New ATT Lay Person appointed

Briefings



23 June 2023

George Ritchie has been appointed as the ATT's Lay Public Interest Council Observer.

At its meeting on 27 April, the ATT Council said a fond farewell to Diane Burleigh, its Lay Public Interest Council Observer since 2016 and welcomed George Ritchie as her successor. George tells us what motivated him to become the ATT’s next Observer.

When I first investigated the ATT, I realised that its aims aligned closely with my personal values. I also believed that my past experience would be relevant but potentially offer a fresh perspective. So I wanted to have the opportunity to help Council members to deliver their mission.

I qualified as a solicitor in 1985, working as a criminal defence advocate and duty solicitor in police stations. In 1992, I moved to the Head Office of the Legal Aid Board where I became a public law lawyer, handling many of the judicial review cases brought against the Board.

In 1995, I joined BT. I was a regulatory and public law lawyer, first in the Retail arm and then in the Wholesale division. From 2009 to 2016, I was Chief Counsel, Competition and Regulatory Law for BT Group. In 2017, BT gave commitments to Ofcom to make Openreach a subsidiary company with its own board and financial, strategic and operational independence. I was appointed BT's Commitments Assurance Director – a unique independent oversight role to hold BT (especially its senior leadership team) to account to live up to its commitments. I was accountable to the BT Board committee responsible for overseeing BT's compliance and to Ofcom. I held that independent public interest role until my retirement in mid-2022.

I now have a broad portfolio. I am an Independent Member of the Health Research Authority Audit and Risk Committee, a Guernsey Competition and Regulatory Authority Board Member, and I have recently been appointed to a quasi-judicial role as a Lay Member of the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service.

ATT's charitable objectives include the advancement of education in the field of tax, and promoting and enforcing standards of professional conduct. Helping others, especially young people, to develop and grow, and ensuring that those in positions of responsibility can be trusted to do the right things are important to me.

I enjoyed being a school governor, and in my last role at BT, I was an independent 'critical friend' to the business to ensure it was doing the right things and could be trusted. That was very similar to the Lay Observer role, and I like the ATT's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is so important to create a culture in which everyone feels included, valued and able to flourish.

I am a member of Westminster International Rotary Club, a wonderful club where we recently led a project to fund the construction of a field hospital in Turkey following the terrible earthquake. I am married with two adult children – one is an economist and an international rugby referee; the other has just bought her first home with high expectations of DIY Dad!