

Thrings meets...

Pete Bradshaw, CEO of Premier Marinas



Established in 1994, Premier Marinas owns and operates nine marinas along the South Coast, including Southsea, Port Solent, Gosport and Swanwick. CEO Pete Bradshaw talks to Thrings partner Mary Chant about the changing face of marinas and boatyard storage facilities.

Have you always worked in the marina industry?

It's fair to say my career took a number of interesting turns before I ended up in the marina industry. I'm actually a qualified chartered accountant, who in 2000 left the world of corporate finance for the travel industry. As a result of a couple of key contacts I developed at the travel operators where I worked, I found my way into the marina industry. If I'm being honest, it wasn't one I had ever thought about joining, but I soon realised it was going to offer me a fascinating and fulfilling career.

You must have seen the industry change over the years?

When I joined Premier Marinas in 2006 there were more boats than there were marina berths, but people's ability to keep expensive boats changed after the financial crisis in 2008. We have therefore worked hard to add value to our facilities to meet customers' higher expectations. We're also seeing generational

differences coming through: millennials tend to hunt for experiences rather than own assets, and we've adapted our business model to reflect the way people go boating. The rise in popularity of stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking are creating interesting opportunities for us.

Do you offer more than berthing?

We are increasingly moving into complementary businesses across our nine sites and are broadening the leisure facilities we offer. We recently secured planning consent for the multi-million-pound redevelopment of a new site on the River Dart, which, in time, will include a boatyard, commercial units, a hotel and more than 100 residential units. We've started a short break holiday business at our Chichester marina, provide self storage facilities at a number of our sites, and are looking to grow the food and drink provision side of our business.

Is marina security a big issue?

Security continues to be an important part of what we offer. Boat owners want reassurance that their prized assets are being kept safe in their absence, particularly if they've invested a lot of time and money in them. We see security as an essential part of the service we provide. If people feel security is lacking, they will let us know.

What is your proudest achievement at Premier Marinas?

Our teams. We secured our Investors in People Gold accreditation last year, which we are extremely proud about. You can have fantastic sites and great assets, but without good people it won't work. We have 200 staff who are all focused on maintaining a strong people culture as well as employing good health and safety habits. We also take on seasonal staff, who by working alongside our full-time employees are able to understand exactly what Premier Marinas stands for.

How would you describe your relationship with Hampshire?

I was born in Zimbabwe and returned to the UK with my family in 1973. Initially we lived in a room above my grandmother's house in Ringwood, moving to Romsey soon after that. I am very attached to Hampshire, although I have spent time in other parts of the UK. After I left university I was involved in fish farming and spent time building a salmon hatchery in the Outer Hebrides. It could all have been so different! ♦

