

Taxes? Yes, we need to pay more, but always spend better

Your letters from Ellie Jaeger and Rob Slater (2 December) set out remarkably clear and far-sighted views of our commonly held tax frustrations and expectations. Ellie points out the many new challenges and drains that now demand increasing finances and resources but are largely unresolvable by any government – climate crisis, global trade and tariffs, the post-Covid aftermath, mental illness epidemic, the needs of the increasingly aged.

Despite the evidence of all of this, most of us just want our government (any and all of them) to somehow not just restore – but also improve – all our services *without* us paying more tax. This is particularly true of our NHS, whose rapidly advancing technology brings both must-have blessings, yet great expense.

Ellie is right, too, in understanding how modern technology amidst its sensationalist doomscrolling and instant gratification leaves us constantly dissatisfied and angry: *'it shouldn't be like this; everything should be better, and fast! Why doesn't someone just fix it?'*.

Rob's analysis of how the austerity-derelection of general practice has ended up costing very much more than it promised to save is spot-on. As a GP for more than forty years I was both a witness and a participant-victim to all this. The Government's attempt to fulfil the electorate's wishes – *Give us good services, but don't ask us for more money* – proved a doomed and destructive possibility. Yes, we need always to scrutinise how governments best spent our taxes. But our current long, increasingly demanding and resource-hungry lives are also increasingly expensive. Ellie and Rob show us what happens when we avoid this unwanted truth.