

Linda Ritson



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

None

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

The core issue for BSAC for me is sustainability, how to retain existing members and attract new ones. The introduction of the EDI policy is a positive start, but we need to build on that to ensure BSAC embraces the full diversity of the UK population. Further, I believe the idea of inclusion needs to be broadened to extend beyond the borders of the UK, recognising that there are BSAC clubs further afield. These clubs need to feel part of the core BSAC club structure and their cultures and processes shared to the benefit of all members. In addition, I believe that EDI also means enabling the voice of members feeling marginalised within their own clubs. Although clubs should have a clear process to address internal issues, there are occasions where matters cannot be settled in branch and there should be a robust process within BSAC for these to be resolved through mediation or direction. The core of my doctoral thesis was how to educate people outside traditional settings and having spent many years working with young people in informal learning, I am keen to promote the concept of diving for all and ensure accessibility. There can be a perception that scuba diving is expensive, beyond the means of most. Changing this and encouraging new members is important in building the future of BSAC and reducing the average age of the membership. In the current economic climate, it is essential that existing members feel they experience best value from their membership and want to remain part of the larger club. For the majority of members BSAC HQ and Council are distant entities, unrelated to them as individuals and their club. I want to change that. I want the voice of members to be heard clearly and be apparent in the work of Council. I

would like to see the club support aspect of the regional coaches and teams be strengthened so that the regions become more engaged with their branches, can better support them and foster the understanding that all clubs exist under the umbrella of the bigger parent club of BSAC. I would like to see the regional teams strengthened, with an improved recruitment process that enables individual and club development, alongside regional sustainability.

The unique selling point of BSAC is its club structure and I feel it is essential to recognise that, embrace it and build on it.

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

I believe that this list of areas of desirable knowledge, skills and experience are all contained within my professional training and experience to date, where I have a proven ability to move ideas through viability testing, planning, piloting and implementation to evaluation and evidence-based proven practice.

My current professional role is in Quality Assurance and Service Improvement in Children's Services. The environment is one of constant change and therefore organisational transformation is a continual part of my role, which is to support, enable and empower frontline operational teams to deliver effective support to children, young people, families and carers. My job is to plan & organise a broad range of quality assurance and improvement projects, both qualitative and quantitative, working with local authority leaders to drive improvement forward and support operational workers. My skills and experience therefore include business development, analysis, risk management and policy development.

Prior to entering the public sector, I worked as a qualified management accountant and therefore have substantial experience of budget management and financial reporting.

Through professional reporting to managers and elected members, and having previously also worked in youth services, I have skills in communication, report writing and presentation. My experiences as an Advanced Instructor have enabled me to enhance my skills in supporting and developing a broad range of types and abilities of people.

Personal statement

On a personal level, I am a first-class diver, advanced instructor and instructor trainer, with tri-mix, rebreather and accelerated decompression qualifications. I have been diving since 1997, having always been a member of East Midlands Sub-Aqua Club and having held every club management post on the committee at least once! I have dived in various locations around the world, but still find UK diving to be some of the most challenging and interesting available.

As a former East Midlands regional coach and as a member of the regional team, I enjoy meeting and supporting the broad range of people I encounter, something

that continues through the instructor training scheme. I respect and admire the dedication, passion and commitment of the many volunteer members, without whom BSAC could not function.

The past few years have been life changing for so many people, and the future looks likely to be no less challenging. By being a part of Council I can help to support members as they look to return to diving fully and resuming their diving journey. I believe that the club structure is the core of BSAC's success and should be recognised as the greatest strength for the future. The club structure offers more than training and diving opportunities, but a social community that provides vital emotional and psychological wellbeing, communal fitness incentivising, mutual support and shared broader hobbies and interests, along with lifelong friendships and support networks being created. It is this community that distinguishes BSAC from other diving agencies and is the foundation that I believe should be strengthened and promoted to ensure the sustainability of BSAC into the future.

There are many small clubs that survive in isolation, and I am a strong believer that there should be a drive to develop a hierarchy that allows these clubs to come together as and when necessary, within the regional network so that they can support one another, and, alongside the regional teams, encourage members to achieve their diving potential.