

Payment Negotiation and Telephone Handling Training

Our first training session of the 2018-19 financial year saw Darren Kelk from Ascendant Solutions deliver Payment Negotiation and Telephone Handling Training to 28 delegates from across the region at the Conwy's Bodlondeb HQ.

The day proved to be a great success with a really open session involving some excellent interaction and debate between the delegates and Darren.

One delegate commented "I was engaged throughout the training session due to Darren's energy and course structure. BRILLIANT! 😊"

For a copy of the presentation slides please visit:

[http://irrvassociations.org.uk/page.php?](http://irrvassociations.org.uk/page.php?Aid=5&Waid=29&lid=1701)

[Aid=5&Waid=29&lid=1701](http://irrvassociations.org.uk/page.php?Aid=5&Waid=29&lid=1701)



Ascendant Solutions
data management

Review of the Annual Wales IRRV Conference

This years Annual Welsh IRRV Conference saw delegates and speakers return to the Hotel Metropole in Llandrindod Wells.

The Conference was opened by Louise Freeth, Senior Vice President followed by our Main Speaker Steve Thomas, WLGA who gave an interesting insight into the challenges faced by local authorities in Wales and the political changes afoot in the race to become the new First Minister.

Further sessions were delivered by:

- Claire Elliott, DWP providing an update on the latest position with DWP;
- Andrew Stevens, EK Services on nudge theory and behavioural insights;
- Daniel Pearce, Telsolutions on low cost solutions to small historic debts;
- Richard Kerr, Greenhalghs Kerr on Challenging NNDR avoidance;
- Tim Turner, 2040 Training on GDPR Demystified;
- Mark Davies, 7 Futures on Building Personal Resilience.



Carwyn Jones, North and Mid Wales IRRV Association President commented "It has been a privilege to be part of conference this year as president and see so many colleagues from across the region attend. Once again the conference was a huge success with very informative speakers giving an update on a variety of topics, a big thank you to everyone behind the scenes for all their hard work in making this event happen."

All copies of the presentation slides from the Conference can be found here
<http://irrvassociations.org.uk/page.php?Aid=5&Waid=29&lid=1710>.

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Removing Imprisonment for Non-Payment of Council Tax!!!!

On Monday 11th June Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford has launched proposals to abolish imprisonment as a punishment for non payment of council tax in Wales.

His view is that.... "The sanction of imprisonment is an outdated and disproportionate response to a civil debt issue." The full news article can be found at: <https://gov.wales/newsroom/finance1/2018/180611-finance-secretary-launches-plan-to-end-prison-for-non-payment-of-council-tax/?lang=en>

The consultation document consists of 2 Questions.....

- 1) Do you agree that the sanction of imprisonment for non-payment of council tax should be removed?

YES / NO Please provide supporting comments.



- 2) Do you have any other comments regarding this consultation?

As many of you working in Council Tax departments across the region will know this is often the very last resort when all other attempts have failed and just the threat of committal action can often result in a positive result in terms of collection or debtor engagement.

So make sure you have your say on the consultation—**closing date 3rd September 2018.**

Consultation Document:

<https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-06/180611-removal-of-sanction-of-imprisonment-non-payment-council-tax.pdf>

21ST ANNUAL NORTH & MID WALES IRRV GOLF EVENT - MAESDU GOLF CLUB

This years golf event was held at the wonderful Maesdu Golf club in Llandudno on a glorious Friday in early July with 24 players in attendance from across the region.

With some good and some not so good scores on the day the eventual winner was Mike Roberts from the DWP and formerly of Conwy CBC who takes the trophy back home until next years event (venue to be confirmed).

The Association would like to thank Excel for their continued support of this annual event, which continues to be a great success.



If you have any suggestions for future meetings; have an event/best practice you want to share or would like to contribute to future editions please contact:

Richard Mallon, Education Officer email: rm@jacobsenforcement.com

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Introducing A New Approach To Tackling Business Rates Avoidance

HUB a new business ratepayer data pooling solution, launched by Destin Solutions is currently generating a lot of interest amongst English Authorities. With a significant number of Councils already signed up to use this solution and reports of significant returns on investment, this article explores how it can help Welsh Authorities proactively tackle rates avoidance.

With Non-domestic rates generating annual revenues of £1 billion in Wales and a new policy report released by [Wales Public Services](#) considering local retention of business rates, the need to understand more about your business ratepayers has never been greater.

A holistic view of your ratepayer case load

With more detailed insights about your ratepayers comes the ability to more easily track, report on and maximise your recovery of business rates whilst tackling issues around avoidance. English Authorities are already starting to embrace a new technology-based approach with many now investing in HUB. HUB is a business rate payer data pooling solution providing Councils with the tools they need to obtain information on their ratepayers whilst gaining a holistic overview of their caseload. It effectively consolidates Authorities' business ratepayer data into one single portal, tracking the activities of businesses across multiple regions and publishing their trading location, rateable value and more.

Matching multiple datasets against business ratepayer data

It has been a highly effective tool in tackling small business rates relief (SBRR) fraud in England thanks to its superior data matching capabilities but the development team have recognised the wider applications HUB can offer. In the latest release, new functionality has been incorporated so that Councils can match their business ratepayer data with other datasets, such as Companies House. This is proving invaluable by enabling Councils to identify companies that have been dissolved but which are in fact still liable for rates and in some cases are still in receipt of SBRR. It is also helping to identify local companies that may require further investigation where there is no record of them listed with Companies House.

Further development is underway to incorporate datasets from the Charity Commission and HMRC Community Amateur Sports Club records. The ability to match against these data sets and in particular Charity information means you can confirm that these ratepayers are still registered as charities and entitled to receive the rate relief they are currently allocated. In the case of Companies House data, when cross referenced against your own business rates data you can identify any ratepayers who have been struck off or liquidated. In this instance you are then in a position to cancel any entitlement to relief and identify the correct liable party.

Keep on top of your ratepayer register

Having an up to date and accurate ratepayer register is crucial in cases where recovery action is required. HUB can help Authorities identify any local companies that are not registered with Companies House. A report can be created proactively flagging these companies so that Councils can then look into these accounts in more detail and issue bills to the correct ratepayer. In most cases it may be that the company name simply needs amending, but in some instances the council may have an incorrect ratepayer register which could cause issues with recovery. In addition to using these data matches as a means for cleansing your ratepayer data, these matches and reports are typically refreshed on a regular basis ensuring that you can validate the ongoing accuracy of your register.

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More easily identify ratepayer avoiders

According to the [Welsh Government Consultation paper](#) on tackling rates avoidance released earlier this year, Welsh Local Authorities identified known and suspected cases of avoidance and estimated the value of these to be between 1% and 2% equating to £10 million to £20 million annually. This is not an insignificant sum and within the paper, it was felt that this did not reflect the full scale of avoidance and was merely the 'tip of the iceberg'.

The HUB development team are in the process of creating an avoidance register which will match ratepayers in one area with ratepayers in another area where they have been registered as being potential rate avoiders. Councils will be able to use a search facility to see if a ratepayer has been registered elsewhere in the country as a potential avoider and is worth a more detailed look. Similarly, if a potential avoider is set up and added as a new ratepayer, the council will be proactively notified by HUB that they may want to look into that ratepayer to determine whether they are avoiding payment of rates. The creation of the avoidance register will provide Authorities with more information and the power to challenge avoidance activity more effectively.

Verify your reliefs and exemptions

HUB ultimately focuses on helping you get the most out of your existing data whilst supplementing it with other datasets. It helps Authorities improve collections activity and proactively tackle rates avoidance by empowering people to act based on accurate and up-to-date information. It also provides a full audit trail, tracking the status of your ratepayers and helps verify the validity of any reliefs or exemptions.



Excel: IRRV Finalists In Two Categories

Excel Civil Enforcement is delighted to have been shortlisted for two IRRV awards, the first for 'Excellence in Staff Development' and the second being for 'Excellence in Enforcement'.

Staff development is a priority for us and we continue to strive to build the skills and knowledge within Excel, so our staff develop, learn and exceed expectations. Our people are fundamental to the success of our organisation and being a finalist in this category is something we are incredibly proud of.

We have also been shortlisted in the 'Excellence in Enforcement Category' this again is an award that highlights the work we do and the goals we have as an organisation. We strive to go above and beyond for our clients, offering the latest in technological advancements, providing a flexible approach to enforcement and above all else ensuring complete transparency between ourselves, the client and the debtor through our sophisticated clientweb, live webchat and live streaming body cameras.

The IRRV Performance Awards Gala Dinner takes place on 10th October in Telford, we look forward to seeing you there!



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