

Dr Paul Johnston,

We're seeing the headline "Hottest Year on Record" with increasing frequency— NASA data confirms this. On a scale of 1 to 10, how worried should we be about the warming climate?

Very worried indeed. It merits at least an 11. We're in the grip of something that will fundamentally change the world we live in and the world our children will inherit. Sea level rise, food insecurity and extreme weather are going to reach critical proportions this century. We have the means to change this, we just need to implement them.

And if we do manage to take action in time? Will the world be magically saved: will forests be replenished, will the Arctic stop melting...?

Even if we stopped burning all fossil fuels tomorrow, we're committed to a certain level of change already. All we can hope for is to minimize the amount of change. There's no magic wand, the planet won't return to the way it was, but it might stabilize in a new state.

If I ran out of optimism I'd struggle to get up in the morning, but I still don't believe in fairy tales with a happy ending. It's either we continue as we are, and watch as everything gets worse, or we act now to try and minimize the impact on us and other species.

If there's one thing that everyone could do today to help protect the environment, what would that be?

Just stop and think about the impact we are having on the planet and systems around us. Think about how you're living your life; how much waste you're producing, how far you're traveling, what food you eat, what you're buying—it's all significant and it can make a difference.

Try to influence others to think the same way: put pressure on corporations, challenge retailers. There are few better ways to try and make a difference than the willingness to get out there and shout, loudly but peacefully. Most people haven't even thought about it. It's tricky to persuade people to rethink their world view, or to even think about a world view in the first place, but it's what needs to happen for us to change.

We've not been good at protecting our environment so far, but I hope to see that change. It's a huge privilege to be a small part of this great continuum of people contributing to increasing humanity's collective knowledge about everything.