President's page, June 2016

Welcomes

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Number 52!

I’m delighted and honoured to succeed Chris Jones as the fifty-second President of the CIOT. Chris is a hard act to follow, but I am helped enormously by the way in which the officers have worked together as a team. The three officers and the immediate past president meet almost every month. We are also fortunate to have an excellent executive team: chief executive, Peter Fanning; director of education and secretary, Roz Baxter; and two more recent recruits – tax policy director, John Cullinane and director of finance and operations, Paul Davies. We are also supported by our treasurer, Gill Evans – and indeed the whole of the joint CIOT/ATT staff.

Perhaps I should start by telling you about my career in taxation. I studied law and was privileged to be taught by the late Professor John Tiley. He first engendered in me a fascination with the structures of taxation – and the constant change. I started work at Arthur Andersen, thinking I might stay for a few years and then go to the Bar. However, working in a team turned out to be a much better option! Initially I covered a whole range of taxes, including US personal tax returns. Ultimately I specialised in international corporate taxation. In 2002, together with most of Andersen’s UK people, I joined Deloitte, where I moved to the Tax Policy Group. This brought me back to the wide range of taxes. I joined the CIOT’s International Tax sub-committee and for the last six years have chaired the Technical Committee. You can see where my interests lie! So you won’t be surprised when I say that I am enthusiastic about the initiative that CIOT has just launched with the IfG and the IFS, to see if we can find ways to improve the process of making tax policy. I will keep you informed of progress via these pages. For now I recommend you check out the introduction to the project on page 12 along with an invitation to contribute your ideas.

I'm looking forward to meeting members – and students – at events around the UK. My President's reception is in London on 11 October. If you would like to come, do drop me a note with your name and membership number. I'm very proud to be a member of the tax profession. Being a professional means that we have ethical standards at the heart of the way we approach our work, underpinned by self-regulation. Our ethical standards are set out in 'Professional Conduct in relation to Taxation', a code of rules and guidance maintained by seven professional bodies – but actually they are best demonstrated in the way in which we act.

I would like to highlight two other aspects of being a profession. The first is the tax advisers' livery company – the Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers. Hundreds of years ago guilds and livery companies were the first professional bodies. In 1995, CIOT members established the Guild of Tax Advisers, which received its Royal Charter in 2009. The Company provides a tax briefing before the Lord Mayor's overseas visits to assist discussions with businesses, officials and government ministers. The Company supports charities, including the Tax Advisers' Charitable Trust and the Tax Advisers' Benevolent Fund. The Company organises two formal dinners every year, where members and guests can partake of some of the City of London's history, at a wide range of livery halls. There is also a variety of informal social activities. The Company's Master is Anthony Thomas, a former CIOT president. You can learn more at www.taxadvisers.org.uk. Membership is open to anyone connected with taxation.

The second area is charity. This time last year, Chris Jones launched the Bridge the Gap Appeal to raise support for our two tax advice charities – TaxAid and Tax Help for Older People. The importance of their work really crystallised for me in a speech by Steve Edge – in which he brought out that many of the people who come to the two charities don't only have a tax problem. There is often another major challenge they have to deal with in their lives. Steve's example focused on homelessness – but there are several others. TaxAid's clients can suffer from serious mental or physical illness; the loss of their home or their business. And debt is frequently a common thread. Rosina Pullman provides some examples of the people helped by TaxAid. Tax Help for Older People's clients may have suffered bereavement; or, after a lifetime on PAYE, face having to account for a small self-employed income as well as

several small pensions.

Solving their tax problem is often a key part of helping vulnerable people start to get their lives back on track. TaxAid has helped more than 100,000 people in the last decade, but both charities know there are many more people – often at crisis point – who need professional tax advice but can’t afford to pay. That is the gap they face and the two charities try to bridge it. But they can’t provide the support needed unless we – in the profession – step up and help fund their work. Please consider supporting the charities. You can find out how at www.bridge-the-gap.org.uk.