

Beneficial ownership for the Overseas Territories is ju...

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My apologies: it's been a slow start to the day. It was, for me, a late evening. There was a small celebration of the victory in imposing beneficial ownership registers on the British Overseas Territories in Westminster last night and I arrived back at home realising that I may have been over the limit and in charge of a bicycle.

The celebration included the usual NGO culprits, but also a good selection of MPs and peers, and both Andrew Mitchell and Margaret Hodge had a few words to say. But the discussion was, of course, the point of interest.

First, I sense that MPs were misled on whether they could legislate for the Crown Dependencies. Let me be unambiguous: they can. The Supreme Court has said so and the Supreme Court, sitting as the Privy Council is these places ultimate court of appeal: this, therefore is binding. If in doubt [the wording used is this](#):

*The Channel Islands are not part of the United Kingdom but as Crown Dependencies enjoy a unique relationship with the United Kingdom through the Crown, in the person of the Sovereign. The UK government is responsible for their international relations and for their defence. **The UK Parliament has power to legislate for the Islands** but Acts of Parliament do not extend to the Islands automatically. Usually, the Act gives power to extend the application of the Act to the Islands by Order in Council, which will be preceded by consultation. For the most part the Islands legislate for themselves.*

I added the emphasis. And we already know that we can legislate for the Isle of Man: [it has been done](#). **It worries me that the chance to bring good order to the Crown Dependencies was lost on the basis of misinformation.**

Second, I was heartened to hear that the campaign to get the Crown Dependencies to comply is already in full swing. In my opinion this just adds to the pressure on these Islands. I explained what this might be here, [last December](#). It is the threat of EU sanctions that will now require the UK to bring them into line, Brexit or not.

Third, there was widespread awareness that bringing the Crown

Dependencies and OTs into line with the standards at Companies House would be a hollow victory: Companies House is nearly universally accepted to be dire. There was much discussion on what to do about that. It's a theme I will be returning to.