



A YOUNG Oban entrepreneur has had a successful six months by offering a unique service to boat owners in Argyll.

Twenty-five-year-old Michael Forbes, from Oban, had his first taste of being self-employed last year when he set up Forbes Boat Care.

Michael, a University of Strathclyde graduate in Manufacturing Engineering and Management, returned to the west of Scotland, after eight months of travelling around the world, with the intention of finding work.

But after being unable to find a suitable job, it was time for Michael to take matters into his own hands.

'I had quite a bit of experience around boats - since I was 15 I had been around Dunstaffnage Marina and the Marine Resource Centre (MRC) at Barcaldine,' said Michael, 'so it seemed a good idea to form a boat care business.'

With the help of the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust, Forbes Boat Care was launched in July 2005 and Michael was officially pioneering in the boat 'babysitting' business.

Regional PSYBT manager for Argyll and the Islands Arthur Barclay aided Michael through the initiation of the business.

'The PSYBT gave Michael money to set up the business, and provided support with advice on book keeping and his business plan,' he said.

'But with him being such a smart young man, he didn't really require that much help from me!'

Michael will be able to use the PSYBT's 'after care' service where for the next two years he will be visited by an after-care adviser to discuss how the business is going.

Michael's service is one that can only be described a boat owner's dream; it includes looking after boats while owners are away, with regular turning over of engines, checking boats are moored securely, and preparing the boat with the likes of maintenance and provisions before the owner's arrival.

Care packages will be made up specifically to suit the needs required by each boat.

'Before a customer signs on to a care package, I will go and take a look around the boat and talk their package through with them,' explained Michael. 'There are different circumstances for each boat, and each person will have a different budget.'

'In 2006 I want to get on top of the paperwork, have one other member of staff and have built up a decent sized customer base,' he said.