what does that say of politicians thinking on tax evasion? I can't imagine any of them want to be seen condoning it, so why not join together to make sure that there is no electoral advantage from silence on this issue?