CEO's welcome: Many things to focus on!

Welcomes



18 February 2025

It is not uncommon in the March edition of *Tax Adviser* for us to be making some comment about an upcoming Budget and the work that the CIOT and ATT are doing around Budget representations. However, at the time of writing, there has been no announcement of a Budget so far.

The Labour Party made it clear in its manifesto that it was ‘committed to one major fiscal event a year, giving families and businesses due warning of tax and spending policies’. Whilst this will come as a relief for many members and their clients, how one defines a ‘major fiscal event’ is still up for debate – and we may well see some Spring announcements sprung upon us.

Readers will be aware that the government has given HMRC three priorities to focus on – improving their customer service for taxpayers; modernising and reforming their offering; and closing the tax gap. HMRC’s poor customer service standards have come under criticism for some time now, and this has been further hampered

by industrial action within HMRC. This action was expected to last from 23 December 2024 until 14 February 2025; however, in early February we were advised that it would continue until 14 March.

The action affects the Employer Services phone lines, including the Employer Helpline and the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) Helpline. Both these helplines continue to operate from 8am to 6pm, though we have been warned to be prepared for longer wait times. No other services are expected to be impacted. Let us hope that 'normal' service is resumed on 14March. If you have had difficulty contacting HMRC on either of these services, we would like to hear about your experiences.

Modernising and reforming HMRC's offering includes work undertaken as part of a ten year tax administration framework review, and the Making Tax Digital initiatives which will be rolled out to Income Tax Self Assessment from April 2026.

On Wednesday 2 April, the ATT is holding the first of its bi-annual virtual Fellows Webinars. These are free events which provide a unique opportunity for all Fellows to enjoy the company of members of similar standing within the Association. The main talk will be provided by Technical Officers Steven Pinhey and Helen Thornley, who will be looking at the third aspect that the government has asked HMRC to focus on – understanding the tax gap. The talk will be followed by a choice of three interactive breakout sessions on: fiscal event/Budget reflections and wish lists; how your MTD preparations are going; and members' views on HMRC's digital roadmap. Find out more and book your place at tinyurl.com/4ekt6cth.

Other dates to note are Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 April, when the CIOT will be hosting its Spring Virtual Conference. The conference provides topical lectures by leading tax speakers, flexible access to all the conference materials and recordings, and an opportunity to increase your CPD. This year will include presentations on R&D tax relief, employee ownership trusts, capital allowances and OMB exit planning in2025/26 and beyond. You can find out more about the event and register at www.tax.org.uk/svc2025.

Looking further ahead, on Wednesday 4June the ATT & CIOT will be holding a members' Tax Technology Conference in Birmingham, where we will be exploring the latest advancements and best practices in AI and technology in taxation. This is a fast developing area and is designed for those who are new to AI and tax technology, as well as those already implementing these advancements. The conference will provide an engaging experience with keynote speakers, panel

discussion, interactive breakout sessions and a demonstration/exhibition area for networking and knowledge sharing. The conference covers the whole day, and you can find out more about the conference and book your place atwww.tax.org.uk/tax-technology-conference-2025. We look forward to seeing you there!