Nick Woolgrove joins River Action

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We are delighted to welcome Nick Woolgrove as our new Campaigns Analyst to the River Action team. In our latest blog, we get to know more about Nick and the role that he will play to help rescue Britain's rivers.

Q1. Tell us about yourself

Hello, very excited to join River Action as the new Campaigns Analyst! I'm originally from Sussex and I have travelled a fair bit for work, but finally settled in beautiful Cornwall as my home. I'm a devoted advocate of everything nature and at my happiest when wild camping, swimming, and walking. I also play folk music.

Q2. How did you become interested in river protection?

I was brought up in Sussex and spent a lot of time walking and swimming in the outdoors. I was well aware from an early age that our local rivers and coastal areas were 'toxic'. I've since spent many years living in Cornwall where I'm a frequent swimmer and all too aware of the horrific discharges into our waterways – it's daily check of the SAS map to see if we can even swim at our local beaches in Falmouth!

I grieve the increasing loss of the natural world. If trees are the lungs of the earth, then waterways are the veins and arteries; home to immensely important habitats and providers of essential ecosystem services without which our society simply could not function. More than this, rivers are things of wonder and beauty. They inspire us to create, to travel, to play, as they meander their ancient ways through the ever-changing landscape. It is shameful how rivers have been abused and neglected by successive governments, companies, and regulators who appear unable to comprehend their true value and importance. I'm proud to now work for a campaign organisation who are committed to providing powerful new voice for rivers which has been so long overdue.

Q3. You have a wealth of experience working in research. What have you enjoyed most about your work and what have been its biggest challenges?

My career so far has really been motivated by working on projects which try and make a difference. My PhD is reflective of a deep curiosity around local and national policy decisions associated with the environment, specifically to bring a better understanding of how nature recovery can also lead to more prosperous local communities. The joy of research is transforming abstract data into meaningful narratives which connect with people and bring about real change. Transitioning from academia to campaigning is incredibly exciting, though perhaps the greatest challenge is the pace at which newly released data needs to be turned around into a compelling story that engages a wide audience.

Q4. Tell us about your new role as Campaigns Analyst at River Action…what can we expect to see from your role in 2024?

My role in River Action is to provide the strong and compelling data driven evidence to support our campaigns and communications. In particular, this involves analysing emerging government and industry data, pollution statistics, legal cases, policy papers, and FOIs to build a nuanced picture of the challenge and ensure our outputs are robust and evidence-based. A particular focus moving forward is interpreting often complex emerging data in the most engaging way for the general public and media.

Q5. Finally, in your opinion, what is further needed/what needs to change to rescue Britain’s rivers?

We need regulators who regulate. Empowered communities. Farmers who are financially supported to deliver sustainable change to their practices. Industries who consider nature recovery an unnegotiable cornerstone of their business models. Water companies to start taking serious social and financial responsibility. And a government who recognises the disastrous state of our rivers and is committed to immediate action and investment. So, not much . . .