ATT President's page, October 2017

Welcomes

01 October 2017

Off to a busy start

So here we are, almost a quarter of the way through my Presidential year. It started with a mad flurry of activity, not least of which was the Ministerial announcement of the deferral of MTD that was made on the morning of the AGM. I would like to be able to say this was all down to the personal influence I have with government, but sadly that is not the case. Nonetheless (sudden rewriting of speeches aside) it was very welcome news and a huge tribute to the hard work that has been done behind the scenes by the ATT technical team and many others.

As I have said before MTD has the potential to bring huge advantages not only to HMRC but also to taxpayers and us, their agents, provide that it is gone about in the right way. We now have an opportunity to work with HMRC to consider carefully how MTD might best be phased in. The deferral creates an opening for large-scale voluntary testing of MTD, followed by a proper evaluation of outcomes, so that it has the greatest possible chance of succeeding. We must grasp this opportunity and work with HMRC to ensure that the final version of MTD is clear, understandable not only by tax professionals but also by unrepresented taxpayers so that we end up with a digital tax system that is visibly doable.

Half an hour after the AGM it was down to work, chairing my first meeting as President. This was to approve the results and prize-winners for the May examination sitting. As an educational charity this is what we are all about! Congratulations to all of you who were successful this time round and it was particularly pleasing to then be able to write to the almost four hundred of you who had won a prize, achieved a distinction or are now eligible to join the ATT.

Forty-eight hours later and it was my first branch visit for the Sussex Branch 40th anniversary celebrations in Brighton, which was covered in the briefings in the

September 2017 issue of Tax Adviser. Despite the rain it was a tremendously enjoyable event with lots of amusing stories about the history of the branch being told and even a parade of mermaids along the sea front, although I am not sure this was an official part of the event. Having served on three different branch committees over the years I can vouch for the hard work that goes in to putting together and running a branch programme for just one year. To have run a successful branch for 40 years is a real achievement and a tribute to the dedication of everyone involved with the Sussex Branch.

So what is in store for the rest of the year? As you might expect there are already a lot of events in the diary given that an important part of my role as President is to represent the ATT at receptions and dinners held by other professional bodies. This means that one of my personal challenges is to still be able to fit into my dinner suit at the end of the year!

As I said in my inaugural address the ATT is an educational charity concerned with the study of taxation, the prevention of crime and the sound administration of the law. This is our core work. We will continue to develop the ATT family of qualifications and promote them to tax practitioners and their employers; look out for more news on this in the coming months.

We will also continue to act as a robust critical friend to both HMRC and government as our recently expanded technical team respond to, scrutinise and engage with government at all levels. With the summer Finance Bill and autumn Budget this promises to be a busy few months.

I am though particularly excited that there are several branch visits already in the diary and I will do my best to add more. One of the challenges I gave in my inaugural speech was for members to let me know about the issues and problems you face in day to day practice, but I see this as a two way street. In a healthy organisation it is essential that there is a real ongoing dialogue between the members and the centre. This means not simply sitting there waiting for the in box to fill up but getting out there and talking to people.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the next nine months, but please do feel free to get in touch with me via email.

- *Graham Batty*