

Why is Amazon advising the government on procurement?

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As the [Mirror notes](#) today:

Amazon is advising ministers on how to buy goods and services after Brexit, while raking in millions of pounds in contracts itself.

The Mirror can reveal the US firm was on a “secretive” panel set up by the Cabinet Office to help shape public sector procurement in future.

As they add:

Amazon has been awarded 82 central Government contracts, worth £225million, in the past five years and has a deal enabling local councils to buy supplies in one marketplace.

And as they noted:

Paul Monaghan, of the [Fair Tax Mark](#), which highlighted Amazon’s involvement on the “secretive” panel, said it was “truly frightening”.

He said: “The manner in which Amazon is embedding itself into national and regional public procurement in the UK has long been cause for concern.

“We are close to the point where it will be impossible for anyone else to compete.”

Paul Monaghan was not alone in his criticisms:

Amazon has been criticised for its track record on paying UK corporation tax. TUC boss Frances O’Grady said: “Amazon’s reward for its exploitative business model is a seat at the table on an influential Government board advising on public procurement, on top of the multi-million-pound Government contracts it receives.”

As the Mirror noted:

Amazon declined to comment.

The Cabinet Office refused to comment on the firm's involvement, but said: "This panel is an important part of our engagement as we look to improve procurement rules."

They are, of course, at liberty not to comment. But others are free to question, and I do.

Amazon is not in the position of a normal business: it is an effective monopoly supplier in some sectors, and has very few competitors in others e.g. large-scale computer hosting. This does not make its experience representative. Nor does it broaden the base of suppliers to government, which is one of the few things that Brexit might deliver.

So what is going on here? I think that the Fair Tax Mark is entirely right to ask, even whilst noting that I am an advisor to it, whilst also recording that I had no part in developing this story.