

Tackling tax abuse by the wealthy matters

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I spend a lot of time criticising the management of HM Revenue & Customs, and for good reason, in my opinion. So, I should give praise when it is due. Yesterday [the Guardian noted](#) that:

Former Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone will face charges of fraud by false representation after an investigation by UK tax authorities that allegedly found undeclared assets worth more than £400m overseas.

The UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said on Monday it had "authorised the charging of Bernard Charles Ecclestone with fraud by false representation, following a [HM Revenue and Customs] investigation". The investigation was dubbed Operation Gallic by the authorities.

I welcome this. Not because it is Ecclestone. I welcome the fact that HMRC is going to prosecute a big case involving a well-known person because this is essential if the right warning signs to encourage compliance are to be sent to others.

I have no idea whether Ecclestone is guilty or not. I suspect HMRC are very confident given they bring so few such cases. But again, this is not the point: what matters are three things.

First, this says that tax compliance matters.

Second, it says that data from offshore is now good enough to be used, and I worked long and hard to help make that happen.

Third, it says they are going to tax the wealthy - and that is also important in terms of encouraging compliance from everyone else.

Now I hope they win, having got this far.