Technical Newsdesk: July 2025

Welcomes



23 June 2025

This is my last introduction to Technical Newsdesk. By the time you read this, I will probably have started my new role in HMRC's Indirect Tax Avoidance and Partial Exemption Team. If you have read my previous introductions, you will know that, prior to joining the CIOT, I was a VAT specialist for many years. I am really looking forward to getting back into the nitty gritty of VAT.

It has been nothing short of an honour to work for the CIOT for the last nine and a half years (over ten if I include the period I was an Indirect Taxes Technical Officer). To have the opportunity to work at the heart of tax policy making, seeking to fulfil our charitable objectives of (to paraphrase) making the tax system better, is very special.

Obviously, it has not all been plain sailing, and over time I became accustomed to telling people that we tried to make the tax system 'less bad'. Actually, that might have happened quite quickly – I recall one of my first CIOT engagements was attending the launch of Making Tax Digital – and we all know how that has gone.

So, what stands out over my time at the CIOT? Here is a much-abridged list:

- Making Tax Digital – as noted above, being present at the launch event, and being involved in the engagement throughout. What this has really underlined for me is the importance of consulting early and properly, rather than governments making big announcements and then consulting on the practicalities afterwards.
- The COVID support schemes, which represented our best engagement with HMRC and HMT, particularly regarding the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. Yes, there were flaws in these schemes, but the real sense of working together to deliver something quickly and effectively was great to be part of.
- Giving evidence to a particular House of Lords inquiry, and wondering why I was getting a hard time whenever I said anything mildly supportive of what HMRC were doing!
- Being accused by a former Financial Secretary to the Treasury (FST) of issuing an 'incendiary' press release. (I will let you decide which FST and which topic.)
- Recognising the need to celebrate successes, no matter how small. Generally, we will not be able to deliver the significant changes or simplification we desire, but any suggestion we make that is adopted will, by virtue of our charitable objectives, have made the tax system better than it otherwise would have been.
- Being asked to speak at a conference in Malta and then being led astray by two fellow speakers (no names, but you know who you are) and roaming the streets of Valletta trying to find a taxi back to our hotel late at night. Actually, that happened in Prague, too…

Perhaps the most challenging thing during my time at the CIOT has been to try and find the right balance between support and challenge when dealing with HMRC and other policymakers. Even when you think a policy or proposal is a really bad idea, there is a need to recognise that you are dealing with people just like yourself, who are often tasked with doing a job in potentially difficult circumstances. We have not always got it right (hence the wrath of the FST), but everything we have done has been well intended, in pursuance of our charitable objectives.

It is also interesting to look back to see how things have changed over the years. I would like to think that our engagement and influence with policymakers has deepened, and I think the introduction of our 'Rules of Engagement' (tinyurl.com/3w4yv4cv) has kept us on message, and demonstrated to the outside

world how we undertake our work.

I have also been writing introductions to Technical Newsdesk for almost the entire period I have been with the CIOT which, give or take the occasional holiday or absence, means I will have written almost 100 of them. They changed from being a series signposting what is in that month's edition to a monthly 'opinion piece' – which, I hope, have been a bit more interesting. I will now need to find another outlet for my thoughts on the tax system.

What has not changed is the continued support from the CIOT technical team, other parts of the CIOT, the ATT and LITRG technical teams, our fantastic volunteer network and, of course, our wider membership. For that I am hugely grateful.

So, what next for the CIOT technical team? I am delighted to be handing over to Victoria Todd. Victoria is already Head of LITRG and will be taking up a new joint role as Head of LITRG and Head of Tax Technical. Victoria will be supported by a new senior manager role within the CIOT technical team. Victoria joined LITRG in 2005 and became Head of LITRG in 2018. Over the last seven years, she has built on the fantastic work of her predecessor, LITRG's former Technical Director, the late Robin Williamson.

Victoria will be writing the introduction to September's Technical Newsdesk and will tell you more about herself and her plans for CIOT and LITRG. In the meantime, she is keen to talk to volunteers and staff to find out more about work in the various technical areas. She will be attending as many committee meetings as possible over the next few months, so please look out for her and make her as welcome as you have made me.