Simon Groom delivers his outgoing ATT President’s speech

Briefings



21 August 2024

In his AGM speech, outgoing ATT President Simon Groom reported back to members on the Association’s efforts to improve HMRC service levels and educate the public on tax.

Celebrating ATT

I want to applaud the work of our incredible technical team, who picked up a silver award for Best Association Team at the Association Excellence Awards in November. If you were paying attention during the election campaign, you’ll have seen them analysing the parties’ manifestos on TV and radio.

I want to thank our volunteers too for their work over the past year. Over my year, I tried to get to as many branch events as I could as we seek to rebuild face-to-face programmes after the pandemic. It has given me particular pleasure to be able to join celebrations for the 40th anniversaries of our Northern Ireland, Severn Valley,

and South London and Surrey branches, and the 90th anniversary of our Manchester branch.

I'd also like to give a special mention to our former executive officer, the legendary Sue Fraser, who retired at the end of last year. Sue clocked up almost 26 years at ATT, supporting countless Presidents, Council members and volunteers. We're missing her – though the excellent Vicky Nicholas is already making the role her own.

HMRC service levels

At the start of my year, I spoke about the unacceptable service levels that taxpayers have had to put up with from HMRC. I'm not going to claim that things have improved. We're still hearing of long delays on both taxpayer and agent helplines, and with responses to written enquiries.

HMRC announced in March that they would be closing or restricting more helplines, only to U-turn the following day after facing the ire of the profession, politicians and the media. This is not the sign of a house in order.

It is nevertheless a sign that HMRC, or perhaps ministers, are now listening to the voices of ourselves and others, and we will continue our engagement with them with that optimistic thought in mind.

We continue to support the move towards digital, but it must be done at the right pace. HMRC need the resources to provide the services needed by taxpayers to assist them with their filing obligations.

Tax education

My background is in tax education and the fact that ATT is an education charity is very important to me. Over the summer, we launched a series of 13 videos, aimed not only at our members and students, but also at educating the wider public. Four are aimed particularly at children and young people. These videos star our multi-talented technical officers and are available in the media section of our website. If you haven't seen them, I encourage you to check them out, share them with the young people in your family and let us know what you, and they, think about them.

We also have lesson plans and videos which volunteers can use in schools to both promote tax as a career and educate children as to why tax is important. We would love to have more volunteers doing this, so please let us know if this is something you would be interested in.

Simon concluded his speech by welcoming new members to the ATT, thanking ATT staff and his fellow officers and promising to support them in his new role as Past President. He said he was proud of the continued hard work, enthusiasm and success of the Association, its officers and all its volunteers and members.

This speech has been abridged for space reasons. The full speech can be viewed at tinyurl.com/ATT-AGM24
(password DGH534NVX; speech starts 11:40)