

Johnson's plan to get rid of DfID is great news ...

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Although I have not done so for some time now, my work on tax justice in the first decade of that campaign's existence pretty much inevitably involved interaction with DfID, which Boris Johnson has now announced will be merged into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

As I recall, without exception the interactions were useful and the willingness to listen and to act on the messages on tax justice that we were there to deliver was high. Staff at DfID simply got, based on their on the ground experience, the fact that tax havens were unambiguously harming development, promoted corruption and stripped any profits arising from activities that were created straight out of the countries that the UK was trying to support.

They also funded research into these issues (although I never received such support, directly or indirectly) and were very willing to promote findings.

The Foreign Office was not of the same mindset. It retained the view that tax haven activity was a way of getting the cost of the Overseas Territories off its books, for example. There was never a hint that it understood the problems that tax haven activity created.

Do I, therefore, regret Johnson's announcement? Yes, of course. For three reasons.

The first is that this is intended to crush the culture of DfID, and that culture has, overall (and of course there are exceptions) been a force for good.

Second, the replacement culture is pro-defence and business, and strategically focussed for the UK rather than needs focussed for the recipients. That undermines the whole logic of aid.

Third, tax havens will be rubbing their hands with glee. That has to make this bad news.

The corruption that the Johnson government appears to exist to promote continues. The status of the UK continues to decline as a consequence. And people will suffer as a

result. This was a bad day's work.