Office of Tax Simplification stakeholder conference

General Features

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The OTS presents its strategy and hosts an interactive event for stakeholders.

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) held its stakeholder conference on 18 July. Representatives from the CIOT, ATT and LITRG were among the 80 or so people present.

Angela Knight, chair of the OTS board, explained the three key areas of the body's strategy: consider the tax issues arising in a changing world; address specific complex areas; and play a greater role in the public debate on tax. To do this, the OTS will:

- Look ahead at changing business and economic structures and set out the new trends and changes in business, employment and other areas that will have an impact on tax and frame the 'story' into which its reviews and proposals will be set.
- Consider the steps that could make the tax system more straightforward and simpler in the context of these world-of-work changes and how people do their jobs.
- Undertake reviews on areas integral to these identified trends; highlight the issues and seek views and evidence; and propose options and choices for the changes as well as compromises to make the system more relevant and simple.
- Review specific complex areas affected by the themes to bring obvious and early benefits, or when there are difficult issues that require an informed discussion.
- Take the issues and options out for wide discussion, and ensure views and evidence are gathered from all interested parties including those outside the

natural stakeholder groups.
- Seek to ensure that simplification considerations are built into tax policymaking and implementation early in the process.
- Engage closely with HMRC on its important digital agenda.

John Whiting, OTS tax director, then took attendees through the organisation's work programme, and led a lively and innovative interactive session on the six questions in its consultation document, *Simplifying Tax for the Future*:

1. Are there significant trends or issues in the wider context or on the horizon that may change the tax landscape that we should take into account?
2. Bearing in mind our legislative framework, do you have any comments on the observations on the OTS's purpose and aims?
3. Do you have particular suggestions for areas of the tax system that the OTS should consider in the coming years? How do you see our main priorities?
4. Do you have any comments, principles or ideas that you would like us to consider as we further develop our approach?
5. We are sure it is right to have a mix of private and public sector people but do we get the balance right? Are there pools of expertise we are not tapping? Or particular skills and expertise we could aim to recruit into our staff?
6. How should the OTS measure its success? Objective measures or subjective criteria?

The CIOT, ATT and LITRG will continue to develop their close working relationship with the OTS as its projects progress, and on consultations issued by HMRC or the Treasury. The ATT and LITRG's responses to the OTS consultation can be found on the ATT website and the LITRG website.