

Research Experience Placement (REP) Scheme

Project Title:

Marine Restoration Enhancement Internship

Project Supervisors:

Professor William Sanderson

Host Organization and Department (if applicable):
--

Heriot-Watt University, Institute of Life and Earth Sciences
--

Project Description:

<p>A collaboration with Heriot-Watt University, Glenmorangie and the Marine Conservation Society, the Dornoch Environmental Enhancement Project (DEEP) is a pioneering marine restoration initiative focused on reviving the Dornoch Firth's native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>) population. DEEP aims to restore lost oyster reefs, enhancing biodiversity and improving water quality. DEEP supports marine life while naturally reducing organic waste from whisky production. Since its launch in 2017, over 125,000 oysters have been reintroduced, with ambitions to establish a self-sustaining reef of 4 million over 40 hectares. This project sets a model for nature-based solutions and sustainable marine restoration, balancing ecological recovery with business. During the summer season, the REP intern will gain valuable hands-on experience as the project prioritizes fieldwork in Dornoch and Loch Ryan.</p>
--

Skills and Career-Development Opportunities:

<p>Skills and experience actively participating in the planning and execution of advanced scientific data collection and diving operations. • In situ advanced scientific survey skills • Boat handling and diver coxswain skills Following fieldwork, the intern will also develop on-the-job skill contributing to: • Data management and handling, archiving • Data analysis, and research skills towards the publication process • Summarising, presenting and discussing data</p>
--

Wider context of research:

<p>This immersive experience provides a comprehensive understanding of marine restoration and monitoring efforts, combining practical fieldwork with scientific analysis, including taking ownership of specific datasets.</p>
--

Project Timeframe:

<p>July 2026: Working with the team in Loch Ryan and in Dornoch Field survey logistics, before and after. August 2026: engaging with biosecurity planning and implementation. Data management and analytical development throughout.</p>
--