ISSUE **35**
JANUARY **2025**

INSIGHT

A WEALTH OF **ADVICE**

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Financial Planning & Wealth Management

Financial Vulnerability Charter

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THE TRUMP FACTOR: INVESTING IN A CHANGING WORLD

WHAT COULD PROPOSED IHT PENSION CHANGES MEAN FOR YOU?

CHOOSE THE RIGHT WRAPPER FOR YOUR INVESTMENTS

5 ATTAINABLE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2025

Our Quest

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WELCOME

Welcome to our latest issue of Insight – A Wealth of Advice

As we begin the new year we continue to consider the announcements made in the 2024 Autumn Budget. While the proposal for unused pensions to become subject to Inheritance Tax remains under consultation, Justin Rourke looks at what this could mean for your financial planning if the suggested changes become law. Amendments to Capital Gains Tax, however, have already been implemented and Emma Copley discusses how this could impact your investments.

Also included in this edition:

Could salary sacrifice be the answer to increased staff costs for employers? Salary sacrifice remains a viable option in shaping remuneration packages in a way that can help to minimise National Insurance costs for businesses, and reduce pay and benefit deductions for employees too.

The Trump factor: Investing in a changing world - The return of Donald Trump to the US presidency has important implications for global financial markets. It is crucial to understand the current landscape and consider how the future may develop when positioning investments to mitigate risks and capitalise on opportunities.

Choose the right wrapper for your investments: Two of the most commonly held investment vehicles, or 'wrappers', are ISAs and pensions, but could selecting one over another result in a greater yield?

We hope you enjoy this issue. If there are any topics you would like us to cover in future editions, please get in touch. If you would prefer to download a digital copy or subscribe to new issues electronically, please visit:

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PAUL DICKSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND MANAGING PARTNER
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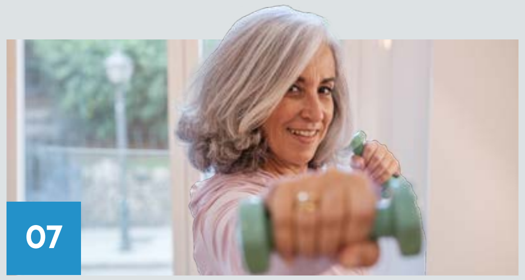
INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Could salary sacrifice be the answer to increased staff costs for employers?

Following the Autumn Budget, much of the discussion and challenge is around how employers will cope with the double whammy of employer National Insurance Contribution (NIC) increases and above inflation rises to the statutory National Living/Minimum Wage rates in April 2025. Both of these measures will make employing staff much more expensive for most employers, and the general feeling is that many businesses will be unable to pass all of these extra costs on to their customers or to absorb within the profits of the business.

Fortunately, one area that was not covered within the Budget is salary sacrifice, and so this remains a viable solution to employers in shaping the remuneration packages for staff in a way that helps to minimise National Insurance costs for the business, and in many cases, reduces the tax and/or National Insurance deductions suffered by employees on their pay and benefits.

Salary sacrifice has been around since the 1980s and the concept remains the same, i.e. the employee agrees to give up part of their pay (which is always taxable in full and subject to employer/employee NIC) in exchange for a non-cash benefit which attracts less tax and/or NIC. The main point that is different these days, is that the Government has already legislated to prevent a tax advantage for all but a few staff benefits, and so salary sacrifice is usually only attractive for certain benefits.

Pension salary sacrifice

The most popular salary sacrifice arrangement is, and always has been, in relation to pension contributions, whereby the employee gives up part of their pay in return for an increased employer contribution to the pension plan of the same value. Employer contributions are not subject to NICs (unlike employee contributions) and therefore there is an employer and employee saving as illustrated in the following example (using April 2025 rates):

- Employee is paid £40,000 pa
- The employee contributes 5% of pay into the pension, i.e. £2,000
- Under salary sacrifice, pay is reduced to £38,000 pa and the employer pays £2,000 into the pension plan as an employer contribution

Saving for employer = £2,000 x 15% = £300pa

Saving for employee = £2,000 x 8% = £160pa

Clearly, the savings for the employer will be more attractive the more employees there are, but such an arrangement can still be very effective for smaller businesses where pay and/or employee pension contributions are above average.

Other salary sacrifice options

Employers can theoretically offer salary sacrifice for any non-cash benefit. However, the arrangements that achieve NIC savings for the employer over and above pensions are restricted to:

- Fully electric cars
- Cycle to work
- Purchase of additional annual leave

Some of these schemes are gaining significant traction, especially following the announcement that employer NICs will be increasing from next year. This is particularly the case with electric cars, where the NIC savings for the business and tax/NIC savings for the employee can be significant.

What's the catch?

As the old saying goes, 'if something appears too good to be true, it probably is.' This is not quite true for salary sacrifice as it can be very effective - and legal - when done properly. However, there are some critical aspects for employers to navigate when offering salary sacrifice arrangements to staff, some of which may affect the viability of doing this within the business. For example:

- This involves a legally binding change to the employees' contractual pay, with various tax, legal and other implications to manage
- It is illegal to allow an employee to sacrifice pay below statutory National Living/Minimum Wage levels and so this is an area that employers require robust procedures and checks to ensure compliance (which is a frequent error even by some of the largest employers)
- There are tax rules to adhere to in order to benefit from tax and NIC efficiencies, especially in relation to the arrangements involving cars or bikes

Armstrong Watson's team of tax, payroll, pensions and benefits specialists can support clients at all stages of implementing and operating salary sacrifice schemes, ensuring these are sufficiently robust to satisfy the key tax and legal requirements and to avoid a future HMRC challenge.

For a no obligation discussion with our experts please call **0808 144 5575** or email **help@armstrongwatson.co.uk**

BRIAN RUDKIN
EMPLOYMENT TAX PARTNER

Choose the right wrapper for your investments

Each investment vehicle, or 'wrapper,' has unique features and benefits, with the funds held within them subject to different tax regulations. Two of the most commonly held investment vehicles are ISAs and pensions. Both offer favourable tax advantages, with the funds in each benefiting from growth that is exempt from personal income and capital gains taxes. But could selecting one wrapper over the other result in a greater yield?

ISA vs pension yields

Starting with an ISA, let's assume the maximum annual allowance of £20,000 is invested. If the monies were left invested for 10 years, and achieved a net annualised rate of 5%, then it would grow to be worth £32,578. As already stated, this would all be tax free. This means the initial contribution has grown by 63%.

If the same money was instead invested within a pension, then the initial contribution would receive tax relief of £5,000, resulting in £25,000 being invested. Again, leaving this for 10 years, growing at a net annualised rate of 5%, then it would grow to be worth £40,722. Thanks to the tax relief, the initial contribution has grown by 104%!

The scenario improves for a higher-rate taxpayer, who could claim an additional £5,000 in tax relief. If they invested this further tax relief into an ISA, over the same period and enjoying the same growth. This would result in a further £8,144 being available.

Withdrawals from ISAs and pension

Those who know their wrappers will already have identified that withdrawals from ISAs are completely free of tax, meaning the £32,578 in the above example can be withdrawn in full to the bank. However, with pensions we need to account for tax when making a withdrawal.

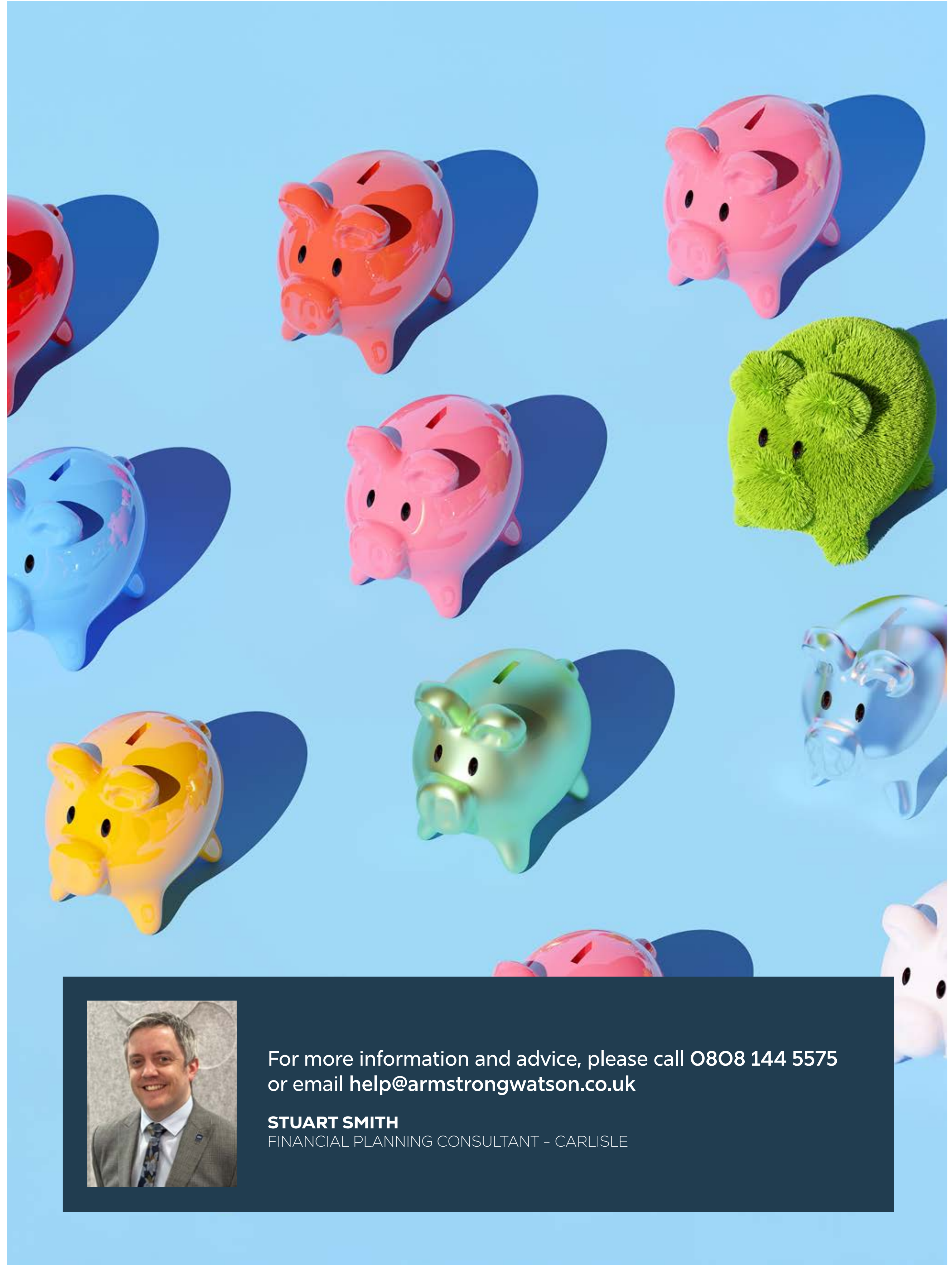
Looking at the £40,722 generated in a pension, we can withdraw 25% by Pension Commencement Lump Sum (PCLS), commonly known as "tax free cash". This will yield £10,181. If we assume the remaining 75% is subject to basic rate tax, we end up with a further net amount of £24,433. Overall therefore, £34,614 could be received from the pension.

Some may think that this additional return isn't worth the bother, given the pension route has yielded "just" £2,036 more than the ISA. For context though, this represents more than 10% more from the initial investment, which others would argue is worth it for what is essentially just signing a couple of bits of paper.

For higher rate taxpayers, on top of the additional £2,036 they would have generated above, they also have the returns from investing the further tax relief they received. This, as you'll remember, grew to be worth a further £8,144. Taking that into account, they've now achieved an additional return of £10,180 just by making use of the correct wrappers, meaning a net growth of 124% has been achieved.

As the examples above highlight, it's crucial to choose the right financial 'wrappers' for your investments. By carefully selecting the appropriate investment vehicles, you can maximise your returns and ensure your financial gifts are presented in the best possible way. That's why it's important to work with a trusted financial planning consultant who understands your unique circumstances and objectives, helping you wrap your investments perfectly for the future.

FINANCIAL PLANNING



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STUART SMITH
FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT - CARLISLE

5 attainable new year's resolutions for 2025

A new year often comes with new year's resolutions and while no one should put pressure on themselves to change too much about their lives, having a goal for the year ahead can be a healthy attitude to take. Here are some inspiring, yet attainable resolutions to consider for 2025.

Focus on wellbeing

A lot can be said for the little things that improve your health and wellbeing. Let 2025 be the year you care for you. You might want to practice mindfulness, exercise more, focus your passions or read more books. These activities can help reduce stress and improve mental clarity.

01

Declutter

Taking time to organise your home and remove the items you no longer want or need can make your home a calmer, more inviting place to live. While decluttering may seem like a daunting task, it can be an ongoing process or a number of 'challenges.' Remove unwanted items from different areas at a time, for example a cupboard, your wardrobe or a pile of mail on your kitchen counter. You could set yourself a time limit to declutter a room or follow the 12-12-12 challenge, locating 12 items to throw away, 12 to donate and 12 to return to their rightful home.

02

Limit screen time

With so many tasks at the touch of a button, it's easy to spend too much time on your phone, computer or tablet. By limiting screen time and setting boundaries such as no screens an hour before bed or family time with no screens, you can free-up time to enjoy together, improve your sleep, productivity, mood and overall wellbeing. Screen time limits can be set up on most devices, along with other restrictions to prevent scrolling habits spiralling out of control.

03

Travel to new places

Exploring new places can broaden your horizons and provide a fresh perspective. Lonely Planet's Best in Travel Hotlist for 2025 includes destinations such as Puducherry in India, Pittsburgh, the Japanese city of Osaka, and places Toulouse in the South of France in the top spot. But visiting new places doesn't have to mean travelling abroad, this could simply be a case of visiting a city, town, landmark or national park closer to your doorstep.

04

Learn new skills

If in 2025 you are looking to learn something new, the opportunities are vast and varied. Whether this is to enhance your professional and technical skills or to learn a new language, play a musical instrument or practise a new pastime, this could give your brain the exercise it's ready for. Plus, with technological advancements in AI-powered learning platforms and virtual reality simulations, the landscape of learning new skills is more dynamic and accessible than ever before.

05

How do the recent changes to Capital Gains Tax affect your investments?

Recent changes to Capital Gains Tax (CGT) have seen both the rate of tax increase and the annual exemption reduced.

The annual exemption dropped from £12,300 to £6,000 in the 2023/24 tax year and then to £3,000 in 2024/25. This means that previously where individuals could realise gains of up to £12,300 without incurring any CGT, now only £3,000 can be realised before a liability is due.

This has been compounded by an immediate increase in the rate of Capital Gains Tax, announced in the Autumn Budget. CGT has increased from 10% for basic rate taxpayers to 18%, and from 20% to 24% for higher rate tax payers for disposals made on or after 30th October 2024.

As a result of these changes more investors will find themselves liable for CGT on gains that would have previously been exempt, and for an amount higher than they previously would have paid.

Impact on investment accounts

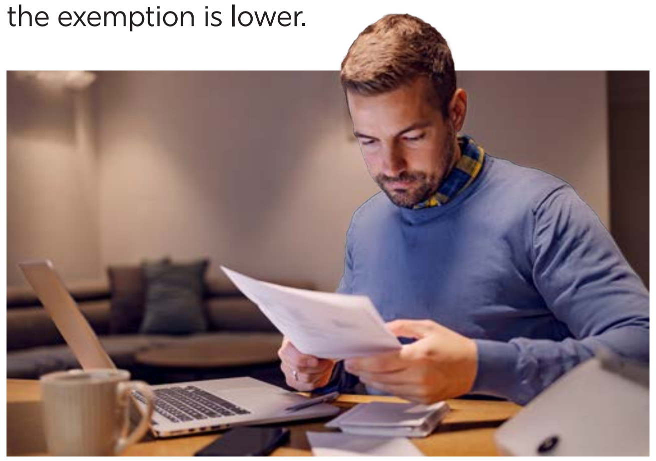
If you hold your investments in a general investment account (GIA) which has a range of singular funds, any rebalance or fund change is subject to CGT. This means that you may have to pay tax or compromise your investment choices to not pay tax. Those with an older account are likely to be impacted more due to the length of time the capital has been invested, leading to higher gains accrued over a longer period of time.

If, however, you hold your GIA investments in an OEIC (Open Ended Investment Company), the fund manager can make internal changes to the holdings without incurring CGT, so the investment decisions are not compromised by tax.

What can be done?

Investors who hold investments in this type of account need to be strategic about when and how they realise gains to minimise any tax burden. The reduction in the CGT exemption and the increase of rates makes the use of tax-efficient accounts, such as Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), onshore bonds and pensions within the given annual allowances even more critical. ISAs offer an annual allowance of £20,000, while pensions offer up to £60,000, capped at your income. Gains realised within these accounts are not subject to CGT, making them an attractive option for investors looking to shelter their investments from increasing tax liabilities. Maximising contributions to these products can help investors manage their tax liabilities more effectively.

Whilst advice to complete an annual transfer from your GIA to your ISA or pension continues to stand true, it could be that the transferable amount is now limited or completed over a longer period of time. Annual market performance has seen a dip over the last couple of years, but as we continue to a recovery, gains on holdings are increasing. Effectively, this time last year it is likely that your fund value was lower, and the CGT exemption was higher, whereas this year the value is higher, and the exemption is lower.



The reduced CGT exemption may also influence your investment decisions. You might become more cautious about realising gains, opting instead to hold onto investments for longer periods, or as a legacy investment to leave to your loved ones in the event of your death. It may, of course, be possible that some of your funds have lost value, these holdings can be sold and used to offset gains from other funds. This can be helpful and will offer slightly increased flexibility when calculating the overall gains.

Is it worth paying an increase CGT liability?

There will be times when it makes sense to realise a gain and pay the tax, but it doesn't have to be negative, as any gain is a sign the portfolio has performed well. Realising a gain will allow you to consider the possibility of a new environment, the funds may remain in a GIA, but as mentioned, other options include ISAs, pensions and onshore or offshore bonds where suitable. It may be worth considering a CGT budget, where some of the fund is sold rather than all of it.

For example, an individual has held capital in a GIA since the early 2000s, with an accrued value of £150,000. This represents the majority of their investment portfolio, and having never moved any of this money to a tax-free environment, their gains are now in the region of £60,000. Inclusive of the £3,000 CGT exemption allowance, the CGT tax bill (taxed at the higher 24% rate) will be £13,680.

In a case like this, good financial planning will always be to avoid letting the 'tax tail wag the dog' and consider moving the capital to a new environment in order to mitigate the risk of being overweight in a taxable environment. Selling the investment can allow for more effective management and increase the opportunity to meet long term goals and objectives.

Professional advice to help minimise tax liability

Given the complexities introduced by the above changes, seeking professional financial advice is more important than ever. Financial advisers can help investors navigate the new rules and optimise their tax strategies. They can also provide guidance on how to structure investments to minimise tax liabilities and take advantage of available allowances and reliefs. This means your portfolio can be proactively managed in accordance with changes to legislation.

It is also worth noting that with the lower CGT exemption, more investors will need to report their capital gains to HMRC. At Armstrong Watson, we are passionate about helping our clients with their finances, along with having a team of chartered financial advisers, we also have an inhouse tax team on hand.

If you would like advice and support on any of the topics covered, please call **0808 144 5575** or email **help@armstrongwatson.co.uk** to speak to one of our financial planning consultants.

EMMA COPLEY
FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT – CARLISLE

>futureMoney

The Trump factor:
Investing in a changing world

The return of Donald Trump to the US presidency has important implications for global financial markets. This brings expectations of stimulatory US domestic economic policy, disruption to global trade through the threat of tariffs, and potential game-changing interventions on geopolitical matters. As the US readies for a second Trump term, it is crucial to understand the current landscape and consider how the future may develop when positioning investments to mitigate risks and capitalise on opportunities.

What we know

A large part of Trump's popularity with American voters stemmed from their perception of a weak economy under Joe Biden. Inflation surged from 2021 to 2023, and while economic growth was also high, voters were more attuned to the elevated costs than to the favourable US GDP figures relative to other global regions. Trump didn't provide serious remedies to reduce inflation, yet his promise of lower taxes and reduced regulation won him support on economic grounds. Meanwhile, his 'America First' pledges on reduced immigration and increased trade tariffs were favoured for a combination of emotive societal preferences and concerns for the domestic jobs market.

Of these factors, the most important for international partners is Trump's preference for trade tariffs. He has threatened taxes of up to 20% on all imports, with this number rising to 60% for those coming from China.

In the weeks since Trump's victory, investment markets have been mixed in response. Equity markets have generally favoured the return of the president, while bonds have been less settled and the dollar has jumped in value.

What we suspect

In general, the reintroduction of tariffs is expected to be a negotiating tactic aimed at strong-arming partners into buying more US goods, rather than a purely dogmatic stance. However, the mere threat of tariffs can create market volatility and uncertainty. Additionally, inflation could return as a concern, driven by higher import prices (from tariffs) and increased consumer demand (from lower domestic taxes). Consequently, interest rates and bond yields are anticipated to stay higher than previously expected, as the Federal Reserve could be forced to maintain higher interest rates.

The US's trading partners will be braced for Trump's return, with few feeling confident they can avoid the president-elect's aggressions, but China in particular is expected to be targeted. While this will be a challenge for the country, which is already struggling with an underperforming economy, Beijing has not had its head in the sand. Since early autumn, China has been building a stimulus program, which so far has consisted of sizable monetary and fiscal policy interventions as well as reforms in the banking and property sectors. It is not done yet, however, suggesting that there is a lot more stimulus that could be launched in the coming months. With the level of US hostility not yet known, Beijing is prepared to scale its support in line with the need that may arise. As such, while China at first seems likely to struggle with the new regime, with expectations already so low, the opportunity for a positive surprise is enhanced.

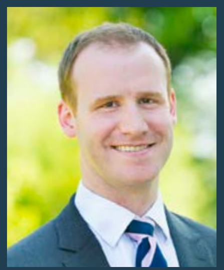
What we do

Considering these factors, we believe that volatility will be higher over the coming years. We expect that yields and interest rates will stay higher as inflation likely increases. On the one hand, economies will benefit from tax cuts and other fiscal easing in the US and China, yet on the other, tariffs will reduce global trade and higher interest rates will also be restrictive.

Against this backdrop, we favour equity markets overall but have concerns for areas with the highest valuations (such as US large-caps) and for assets with greater sensitivity to interest rates, such as long-dated bonds.

The return of Donald Trump marks a significant shift in the global political and economic landscapes. Investors must remain vigilant and adaptable, recognising the potential for increased tariffs, higher inflation, and elevated interest rates. By tactically adjusting the portfolios we manage at Future Money, we aim to navigate the changing investment environment, seizing opportunities for growth while protecting against areas of vulnerable valuations. The Trump factor, with its inherent uncertainties, underscores the importance of a diversified and active investment approach for the coming years. Opportunities will present themselves, but so too will risks.

Important Information



RICHARD COLE

FUND MANAGER
FUTURE MONEY LTD

Your stories: Heatons

A healthy attitude to financial wellbeing

Heatons is one of the largest single source business suppliers in the UK, offering a range of products and services to cater for many business needs.

Established in the Wirral in 1986 by David Heaton Fielding as Heaton Stationery Limited, the business rapidly established itself a firm foothold in the North West and has continued to expand over the years.

Now rebranded as Heatons Group, with its head office based in Merseyside and offices in Cheshire and Cumbria, the firm has more than 100 employees who work across six divisions. True to its roots, Heatons continues to supply office stationery and business supplies along with office interiors, promotional gifts, workwear and PPE, and facilities supplies as well as print and design services.

With a growing number of staff, the business recognises the importance of its employees' financial wellbeing and educating its workforce about the intricacies of their workplace pension and protection.

Focus on financial issues

Working with Armstrong Watson, Heatons has provided financial education and wellbeing webinars to its team members who are at different stages in their working lives. The first, aimed at those in their 50s and 60s, focussed on what they will need to consider approaching retirement, specifically their workplace pension - pension access, the funds they are in and using their pension going forward - as well as other issues such as Retirement Living Standards, State Pension and the impact of inflation. A second webinar, aimed at younger employees, covered a broad range of topics including pensions and consideration for increasing contributions, mortgage and income protection and savings. The webinars, which are available for all staff to access and review again, aim to educate and remind staff of issues they will need to consider now to benefit them in future.

David Heaton Fielding said: "Over the last 38 years I have seen so many staff join Heatons and mature and grow. Almost all didn't imagine that at the end of the road is retirement, but with Armstrong Watson's help we have awoken many to plan for a better-funded retirement."

Support provides greater peace of mind

Financial Planning Consultant Chelsea Whittock, who delivered the webinars, said: "Financial education and wellbeing is an extra benefit businesses can offer their staff. Pensions change so much, and the government could completely change the rules at any time. From an employer perspective, to do their part in educating their staff on any changes that are happening and how that could impact them, is really important. Providing webinars like this also gives employers peace of mind that their pension scheme is being looked after properly.

"It's always a pleasure to help a business find an appropriate workplace pension strategy, but it's even better when we can work together with their staff to deliver better outcomes for all."

Heatons also engage Armstrong Watson to look after their additional employee benefits matters, with Hayley Towlson advising on their group death in service scheme which provides employees with a remuneration package that is more than just a salary, annual leave and pension contributions.

Hayley said: "A death in service scheme provides an individual's loved ones/next of kin with a financial safety net should the worst happen, this helps financially during what is likely to be a very difficult time. The scheme is not just limited to adding benefit to Heatons' employees in the event of death, it provides additional benefits that include remote GP, Get Fit programme, Mental Health support, Financial and Legal advice, Care Concierge and even dental care. Having access to these benefits shows the investment the business has in its people and their wellbeing."

"As a business owner who doesn't want to retire or sell up, but will have to drift back within the business soon, I (and I'm sure all caring employers) don't want to think of our staff, who have helped us be successful, discovering a cliff edge when they come to retirement. Between Armstrong Watson and ourselves we do our best to help all to prepare for the future"

FEATURE ARTICLE

HEATONS

What could proposed IHT pension changes mean for you?

One of the key headlines of the Autumn Budget for financial planners and our clients was the proposed change for unused pensions to become subject to Inheritance Tax. Here, we look at how this could impact your financial planning.

Unused pensions and inheritance tax (IHT)

Firstly, it's important not to panic. The proposed legislation won't come into force until 6th April 2027, and prior to that it is subject to a consultation.

The consultation will take place in early 2025 and will allow the pensions industry (providers and advisers) to consult on the proposed changes.

Assuming these changes do go ahead, what are they?

Proposed changes to pensions and inheritance tax – summary of facts:

- The proposed legislation is aimed at those perceived to be using pensions as a 'family trust' and not a retirement vehicle
- Unused pensions will be included in the overall estate value when assessing inheritance tax liabilities
- There is an exemption between spouses and civil partners - meaning that this is pertinent to those who are single and on second death if not single
- The pension value is taken at the day before death (ruling out the use of bypass trusts) and the 'PSA' (Pension Scheme Administrator) needs to work with the 'PR' (Personal Representative) to add together the estate assets + the pension value
- The pension value includes any unused defined contribution funds irrespective of the crystallisation status, and it also includes lump sum death benefit paid from a defined benefit pension
- If the unused pension funds + the estate exceed the allowances, the inheritance tax is calculated, and the bill is then split proportionally. If the estate tax liability is £100,000 and the pension accounts for 20% of the estate assets – the PSA needs to pay £20,000 (20% of the liability) directly to HMRC

This is not simple. For anyone with more than one pension the PSAs will all need to communicate with the PR.

Those with commercial properties in a SIPP (Self-Invested Personal Pension) and/or SSAS (Small Self-Administered Scheme) will need to consider the liquidity of the scheme or the sale of assets.

It will mean a full review of 'death benefit nominations' for everyone with a pension to make sure the spousal/civil partner exemption is used.

Pensions remain a valuable retirement planning tool

Despite these potential complexities, it is important to retain context and balance. Pensions have not always been IHT free, this only came about in 2015. Many financial planners will have been through cycles like this before, and that is why both flexibility and regular reviews are important.

Pensions remain a very valuable retirement planning tool, those who aim to provide a retirement income for themselves and their spouse/civil partner are less likely to be impacted.

The pre-budget speculation centred around two main themes - tax-free cash and the removal of tax relief on contributions - neither of which materialised.

Why a pension should remain a key part of your personal financial plan

There are several tax benefits for saving into a pension and these include:

- Income tax relief on contributions for all rates of income tax
- Corporation tax relief on employer contributions
- No income tax or Capital Gains Tax (CGT) on investment assets within a pension
- 25% Lump Sum Allowance
  (in most cases, although this is complex it remains unchanged by this budget)
- On first death, can pass the pension tax-free to a spouse or civil partner

At a time when tax is high, marginal gains can make a significant difference to meeting long-term objectives. Good financial planning has always been about having a flexible plan, adapting and regular reviews. Don't make any rash decisions, speak to your financial planner and adapt your plans if required.

If you would like advice and support about any of the issues above please call **0808 144 5575** or email **help@armstrongwatson.co.uk** to speak to one of our financial planning consultants.

JUSTIN ROURKE
FINANCIAL PLANNING DIRECTOR & HEAD OF ADVICE

Meet the adviser – Robert Hoggarth

FINANCIAL PLANNING CONSULTANT - WORKINGTON

Describe a typical working day

My working day varies depending on client appointments although caffeine is always heavily involved. I recently met with a client wishing to invest a lump sum for the longer term, who had increased concerns regarding inheritance tax after changes made in the Autumn Budget that may impact the treatment of their pension. I started to formulate a plan through our discussions and agreed I would produce a report setting out my recommendations, which would include a whole of life insurance policy written into trust.

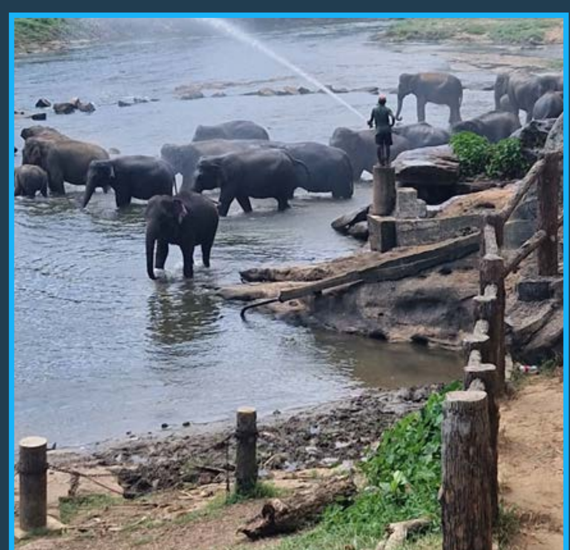
What do you enjoy most about providing financial advice?

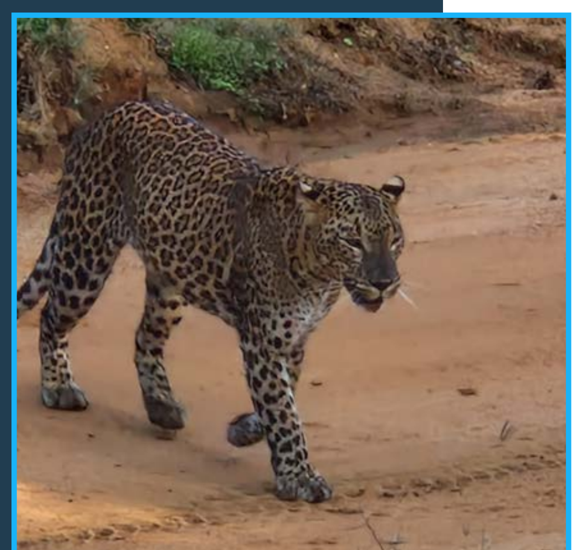
I like building client relationships to the point where they are valued friendships; being trusted to help achieve their financial goals, as well as sharing some laughs about what is going on in our lives along the way.

What's the best piece of advice anyone has ever given you?

Always carry an emergency snack.

> **I like building client relationships to the point where they are valued friendships; being trusted to help achieve their financial goals**





When you're not supporting and advising clients what do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I like to travel and I have family in Malaysia so I make regular trips there. This year we combined that with a trip to Sri Lanka. I love wildlife and found it a special place from that point of view. I went to the Elephant sanctuary and to Yala National Park safari.

I also enjoy fell walking, and I am slowly ticking off the Wainwrights in the Lake District. I took part in a charity walk for West Cumbria Hospice at Home, a cause close to my heart, and after extreme conditions stopped us completing it the first time as part of the organised event, we arranged to go back to complete it ourselves. Both walks were special for their own reasons and although I didn't feel like that after the first attempt was halted, I am definitely pleased we ended up doing both.

You're about to retire on an unlimited budget what's the first thing you'd do?

Definitely a big holiday – New York to see a Lakers-Knicks game at Maddison Square Garden (hopefully when the huge Christmas tree is up at the Rockefeller Centre) then to New Orleans for live music and a well-deserved drink, Disney and Universal Studios and Africa for a safari. There's a long list!

If there was one financial tip you could offer readers what would it be?

To make a plan to help achieve your goals and be prepared to adapt it. This should incorporate immediate, short term goals, such as building an emergency fund; medium term goals, for example buying a home; and long term goals like retirement planning. This should include a snapshot of your current position and a detailed breakdown of income and expenditure, ensuring an accurate picture is built of what is affordable at the outset.

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