# CIOT President's page: Time flies!

Welcomes



24 April 2024

It has been an honour to serve as CIOT President for the past year. I hope I have used that time and this platform to represent the interests of our Institute, its members and the tax profession as a whole.

This is my last ‘welcome’ column as President, so I want to use it to reflect on the last twelve months and to thank everyone who has made this a hugely rewarding and highly enjoyable term.

When I became President last year, we were grappling with the seemingly never-ending challenge of HMRC service levels. But I don’t think even we could believe it when HMRC announced in March that it would close its Self Assessment and VAT helplines for at least part of the year. However, we should take heart from the fact that no sooner had we spoken out than the Chancellor reportedly stepped in to put the plans on pause. That was an astute move, not least because it gives bodies like ours the chance to sit down with HMRC and help support their efforts to have more taxpayers interact with them online and in an orderly manner.

Good tax policy is core to our public interest remit, so it has been great having the chance to raise our concerns with people like the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and to discuss and debate topical tax issues alongside experts in their respective fields. The CTA address allowed us to explore the future of international reform and our events at Conservative and Labour conferences underscored our influence and impact at a political level. I want to say a massive thank you to our events and external relations teams, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies, for putting on a first-class programme of debates and for the plans underway for the next twelve months.

A real standout was being able to criss-cross the country and meet members at Branch events, dinners and other social settings. Our members are central to everything we do and seeing CIOT reach its 20,000 member milestone earlier this year was a real treat. We are delighted to welcome Rachael Brown as the 20,000th member of our CTA family (see page 50), as we are all of our newly qualified CTAs, many of whom I was honoured to meet at the recent Admissions Ceremony. I hope our new members see their membership as a springboard for their future successes.

I am looking forward to one final event as President later this month when ATT President Simon Groom and I host our annual Joint Presidents' Lunch in Edinburgh – a mainstay in the presidential calendar. It was recently joined by our inaugural Joint Presidents' networking lunch in London. After the pandemic put these events on hiatus, it has been great to see them return with vigour.

Before I sign off, I want to thank everyone who has contributed to my Presidential year. My fellow officers, Susan, Charlotte and Nichola have, along with our colleagues on Council, ensured the Institute stays true to our charitable objectives. Helen Whiteman and the executive team have done a sterling job leading our Institute to new heights, with the support of their fantastic staff. Helen, thanks for everything you have done to help me!

Being President would have been a lot harder without their support, and it would have been impossible were it not for the help of my colleagues at Harbottle and Lewis. I would especially like to thank my excellent Personal Assistant Eleanor Lawson, without whom I would never have been at the right place at the right time and much more besides!

And lastly, a special word of thanks to my family (Alistair and Ewan) and in particular my wife Clare for being a constant support in my life. Clare has been through the

whole CTA journey with me; the decision to venture out from HMRC, studying for ATT and CTA, joining CIOT Council and the various moves that have led to me becoming a Senior Equity Partner at Harbottles and member of their Management Executive board.

At the AGM later this month, I will hand over the reins to Charlotte Barbour. I couldn’t be happier to be leaving the Presidency in such capable hands.

I am so proud of this Institute, our members and everyone who brings it to life. Being its President is a memory I will hold dear. Thank you all for your support. And good luck to you all with your future careers!