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3 September 2018

HRH The Prince of Wales
Clarence House
St James's
London
SW1A 1BA

Sir,

As a qualified accountant and business leader I have spent much of my working life in different commercial organisations, returning to the accountancy sector several years ago to lead the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT).

During a comparatively early stage in my new role I was pleased to receive an invite to visit Clarence House and hear more about Your Royal Highness's A4S initiative and the Accounting Bodies Network.

This event gave me pause for thought as, having started out in life as an Oceanographer and subsequently having had the honour to lead a Government marine research agency, I could all too clearly see the positive impact the finance community should have in helping to change the environment and people's lives for the better.

While many of AAT's 140,000 members and students are in key financial roles, others are at different stages in their career pathways with more limited ability to influence key decisions. Given this background and in pursuit of the sustainability agenda, I decided to adopt a strategy where AAT as an organisation would seek to lead by example, and so encourage our members to do the same over time.

While most of our work is focussed on educational matters and measures to help improve social mobility, we are pursuing a broad range of initiatives to help inspire action by the accountancy profession and drive forwards responsible business practice in support of UN Sustainability Goals.

One example of this work was the launch of a free website, Informi.co.uk, to help small business and start-up companies and aid sustainability. Since launch in 2016 the site has received over 400,000 visits and work to further enhance the platform is underway.

We were also amongst the first 100 organisations (and only professional body) to sign the Women in Finance Charter, pursued reporting of Gender Pay and Prompt Supplier Payments before being required to do so, embedded the Living Wage through procurement action in our supply chain and also sought to reduce our own carbon footprint.

Every opportunity is taken to highlight such work to our members and the wider business community, including a recent headline article in our in-house magazine considering how taxation policy might positively impact the environment and which will be read in over 100 countries around the world.

Education and skills development are at the core of our own work and, I would suggest, play an important role in gaining even more traction from the great work Your Royal Highness's A4S initiative has delivered. I know from my own experience that the earlier in an individual's career such knowledge can be developed, the more likely it is to result in the execution of best practice in later life. At AAT we will continue to seek ways to embed the subject of sustainability as early in an individual's learning as possible, and if such a measure could be pursued across the international accountancy community, I'm sure it would make a positive difference.

Drawing on my own background I can see that as an island nation, with our surrounding seas swamped by plastic, we should understand better than most how responsible actions by the business community can improve both the environment as well as our business performance.

Clearly there is further room for improvement and AAT will play its part by continuing to seek to achieve a more sustainably future.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'M.' followed by a long, flowing signature that ends in a horizontal line.

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