ATT Welcome: A slightly sideways look…

Welcomes



21 August 2024

So here we are, another new ATT year. Senga has been installed as this year's ATT President, Barry as Vice President and, for the next 12 months, it will be my role as Deputy President to bring you news of all things ATT and, most likely, taking a slightly sideways look at the world of taxation through this page. Of course, the older ones among you will remember that I have been lucky enough to have been author of this page before, back in 2016-17. I was enormously honoured to be asked to be an ATT officer for a second time so I obviously did something right – or maybe it is just that I remember where the bodies are buried!

Anyway, for the benefit of those of you who do not know me a brief introduction is appropriate. Tax is really my second career since I started my working life in the late 1970s as a fisheries biologist tagging salmon on the Yorkshire coast. However, I eventually decided I had to get a real job, so became an accountant. Starting off working on owner managed businesses, I then progressed to large corporates – a secondment as technical manager that turned into five years running technical

training and support before being poached to return to mainstream practice and relocating to Birmingham. I then specialised in the taxation of charities and other not for profit bodies at RSM, working with clients across the whole country.

I retired at the end of December 2021 and now spend my time looking after my wife Jan while she goes through a series of hip and knee replacement operations, and trying to train our spaniel Bess, although she is really training me. Like many Council members, I first got involved with ATT and CIOT through the branch network. I began with the Sheffield branch in 1986 and then went on to be chair of both the Leeds and Birmingham branches as my career took me round the country. I cannot believe that is almost 40 years – where has the time gone? At the ATT, I have been Honorary Treasurer, chair of the Finance Steering Group and Examination Steering Group, and a member of the Technical Steering Group, Audit Committee and Joint Policy Review Group, as well as representing CIOT on the Charity Tax Forum.

As well as the ATT AGM, July also saw the election of a new government and the appointment of Rachel Reeves as the UK's first female Chancellor. I wish her luck in her new role and can promise that the ATT will continue to be a critical friend, commenting on any changes to the tax system to help make sure that it works fairly for all – something we have long done with governments of all political persuasions. The first Labour Budget has been announced for 30 October. As I write this, we already know that the furnished holiday letting (FHL) and non-domiciled taxpayer regimes are going to be abolished. Draft legislation removing the VAT exempt status of education provided by private schools with effect from 1 January 2025 has also been published. As with FHL, the VAT changes include anti forestalling measures. The ATT will, of course, be looking closely at the Budget proposals so it is going to be an interesting, and busy, few months for the Technical Steering Group and our award-winning technical team.

They say that there is really nothing new under the sun. I remember saying several years ago that the two biggest challenges facing us over the next few years were undoubtedly MTD closely followed by maintaining the standing and credibility of the tax profession in the eyes of government and the public. Well, MTD has still not been fully implemented and we are at the beginning of consultation about the future regulation of the tax profession, or at least those parts of it that interact with HMRC. That seems a bit of an odd approach to me. The tax profession is more than agents who interact with HMRC, but inevitably there are some chancers, no-hopers and rogues out there. Published estimates of the tax gap state that 30% is due to not

taking reasonable care, while error accounts for another 15%. Looking at it from HMRC’s perspective, you can see why they want to reduce the rate of error and mistake and for all agents to be as competent as ATT members are, but I am not sure if that is looking at the full picture.

We will come back to these and other challenges in the coming months. Please remember that the ATT is your association. We want to hear what we are doing well (or not so well), the problems you experience in practice and even, I hope, that you want to get more involved. You can get in touch at the email address on the left. See you next month.