



Welcome

Dear new colleague,

I am delighted to hear that you will be joining us as part of the transfer of 7 Carrick travel branches to our Co-operative family.

I know from our own operations how difficult this year has been for the travel industry and all of those working within it and I am sure much of your focus has been on assisting your clients to rebook or cancel trips which you had worked hard to organise for them. There is a great deal of uncertainty over what the immediate future holds for all of us and this is causing many organisations to rethink or abandon plans until some sort of normality is resumed.

Therefore, in welcoming you to our organisation, I also want to reassure you of our commitment to our travel operations which we view as an essential part of our longer-term plans. It is fair to say that the months ahead will continue to be a challenge and we are having to make our own difficult choices to maintain and protect our operations. We are however committed to the longer term and our plans remain firm. We are an organisation owned by over 700,000 members who are in the main our customers. Our purpose is to help them make their day to day lives less complicated and more rewarding. They are increasingly trusting us to do this over a wider portfolio of services which in addition to travel now includes food retail, pharmacy, funeral services, childcare nurseries, energy, and telecoms. Key to the trust our members place in us is the incredible service provided by our 8,500 colleagues. We recognise that without great people working across our businesses we wouldn't be able to deliver on our promises to our members.

That's why I am so pleased to now have you on board. I am aware of the quality of service afforded by Carrick travel over the last 46 years, most notably recognised by having won the Travel Weekly UK Small Agency Achievement Award for Central England for the last four years. I am also aware that the goodwill with your clients that exists within the business, has been built over time by your endeavours and our aim is to provide the support which will allow you to continue this great commitment to deliver exceptional service. We also recognise that larger organisations like ours, can often learn a lot from smaller companies which specialise in specific areas and where they make their clients central to everything they do.

We are investing in new technologies and digital innovations to broaden our approach and provide our members with new ways of accessing our services. And yet whilst a growing number of people want to use online channels to shop and book holidays, we are conscious that a large number also enjoy the benefits of human interaction and the wealth of knowledge and assurance gained by visiting a travel agent in branch. That's why we are continuing to invest in our branch network having already added 16 new branches this year. Further to this, we are developing exciting plans for new formats which will truly showcase the quality of Co-op Travel and its unique approach to meeting our members' needs from 2021 and beyond.

I am sure you will appreciate that this will not have been an easy decision for Tina and Tracey. I would assure you that throughout our conversations, they placed the commitment to you at the forefront of matters agreed. We are extremely grateful for the way in which they have maintained the business for the benefit of you and your clients through difficult times and we have given them our assurance that we will continue to build upon the good name of Carrick travel by providing support and assistance to you and your branch operations.

You are joining a brilliant travel team whose dedication to their clients and support for each other never ceases to amaze me. I know that Rad and the team will give you a warm co-operative welcome as will the wider Midcounties Co-operative community. I hope you will feel at home with us straight away and that you will enjoy the wider benefits available throughout the organisation.

I very much look forward to meeting you in person at some point in the future, but in the meantime if you want to share your thoughts, I publish a blog each week on 'Colleagues Connect' which is your dedicated colleague website and where you can post comments and questions.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Ponsonby', with a horizontal line underneath.

Phil Ponsonby
Group Chief Executive