

We like to tell ourselves that we're doing enough. After all, it's not our fault the planet is dying – we're not the ones pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Oh no, it's not us. And anyway, it's the little things we do that count. The recycling, shorter showers, turning off the lights and cutting out single use plastics. We tell ourselves we can't do everything and let some of the little things slip by – the cotton buds we use or the cheeky plastic bags we buy when our reusable ones sit at home forgotten.

But I'll let you in on a little secret...we're lying to ourselves. It's not enough.

Temperatures continue to soar, gases continue to be pumped into the atmosphere, trees continue to be cut down, ecosystems continue to collapse and our planet continues to die. Our planet is dying, and I am terrified. You should be terrified.

20 of the warmest years on record have occurred during the last 22 years. We have data from many sources, all showing the same trends. Data spanning four decades – all proving the existence of climate change. As greenhouse gas emissions increase, so do global temperatures.

Greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide and methane) act as a blanket, trapping heat and warming the Earth. The more gases released into the atmosphere, well, the thicker the blanket becomes. When we burn fossil fuels such as oil and coal, we spew these pollutants into the sky and cause the blanket to become thicker and thicker.

The problems caused by this global warming effect are no longer subtle. They're monstrously loud.

Fires run wild across our planet annually, causing the destruction of habitats and homes. The 2019 California wildfires caused \$24 billion worth of damage, and cost 106 people their lives. But the fires don't just kill us – they destroy the habitats of many species of animal, and similar crises have led to 8% of species being at risk of extinction solely due to climate change.

Floods pour across our planet – wiping out whole towns and causing millions to need humanitarian aid. Sea levels have risen by 20cm in the last 100 years, and could continue to rise by another 80cm. This would mean the destruction of our coastal cities. Entire cities...wiped out completely. The American state of Louisiana loses about a football field of land every 45 minutes due to these rising sea levels, leading to the relocation of an entire town.

And yet, we continue on in the way we always have. Why?

We need to stop before this gets any worse.

But it's not that simple. You see, we've come to rely on our oil guzzling machines and coal consuming factories, and the world would grind to a halt if we simply stopped using them. At least, that's what they've always told us.

No one person or institution can truly be held responsible for the climate crisis, but I find it almost too easy to place the blame for those responsible for its continuation. It's not just the multinational oil companies, the manufacturing industry, or even the governments, it's us, all of us: the average person - we are all responsible.

And we've known about this for almost four decades. Four decades of virtual inaction. I will not stand for it any longer, and neither should you.

Dr James Hansen warned the world in 1988 of the threat climate change was becoming.

What have we done since then? What have you done to help?

The average person puts 13 tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere each year, with ¼ of this coming from the food we consume. Studies have shown that if meat and dairy industries continue to grow, by 2050 they will make up 81% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

So, what *can* you do to help?

Eat everything you buy, and consume less. Reduce your meat and dairy consumption. Isn't it worth sacrificing that burger, if it saves our planet?

Reduce, reuse, recycle. It's a motto we need to live by.

Reduce energy consumption, travel by bike

Reuse the same plastic bags and packaging, make everything last

Recycle or donate old clothing, buy second hand

This is serious and it's about more than just you or me. The future of our planet is worth these small sacrifices. Our future is worth the small sacrifices, because we cannot survive without our planet.

But these small sacrifices can't be the extent of the action against climate change. We must make a political stand. Check the voting records of your local MP before you vote them into power – we need people who care enough about climate change to take decisive action, not just those who look good on paper.

Follow in the steps of Greta Thunberg, as many of my peers have done. Protest, sign petitions. They can't continue to ignore the problem if enough of us speak out.

This is happening now, and if we don't take action urgently, there will no longer be a planet to save.

Please, take a stand with me. There is no planet B.