My Summer Placement at the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS): Rachel Brown 2006/07

I found my summer placement after doing a bit of searching for marine research institutions in the UK. I contacted a few people and heard back from Mike Burrows at SAMS quite quickly, that there had been a proposal for a Coastal and Marine National Park (CMNP) in their area and he wanted to know if I was interested in this. Of course this was exactly what I wanted to be involved in and so I was put in touch with Tavis Potts, whose field of study involves marine policy and social science. I arrived in Oban on the west coast of Scotland to find that plans for the Marine Park had been shelved by the Scottish Executive for the foreseeable future. Hence the first job in my placement was to write a new research proposal!

I was very busy the whole time I worked at SAMS. In addition to carrying out my own research, I also assisted various staff with their work. I helped design a marine protected area assessment for undergraduate students at SAMS and researched the various ways that stakeholders have been consulted about marine protected areas around the world for another colleague’s work. The main part of my own project was to design and conduct a survey of tourist opinions about a Marine Park in Oban. This involved standing outside the local tourist information office and stopping people as they walked past to answer my questionnaire. I got some really interesting results and intend to write them up into a paper.

My experience at SAMS taught me a lot of things: how to juggle several small projects; how to manage my time; how to work as part of a team; and most importantly, I learnt how researchers who don’t work in academia operate on a daily basis. Although at times my placement was tough, I very much enjoyed it and think that it was a very valuable part of the course. It has allowed me to make contacts for the future and made me realise that marine environmental management is definitely the field I want to work in.
The view from my office at SAMS towards Connel