THE CHANGING FACE OF MARINAS

Keeping a sailing yacht or motorboat in a marina along the coast is often the preferred choice as it offers a gateway to many great cruising destinations, both near and far. But many coastal areas are exposed to the elements, with marinas and yacht harbours often bearing the brunt of adverse weather. We talk to Inland and Coastal Marina Systems about how it is possible for marinas to be a place of calm during the storm.

The concrete breakwaters are built following detailed analysis of each site

Boating is a passion. A yacht or motorboat facilitates that passion. Ask any boat owner about the decision regarding where to berth their boat and they will tell you it is not based on cost alone; many factors are taken into account including safety, security and a good night's sleep.

Safety and security encompass more than just anti-theft solutions and good lighting. Good protection from the elements, offered by the marina's pontoons and infrastructure, needs to be considered too. The choice of floating pontoon can substantially affect the safety and security of a vessel, protecting it not just from human intervention, but from the wrath of nature and wash from passing craft.

More boats, more berths

Over the last couple of years boating has boomed, increasing the demand for quality berthing across the UK and Ireland. With many marinas and harbours already tight for space, there has been expansion at existing sites and development at new locations, leading to pontoons and moorings positioned where it was not thought possible before due to the exposed nature of the area.

New berthing provision in these exposed environments has been made possible thanks, for example, to Inland and Coastal Marina Systems' state-of-the-art floating concrete breakwaters and heavier Glass Fibre Reinforced Concrete or GRP decked units, which reduce the wave climate to provide safe, comfortable berthing.

"Combining high strength and flexibility, our floating concrete breakwaters are an ideal option for marina and harbour operators where a fixed breakwater is not feasible," said Oliver Shortall, MD at Inland and Coastal.

"They are specifically designed to reduce waves to a level where sheltered berthing, either moorings in a harbour or pontoon berthing in a marina, can be provided. All our concrete breakwaters are built in-house to ensure they can withstand the severe environments in which they often function, with particular attention paid to the lifespan of the units.

"Following a detailed analysis of the site, each breakwater unit is built in accordance with exposure classifications and only high-quality materials are used to ensure its longevity."

Bigger boats, bigger berths

Not only are boats generally getting bigger and more voluminous, many marinas and harbours now cater for both recreational and commercial craft. Larger vessels and heavier displacement commercial vessels require larger, more robust berthing solutions, especially in exposed conditions.

"Our floating concrete breakwaters are ideal for use as a berthing facility for larger boats, such as superyachts and work boats, boats which would prefer to operate from a marina, but might previously have had to tie up in a commercial facility due to their size and displacement," continued Oliver.

"As we oversee the design process, we are also able to vary the freeboard height of the breakwaters. This can be anything between 500mm and 1,000mm, matching the increasing freeboard heights we are seeing on boats as they get bigger, making it a more comfortable experience for anyone using the berths."

Harbour protection, tourist attraction

It is easy to see how these breakwater units act as both exposure protection and berthing for larger vessels, but in Port Phillip Bay in Victoria, Australia, the inner harbour's floating concrete wave attenuator also doubles up as a tourist attraction.

ABOVE: The 600m Acres Lake Boardwalk is Ireland's first floating boardwalk
BELOW: Ireland's Crosshaven Marina is just one marina to have benefitted from the breakwater units

Oliver explained: "The site is exposed to a high wave climate which required 6m wide breakwaters to offer the stability and protection needed. It is the longest breakwater we have manufactured to date at 426.5m and comprises 23 of our concrete units.

"Known as the Wangim Walk, our breakwater forms one of Australia's longest on-water walkways, providing a safe harbour for the Royal Geelong Yacht Club as well as a tourist attraction, allowing visitors to literally 'walk on water' with the hope that it will help drive economic recovery for the area post Covid."

For a marina or harbour to ensure it is offering the ultimate in safety and security for the vessels in its care, it must look beyond CCTV and evaluate the options for greater exposure protection – it might just find that investment in a more robust berthing solution may open the doors to previously untapped revenue sources and income streams too.

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