From Fear to Hope: The inspiring journey of an 11-year-old Environmental Activist

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“When I first became aware of the destruction of the world through climate change, I felt very upset and angry, but also a little worried. What was going to happen to my world? And what was everyone going to do about it, including me?” (Parsons, 2019).

The Earth is currently undergoing a sixth global scale ecological crisis. The available science almost unanimously positions human activity at the heart of the cause of this crisis, with anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gasses, pollution, land degradation and deforestation, all contributing. Recent IPCC reporting has demonstrated a need to curb global warming at 1.5 degrees above the pre-industrial baseline and have highlighted a range of likely impacts of Climate Change should no action be taken, particularly in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Despite this need, policy-based action at a nation state level is largely lacking, with recent talks at COP25 failing to reach agreements. However, a significant global youth movement is now underway, with children and young people taking it upon themselves to highlight a need for climate and environmental action, calling for others to follow. Greta Thunberg and the Fridays For Future (#FFF) movement now regularly appears in mainstream media, highlighting the issues of Climate Change with an emotive narrative centred on the impact of future climate change on today's children and their environments.

Whist there is growing literature that explores Youth Activism, to our knowledge, there is no investigation that has followed the emotional journey of a child whom has chosen to take environmental action. Here, we present Lucie Parsons, an 11-year old girl who, after watching BBC's Blue Planet II back in 2017 and seeing the devastation plastic pollution was having on the marine environment and its wildlife, decided to take action and be a champion for positive environmental change. Since then, Lucie has spoken at international conferences, conducted her own research in her primary school, organised regional litter picks, and has become an Ambassador for the national charities iWill and Kids Against Plastic; amongst many other things. As her activism has gained momentum and as she has become more aware of wider environmental issues, her focus on plastic pollution has broadened to include the current climate crisis and environmental degradation as a whole. We will present the highs and lows of Lucie's Environmental Activism and the role that emotion has played in her journey thus far; as well as
what she believes to be the achievements in her own science communication and what you as scientists can do to help her in her fight against environmental and climatic change.