

Caroline Keenan

The newly appointed Honorary Consul for New Zealand

Tell us a little about yourself

With dual citizenship of the UK and New Zealand, I was delighted to be appointed Honorary Consul for New Zealand in September 2023, and I am very much looking forward to fulfilling this role.

Following qualification as a Chartered Accountant with PricewaterhouseCoopers (now PwC) in London and Birmingham, I had the pleasure of embarking on a two year secondment to the Auckland, New Zealand office. The two years turned into four years, and in fact I likely would still be there if it was not for family illness reasons that I returned to Northern Ireland over twenty five years ago! The intention was to return to NZ at the first opportunity, but with three children later I am still here!



The day job is Head of Tax at ASM Chartered Accountants, specialising in advising a range of family and owner-managed businesses across a number of sectors, but also heavily involved in advising several Foreign Direct Investment Companies setting up here, and in assisting innovative companies in availing of invaluable Research & Development Tax Reliefs. Outside of the firm I hold Board appointments at The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales ("ICAEW"), The Friends of the Cancer Centre, the Aerospace, Defence, Security and Space Group NI ("ADS NI Group"), and the NI Polymer Association. Additionally, I am regularly called upon by the media to commentate on taxation matters.....so never a dull moment!

Experience of living in New Zealand

Living in NZ from 1994 to 1998 was a tremendously enriching experience, both career wise and personally. As a recently married couple moving to NZ, with no family in the country, we found the Kiwis extremely welcoming and very hospitable. In no time at all we were included in a number of social groups, taking up many new hobbies (sailing, skiing, hiking, travelling, vineyard visits, but definitely no bungy jumps...!), and hosted many BBQs and get togethers in our lovely new build timber-frame home overlooking Rangitoto Island, a dormant volcanic cone island in the Hauraki Gulf. We escaped to explore the many stunning attractions at numerous locations in the North and South Islands at every opportunity. There were so many highlights, but our particular favourites were the Bay of Islands, Hawkes Bay, Abel Tasman National Park, Queenstown, Wanaka, I could go on.....now I am feeling homesick for NZ! We were extremely fortunate to have visited and hiked on White Island, so it was with great sadness that I learnt of the eruption in December 2019. For anyone that has not visited New Zealand, I cannot recommend it enough!

Plans in the new role

Despite being back in NI for many years, I have maintained a great number of connections back to NZ and to date in my new appointment I have been very keen to identify further opportunities for NI and NZ to work together. We share a great number of similarities, and there is already tremendous goodwill existing between our communities which we will be able to build upon further. That entrepreneurial can do attitude goes a long way!