Introducing ‘Friends of the Thames’ (FoTT)

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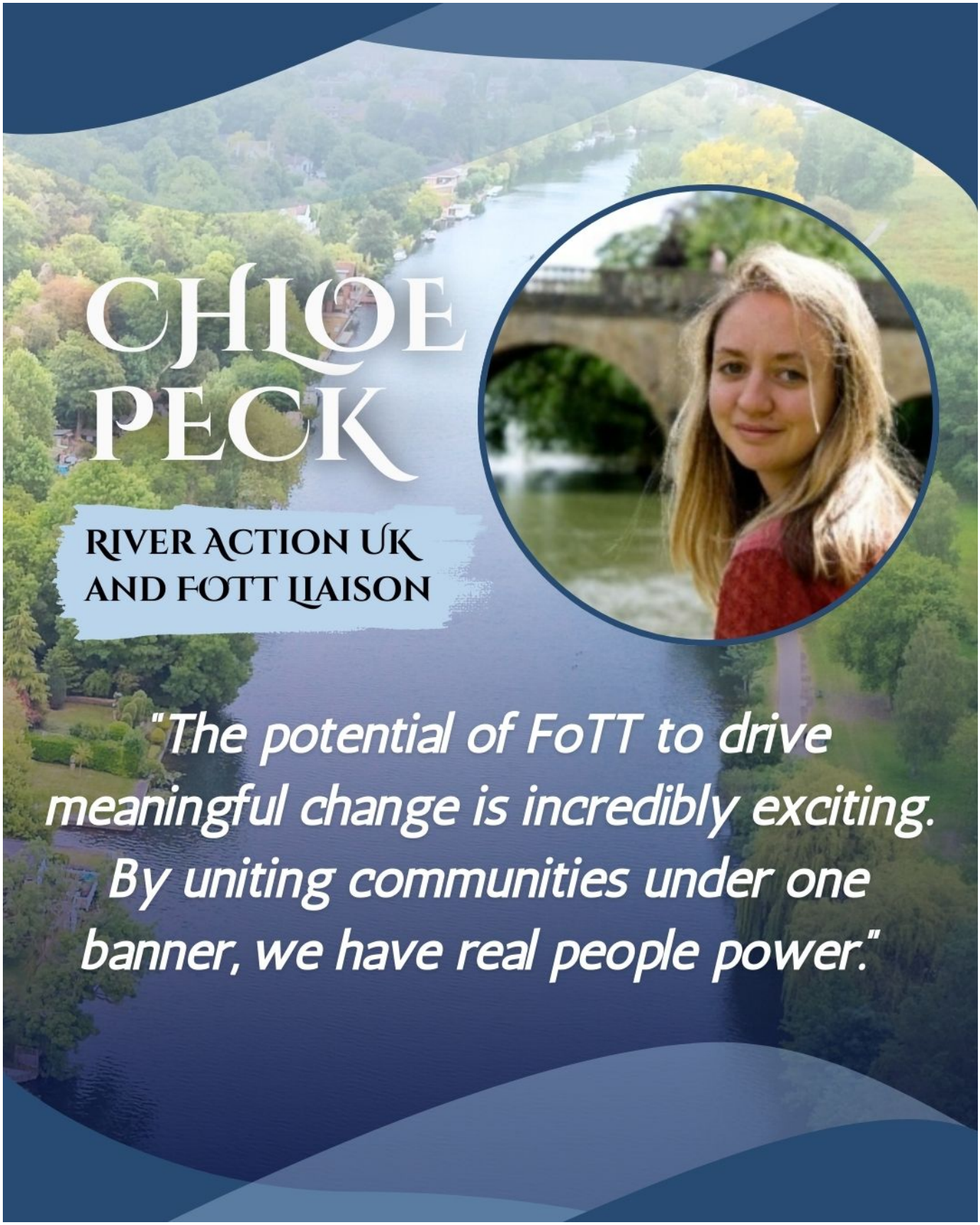
Grassroots action is fundamental in driving change for our rivers. At River Action, our most significant successes have started from local communities taking a stand for their rivers. This is why we’re excited to introduce Friends of the Thames (FoTT), a new not-for-profit organisation dedicated to uniting communities along the Thames. From swimmers and citizen scientists to schools and campaigners, FoTT aims to bring together diverse voices, creating a unified movement to fight for cleaner rivers and hold Thames Water accountable.

Laura Reineke, a passionate swimmer, campaigner, and community coordinator, is leading this initiative. Her deep connection to the Thames and commitment to action make her the perfect person to head up this exciting new venture.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RIVER ACTION UK AND FOTT LIAISON
"The potential of FoTT to drive meaningful change is incredibly exciting. By uniting communities under one banner, we have real people power."

LAURA
REINEKE
FOUNDER OF FRIENDS
OF THE THAMES
HENLEY
Mermaids
"We have a moral and legal obligation to take action on behalf of the river herself and the wildlife that call her home."

What is FoTT?

Friends of the Thames is a unifying force for the many groups, citizen scientists, and campaigners across the Thames catchment. From the Kennet to the Wandle and the Mole, there are already plenty of amazing initiatives in action. FoTT aims to be the link between these missions, aiming to create a supportive network that can amplify each other's voices.

One of FoTT's key tools will be an online map, highlighting groups across the Thames. This resource will offer a clearer picture of pollution throughout the catchment by compiling data from citizen scientists, the Environment Agency, and Thames Water themselves. By providing communities with this evidence, we aim to strengthen campaigns, advocacy efforts, and legal actions to better protect our river.

Why River Action Seed-Funded FoTT and How We Are Supporting It

Friends of the Thames aligns with River Action's commitment to empowering communities to protect local rivers. After two years of taking action along the Thames—collecting data, working with communities, and creating impactful news stories—we were eager to assist in the creation of a unified voice for lasting change. As River Action's Senior Communities Coordinator, I've been working closely with Laura to lay the foundations for FoTT. Our support extends beyond just initial funding; we're actively helping to build key partnerships, raise awareness, and provide strategic guidance to ensure FoTT has the resources and momentum needed to make real long term impact.

What Excites Us About FoTT

The potential of FoTT to drive meaningful change is incredibly exciting. By uniting communities under one banner, we have real people power. One key initiative will be the creation of River Guardians, inspired by Paul Powlesland, founder of Lawyers for Nature and River Guardian for the Roding, who is now working alongside Laura to establish FoTT. These Guardians will serve as stewards for specific stretches of the Thames and its tributaries, deeply understanding the river, monitoring pollution, and championing their local waterways.

FoTT's vision is deeply rooted in celebrating local action, and Laura's passion and commitment ensure that this initiative will benefit both the communities it serves and the waterways they protect.

How to Get Involved

Are you passionate about the Thames or one of its tributaries? Whether you're interested in citizen science, volunteering, or becoming a River Guardian, FoTT would love to hear from you. Stay updated with their campaign, connect with Laura, or explore ways to get involved by visiting their website or social media channels:

Website: friendsofthethames.org

Email: laura@friendsofthethames.org

Social Media: @friends.of.the.thames on Instagram, @friends_thames on Twitter.

Together, we can end pollution and put the Thames catchment first, for generations to come.