CIOT President's page: A vibrant debate

Welcomes



22 June 2023

It has been a very busy few weeks! Since the AGM on 31 May, we have hosted the CTA Address on 8 June and the Parliamentary Reception on 12 June. Both were a roaring success – and that's not just coming from me, that's the feedback from everyone who attended!

First of all there was the CTA Address at the most beautiful RSA House, near my offices behind the Strand. Picking up on the theme of outdoor summer music festivals, we had a rock star line up.

On the stage, we had Pascal Saint-Amans, one of the key architects of OECD BEPS and more recently the Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 proposals (BEPS 1), and now a consultant with the Brunswick Group. We also had the eminent Heather Self. Many of you will know Heather – as well as her many successes over the years as an international tax expert, she won the Lifetime Achievement award at the Tolley's Tax Awards in May. And to complete the line-up, we had Tove Maria Ryding. Tove is a well-known

campaigner for tax transparency, and sacrifices much of her life in pursuit of tax justice in her many roles, most notably as tax justice coordinator at the European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad).

The debate was illuminating, in part as Pascal shared many great anecdotes on his journey to securing agreement to the BEPS actions. Of course, we are not there yet with Pillar 1! Heather followed up with an excellent analysis of the developments and a balanced view on some of the positives and negatives of the BEPS programme. And then Tove provided an equally excellent response, explaining her view that we need to involve the UN much more so that developing countries will have a greater seat at the international tax framework table. Pascal also mentioned what I see as one of the (if not THE) next big taxation debates of our time – taxation linked to climate change and decarbonisation of the world economy.

The feedback we have had has been immense, and I am so pleased to have played a small part in this event.

Then it was the House of Commons Parliamentary reception. This is always an excellent event. Despite the risks of thunderstorms we enjoyed a beautiful sunny evening, so many guests spilled onto the Thames terrace. On a personal level, it was lovely to see new and old friends. We were honoured to have the attendance of a number of Parliamentarians, including the Financial Secretary to the Treasury Victoria Atkins MP, and her opposite number, the Shadow FST James Murray MP.

Victoria, as one would imagine, has significant diary commitments but she kindly spent a fair bit of time with me and Susan Ball. We had the honour of James speaking at the event, alongside myself, Lord Leigh of Hurley and Craig Mackinlay MP, who was our gracious and generous host for the evening. Craig and Lord Leigh are both CTAs, while Lord Leigh chairs the Lords Economics Affairs Finance Bill Sub-Committee, the first parliamentary select committee chaired by a CTA to produce a report on tax.

And so it is onwards to the joint CIOT/IFS debate on 26 June. The theme is ‘The future of income tax’. Given that income tax is currently the UK’s biggest tax raiser, we are keen to discuss what the future might look like, not least because in recent years we have seen allowances frozen and sizeable shifts to the higher rate threshold. We are not planning a ‘blue sky’ discussion but something more pragmatic – although we do hope it will go beyond rates and allowances. Let’s see!

As well as my Presidential commitments, I still have my job as a senior Tax Partner at Harbottle and Lewis. I am lucky that I have such great support from my team and firm as a whole, as well as the amazing team at the CIOT. From their work to prepare for Council and subcommittee meetings, to supporting high level events such as those described here, the CIOT ‘head office’ is a very well organised operation!

And finally, one of my favourite things here is to thank all our branches and volunteers. Special thanks and birthday wishes go to Manchester and District, celebrating a cool 90 years on 4 July, while North East England are celebrating 40 years on 6 July. A belated congratulations also to East Anglia branch, who celebrated their 40 years on 3 May. And finally, East Midlands branch held a great conference in Leicester on 12 June.