

President's page

Welcomes

05 January 2021

Love Is All Around

Welcome to my first Presidential Page of 2021. And may I start by wishing you and your families a successful and happy New Year. I am sure many of us are glad to see the back of 2020 and the prospect of some return to normality. As you read this, I am all too aware that a large number of you will be in the midst of tax return filing. This can be a stressful time and it is important that we manage to look after our mental health – even if this is a brief walk or meaningful break from our computer screens.

One of the positives that I take from the Covid-19 ridden 2020 is the emergence of the wonderful human spirit and courage we have seen working for the benefit of our wider society. The NHS and the other vital front line workers, Captain Sir Tom Moore, Marcus Rashford MBE, and all the other great shining examples of humanity and benevolence.

The work of our Low Incomes Tax Reform Group

Closer to home, I think we can justly be very proud of the great work of our Low Incomes Tax Reform Group (LITRG). LITRG has worked tirelessly this year to help the public – especially the vulnerable – to understand and navigate through the complex web of Covid-19 assistance measures. At the last count, LITRG had over 600,000 visitors to its Covid-19 website hub (which can be found at bit.ly/2WjG2DP).

Furthermore, it has published over 80 dedicated articles to help everyone understand the impact of Covid-19 on tax and related benefits. The group has also been able to use the numerous web queries it has received to improve website guidance on areas that people have found particularly difficult and to alert HMRC to issues.

LITRG continues to work closely with HMRC on many highly topical areas, including the Covid-19 support schemes, tax credits and the loan charge. It is great to see that, as a result of LITRG's practical expertise in these areas, HMRC has listened to and taken on board some of its recommendations; for example, improvements to guidance allowing you to check if you can claim a grant through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (see bit.ly/3gzNYdF). Moreover, LITRG has been instrumental in identifying issues and improving processes such as surrounding the disability element of tax credits (see bit.ly/3n4Y34L).

I could go on to list out more of LITRG's wonderful achievements but space does not permit. We were all very delighted to see LITRG win the award for Best Specialist Team in a Public or Not for Profit Organisation at the 2020 Tolley's Taxation Awards. Further awards were picked up by one of LITRG's Technical Officers, Meredith McCammond (The Tax Rising Star Award) and Robin Williamson (LITRG's former Technical Director and ongoing volunteer) (The Lifetime Achievement award). These awards are indeed testament to the widely acknowledged fantastic work of our indefatigable LITRG group, headed up by Victoria Todd.

A better deal for the low-income taxpayer

Looking further ahead, last month LITRG released a visionary paper, 'A better deal for the low-income taxpayer'. This paper sets out how the tax system can be made to work better for taxpayers on low incomes. The 47 recommendations in the paper are divided between seven key principles which LITRG believe should be firmly lodged in the minds of those designing and managing the tax system. I think many of you will be interested in reading this paper, which can be found at bit.ly/2W41nkw.

The CIOT is very proud to support and fund LITRG's valuable work providing free, relevant guidance on tax matters to those who need it, and trying to make the tax and related benefits systems work better for those on low incomes.

Supporting you

As we start the year afresh, we are looking forward to supporting our students in their studies, our members in their careers and volunteers in their much valued contribution to the CIOT.

I hope my page has shown that 'Love Is All Around' – being a child of the sixties, I much prefer The Troggs version!

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