CIOT President's page: A busy year ahead!

Welcomes



27 May 2025

It’s an absolute pleasure to be appointed as President of the Chartered Institute of Taxation. I have served on the CIOT’s Council of Trustees since 2017 and spent my life in tax, advising other professional firms and SMEs.

One of the aims shared across CIOT is to achieve a diverse and inclusive membership. I think we are travelling in the right direction on that front but it’s a slow process. I am only the CIOT’s sixth female president in the Institute’s 95 year history.

My journey in tax includes 20 years as a tax writer, CPD maker and ‘Virtual Tax Partner’ to professional firms. During that period, I have developed tax websites and experimented online in ways to make tax know-how understandable and accessible to wider audiences. I am enthusiastic about being part of the CIOT, which has a primary purpose to promote education in taxation. We share a key aim to achieve a more efficient and less complex tax system for all. This is a challenge, not least due

to the way that we make new tax legislation.

Since the advent of computing, technological change has been ongoing. We might perceive that we are in ‘the age of AI’, but at the end of the day it’s all just an age of evolving advancement in computer sciences. I am looking forward to seeing how AI will evolve to be able to assist us in the simplification of all human systems, including the tax one. I personally cannot wait until AI rewrites all our employment tax legislation; that would be a game changer!

This year, advisers must prepare their practices for the April 2026 commencement of Making Tax Digital (MTD) for income tax. There is a push-back against MTD on many sides. Some believe that it does not seem like value for money for the smallest businesses and that it poses more complexity for the already complex ones. My feeling is that once set up, digital bookkeeping saves a lot of time, especially having automatic bank reconciliations. If it is too difficult to set up, then delegate the problem. That frees your time to run your business.

HMRC’s Making Tax Digital team are pulling out all the stops to support those who want to get into the MTD Public Pilot test. Talking to visitors at the recent Accountex show, I found that most firms are using five to eight different types of software; the question is which software to use for MTD submissions. My most overused phrase is ‘one size does not fit all’ and that is unfortunately the case here. I urge everyone to join the MTD pilot and work through their MTD process ahead of next April.

Tax simplification starts at the top. HMRC is undergoing a massive transformation as the new government focuses on increasing tax revenue in order to achieve its electoral mandate. Where possible, when I meet with the ministers I will continue to urge government to consult widely on any proposed tax changes in order to avoid unintended consequences.

For example, we had expected some changes to inheritance tax with a new chancellor at the helm. However, the changes currently proposed to business property relief (BPR) and agricultural property relief (APR) – to restrict the full relief to a £1 million combined limit with the balance at 50% relief, from April 2026 – look as if they are going to have some unforeseen side-effects.

Here are just three. Firstly, a generation of entrepreneurs will be pushed into early retirement at a time when we need to grow and not decrease the workforce. Secondly, the non-transferrable BPR/APR limit looks to add vast complexities for

families who will no doubt now be offered complex trusts (when are trusts not complex?) and will rewrites as part of normal planning. Thirdly, there is the valuation issue. The government is looking for land to build more houses and most farms have a significant development value apart from their agricultural value. Do we value for inheritance tax on ‘hope value’? This all needs thinking through.

Perhaps there is scope for the equivalent of a deferred inheritance tax overage charge? It’s a thought, but without having the wider debate on this we will see the demise of many businesses and with that the loss of potentially valuable resources.

I am all set for a busy presidential year in supporting the CIOT, its members, the branches and, of course, the staff. Do say ‘hello’ if you see me, connect on LinkedIn and I would be delighted to come and give a talk at your branch too!