President's page, June 2020

Welcomes

01 June 2020

Navigating in new waters

When I wrote the welcome to last month's Tax Adviser, the 'lockdown' was a relatively recent phenomenon. At the time of writing this column, the first very tentative steps to unwind the lockdown have been announced. By the time you read this, some further steps may have been taken, but it seems certain that it will be some considerable time before life resembles anything like what it was in February. It is very possible that we will not return to life exactly as it was, either as an Institute or more generally.

> As far as the Institute is concerned, actions required by the pandemic have accelerated our plans in some areas.

We will hold our first exam by remote invigilation shortly, and moves to online examinations more generally are being considered. We will, of course, strive to ensure that our exams remain at least as accessible as they were pre-pandemic; technology may actually help us improve accessibility to some groups.

Online CPD offerings have been a success. We are very likely to continue to offer online CPD lectures and conferences even after the pandemic has faded. However, the value of social and networking contact in branch meetings will remain important. Some CPD subjects will still appeal to some branches more than others. Presenting to a smaller audience can be helpful in developing skills and confidence in delivering CPD for those a little newer to the experience. Accordingly, the branch network will still have an important part to play in the future of the CIOT.
Our technical and LITRG teams, supported by many volunteers, have done a superb job in updating members and the public on the measures the UK government has introduced to mitigate the economic effects of Covid-19. My thanks, on behalf of you all, go to them. You may also have noticed a significant increase in our social media

presence, especially on Twitter, as we disseminate information and direct readers to our webpages for more detail.

Ensuring the Institute's finances are secure has been a priority in recent weeks. There has been some belt tightening, and we have furloughed a modest number of staff. However, working remotely has demonstrated that there are sometimes more efficient ways of working than we had previously thought possible. I suspect many of you will also have been positively surprised about this in your own workplaces.

The Presidential Team – myself, Peter Rayney, Susan Ball, Ray McCann and our incoming Vice -President, Gary Ashford – are meeting over Webex on a weekly basis to review both internal and external developments. We intend to ensure that the strategy for the Institute that has been developing over the course of my Presidency reflects the impact and experience of the current crisis. There may also be lessons for how governance of the Institute, including the Council, is undertaken in future. When it comes to dealing with a crisis of this nature, tax skills are not the only ones required around the table. As we seek to broaden the diversity of Council, this is an important lesson.
Despite the pandemic, much activity continues. The OECD continues to lead negotiations on further reform of the taxation of multinational companies. The Institute continues dialogue with HMT and HMRC on this. The digital services tax is now in operation (even if the legislation governing it is still to be passed). The call for evidence on raising standards in the tax market has been issued. The CIOT is working on our response to this, in close co-operation with the ATT and the other PCRT bodies.

Personally, I remain convinced that, whatever the challenges ahead, being a tax adviser still provides you with a great career! Stay safe at work and home (which for most of you I expect is still the same location), continue to help your clients and colleagues navigate through the complexities of the current situation, and continue to believe in brighter days ahead!

STOP PRESS! At the Tolley Tax Awards, LITRG scored a hat trick of awards! Technical Officer Meredith McCammond won the Rising Star award, former Technical Director (and current volunteer) Robin Williamson won the Lifetime Achievement prize and the LITRG Team as a whole won the Best Specialist Team in a Public or Not for Profit Organisation award. Congratulations to the whole team, and Robin and Meri in particular!

- We should very much appreciate your completing our survey about the impact of coronavirus on you and your organisation. We are gathering this information to help us continue to support and inform you. Please click here to complete the survey. The closing date is 30 June and we shall provide a report on our websites in July.