

**Virtual Communications Group**  
**Digital Services Update**  
**April 2021**

## **Making Tax Digital (MTD)**

- There are over 1.4m businesses signed up to MTD as of 23 March and over 9 million VAT returns have been successfully submitted. Overall, an estimated 89.2% of all businesses mandated to join from April 2019 are now signed up to the MTD service.
- On 23 March, the government published new research which demonstrates a range of benefits to businesses that have already started using MTD. The two research reports, titled [\*Exploring the costs and benefits of MTD for VAT experienced by small businesses\*](#) and [\*Exploring voluntary sign-up to Making Tax Digital for VAT\*](#), are available on GOV.UK.
- HMRC recently announced that Giles McCallum has been appointed as the new MTD Director, following Roy Wallace's retirement. Roy officially left the programme on 30 March. Giles will be starting with us on 17 May at the latest. In the interim period, Making Tax Digital deputy directors Anna Thomas and David Hubbard will split cover for the Director. We have set up a mailbox for any MTD Director correspondence: [mtddirectormailbox@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:mtddirectormailbox@hmrc.gov.uk). You are welcome to use this should you wish to get in touch with a director – or you can reach out to your usual MTD contacts.
- The Corporation Tax consultation closed on 5 March. HMRC received a variety of responses to both the main consultation and the shortened online consultation and are now analysing the evidence. HMRC will publish a consultation response in due course.
- HMRC will need a valid and current email address for customers to enable non-MTD VAT customers' Direct Debit payments to continue after migration of customer records from the VAT Mainframe (VMF) to our new Enterprise Tax Management Platform (ETMP). This allows HMRC to comply with UK banking regulations requiring them to notify customers of the date and amount to be taken by Direct Debit (we have chosen to do this by email). Without a valid email address, HMRC may be unable to collect VAT payments. HMRC will ask affected customers to provide this information. These customers will be contacted via letter which will inform them that HMRC will be cancelling their Direct Debit and asking them to regularly log into their Business Tax Account (BTA) between July – September 2021. Customers will then be introduced to a step-to-step process on how to update their Direct Debit information.
- Starting 1 April 2021, businesses will be required to have digital links between software programs. HMRC are holding webinars during April 2021 to provide further information on digital links. For more information, please follow the link to book in a slot to attend the webinar:  
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/1852554361301926925?source=Gov>

## Senior leaders talk about the Charter

We launched our new [Charter](#) on 5 November 2020 after a full and open consultation. Our Charter sets out the service and standard of behaviour you can expect from us. It explains how we will get things right, make it easy for our customers, be fair, responsive and aware of their personal situations.

You can hear what HMRC's senior leaders think about the Charter and what it means for our customers and staff in this [YouTube video](#).

## VAT – paying deferred VAT.

The VAT deferral new payment scheme is open for all businesses who deferred paying VAT due between 20 March and 30 June 2020 and have been unable to pay in full by 31 March 2021.

Apply now to spread these payments over a number of months – **join by 21 April 2021 to benefit from up to 10 instalments**. The later you join, the fewer instalments are available to you.

You can join the scheme quickly and simply online without needing to call HMRC. To find out more information, including the things you need to prepare before joining online, go to GOV.UK and search 'VAT deferral'.

You need to apply by 21 June 2021 if you want to join the scheme online.

## Agent Forum (AF)

As at the end of March 2021, the Forum had 1505 registered subscribers including Professional Bodies, which exceeds the amount of 1229 users signed up to its predecessor forum. We are separately inviting various customer groups with Capital Gains payment liabilities or Trust registration responsibilities to HMRC; the Law Society and Society for Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) amongst them. Registrations have exceeded the levels of its former platform and will continue to grow as new Agents are invited to register as part of their email Agent journey.

Participation and issues traffic are also increasing. We are also stepping up our recruitment of internal HMRC users. In 20/21 we have received 750 widespread issues, dealing with and closing 677 across all Heads of Duty.

We continue to support agents and their clients through the COVID-19 crisis and have a live dedicated panel to deal with related issues and publish guidance for all associated schemes including the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and Job Retention Scheme (JRS).

We will set-up two new boards, one for User information which will make the guidance easy to access and one for the Issues Overview Group (IOG) escalated issues. We have, in conjunction with our IOG stakeholder colleagues, put in place procedures to identify high

priority widespread issues to be taken forward for resolution with our internal technical specialist and communications partners. This is being monitored by the Agent Forum team and others.

We continue building our internal HMRC Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) capability, formalising recruitment from across HMRC to improve the quality and timeliness of issue resolution responses and to focus on Agent Forum operations. Performance metrics so far for 20/21 include over 40,900k forum views and 539 resolved topics since April 2020, which are all moderated daily with appropriate responses given, as determined by subject matter, related traffic generated, and referrals provided by lines of business. We have reviewed our performance metrics to more effectively manage our live 'aged cases' portfolio, given we better understand new functionality provided by the MS Dynamics platform.

The Digital Customer Support Services (DCSS) Agent Team is staffed by a Service Manager and 3.5 FTE Moderators, having been joined by two new staff at the beginning of January, who moderate and run the forum.