

## Pete Bicheno



**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?**

After thriving for 70 years we are shrinking. It is not just us; most diving organisations worldwide are shrinking. Yet other watersports are growing. Why? What makes diving less attractive?

We suffer from an imbalance between our branch system and our commercial arm. In many ways they are complimentary but in others they compete. Some see the answer in the commercial side as they feel the branches are shrinking while others see the commercial side impinging on branch strength. We need to resolve this. We have a falling membership. Experienced members are the backbone of the club, but aging so we have a changing demographic. Disposable income has other calls on what is a limited resource. Remember also that diving is a time stealer as we all know. PADI have turned diving into a bucket list tick box taking place in warm waters, taking the younger recruits we would have found in the past. To the public they appear to provide better opportunities or even the only ones.

BUT – interest in getting into UK cold water has risen rapidly in the last five years. After swimming, snorkeling is the next logical step. We should be aggressively targeting this market to expand our branches. Why aren't we?

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

A list of business skills are listed in the guidance for this section suggesting these are needed on council. Perhaps, though I thought we employed professionals for many of them. We also seem to have recruited many of these skills already in past

elections. Instead I find the skills missing interesting. Ideas; Innovation; Change Management; Franchise operations (yes we seem to be involved in one in Egypt); Conflict Resolution; oh yes, Diving for fun. Yet I feel these are the ones we need at the moment if we are to survive.

I've run my own business, run multi-million pound projects spanning countries around the world and managed teams of up to 50 people again scattered around the world. I've assisted in setting up a franchise in China, built workflow systems, designed and run online and in-person courses for large companies and been the ideas man behind many projects. So perhaps I have some useful skills we seem to be missing.

### **Personal statement**

BSAC is going through a traumatic period. As Instructor Training Group Lead and a member of the National Diving Council I've seen much of this close up. Plus as I've been part of BSAC for over 40 years I have a good idea of the history.

I joined BSAC in 1980, became a First Class Diver in 1985, an Instructor Trainer, teaching Instructors, in 1986 and a National Instructor in 1990. I'm still actively diving in Scotland and instruct with Stirling University Sub-Aqua Club teaching students to be good divers. I still teach on Instructor events at all levels, and I still love it all. BSAC has given me a lot; lifelong friendships and skills I've found invaluable in diving but also in my career. I've given a lot back but I've got more to give.

So what do I think is important to do within BSAC now and how can I help? Our training is still some of the best in the world, but we need to keep in front of changes and ensure anything we bring in is safe, robust and required. Our Advanced Diver level has lost much of its relevance, so we need to address that to make it something divers want to do. We use less RHIBs nowadays so is there something we need to do there to revitalise, what I feel, is one of the best ways of diving? I've encouraged our Chief Examiners to look at how we update and improve our relevance to instructors and how our instructor levels and instructor training better fit today's divers. Diving for All is changing and needs to be expanded to get all our instructors able to teach anyone who wants to, and is able to, learn to dive. Plus we need to look at bringing more things out to the branches to increase participation.

Snorkeling was a big part of branches when I started diving. Now it seems to be lost. We need to revive it as a members pursuit and use it as a means to recruit more members. Many people are now wild water swimming. Snorkeling is the next step. Lets embrace them and make them part of our organisation.

My experience and my openness to change and discussion will make me a good NDO. I think I can do a good job. I hope you do too.