

## Michelle Haywood



**Please give details of all diving industry related interests, whether remunerated or not, and any other potential conflicts of interest**

Director of Irish Sea Diving and Marine Services Ltd. Currently non-remunerated. The company owns and runs Discover Diving dive centre which provides training, dive charters, equipment sales and repair in the Isle of Man.

Diving Officer of Discover Diving special branch of BSAC B2348. Non-remunerated. Minister for Department of Infrastructure, Isle of Man Government. Appointed Nov 2024. Remunerated.

**What do you think are the key challenges facing BSAC, and what should we be doing to address them?**

BSAC faces several challenges to adapt to modern recreational trends. Just as we see the world of work changing so that a job-for-life is becoming rarer, we see the next generation having a portfolio of skills and hobbies, such that they don't commit to any single pastime for too long. Younger divers prefer flexible experiences and travel-related diving, so persuading them to have an extended engagement in any sport is a real challenge. This can be helped by offering flexible membership models, and perhaps by developing an approach that continues to remind young divers of how much they love the sport, and offer that they are always welcome to come back to BSAC.

Our clubs mirror the national demographic challenges. As the baby boomer generation that established many of our branches retires from diving they leave a smaller cohort of Gen X to carry on with the hope of inspiring an even smaller cohort of Millennials and Gen Z to get involved, and stay involved. BSAC needs to continue to promote the benefits of club diving, the supportive community and the ongoing training that clubs can provide to all divers.

Global events which caused increases in the cost of living, inflation and high rent and mortgages have reduced the leisure spend for many people. Lifestyles are often more pressured, with limited time and resource to support a hobby such as

diving. Budget friendly starter kits for new members, including discounted gear and training would perhaps remove the huge financial hurdle to get involved. Perhaps developing a relationship with BSAC Centres as trusted industry partners to refurb and service second hand kit and provide some quality assurance would help those starting out in the sport?

BSAC needs to recognise the generational differences in communication styles; whereas Gen X prefer Facebook, Gen Z has moved on to Instagram and TikTok, but they are a very discerning demographic who expect high quality images and production value. You don't need to show young faces, but you do need to show exciting dive opportunities and how BSAC can help divers to achieve amazing things. This is the generation who experience high quality media but they will respond to great visuals and messages if we can get short form engaging content to inspire them with an call to arms.

### **Please describe how you would contribute to any / all of these areas**

I have run a commercial dive centre since 2004 delivering BSAC, PADI and TDI training courses. I have significant experience of building a business brand dedicated to quality training and support, which aims to foster positive relationships between divers. We provide great opportunities to regularly dive and snorkel at every level, and also offer charter trips. I am a qualified cylinder test technician and life jacket service technician alongside being a BSAC National Instructor and commercial skipper. I understand every facet of running a dive centre and appreciate the commercial decisions being made by business owners and charter skippers.

In 2021 I was elected to serve in the Isle of Man Parliament, Tynwald. As a national politician I have represented my country in trips to other Commonwealth countries, and hosted visiting delegates to the Island. These trips often being involved in cross-jurisdictional discussions where understanding our differences and finding common ground are essential goals. As a Parliamentarian I obviously have experience in reading, writing and amending legislation and regulations. Every working day involves me managing communications either within government departments or to the general public (or specific sectors of the public). Much of my work involves consideration of how comms will be received and whether they suit the needs of the audience and are presented in language that is clear and unambiguous. I spent 10 years as a columnist for Scuba magazine.

Governments work extensively to balance sources of income against expenditure on services. I apply the sound economic principles I learned in running my own successful business to managing department and project budgets. I believe that I could apply my suite of skills to help support and develop BSAC to face the future challenges.

### **Personal statement**

It's nearly 30 years since I first tried scuba diving and, after a slightly shaky start, I joined BSAC in 1996 and I've never looked back. I wish in those early days I had signed up for one of the lifetime membership deals, but I don't think I believed I'd still be involved in diving after all this time! My passion for diving and snorkelling is greater than ever.

I am by nature a problem solver who is happy finding creative, novel routes to reach strategic goals. Years ago I learned that one of the biggest drivers that causes divers to leave the sport is feeling unsafe, and I have made it a personal mission of mine to always ensure that any training or diving I am involved with is conducted in a safe and controlled way. One of my earlier roles with BSAC, was as an advocate for the Sports England Clubmark scheme which encouraged the development of youth participation and I am a firm believer that diving and snorkelling should be inclusive activities.

Within BSAC I have previously spent a decade or so organising the Dive Officers Conference, which later became the Diving Conference. I was one of the speakers at this year's Conference where I presented the story of the Mona's Queen, an Isle of Man vessel lost in the Dunkirk evacuation. I am also immensely proud to have won the Wilkinson Sword this year for my performance during my BSAC National Exam. I have a very strong drive to contribute to the communities that I belong to, whether that's supporting my constituents in the Isle of Man, or supporting the dive community within my club or at national level by joining BSAC Council. I bring with me a wide range of technical and professional skills, and would be happy to accept the responsibility of being on Council. I'm a believer in the mantra that we should be the change we want to see, so that if I think I can make things better I will step up to contribute. Every volunteer led entity depends on members to donate their time and knowledge to support the continued survival of the organisation. I am happy to offer to contribute my time to Council.