



UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards 2023

Speech by Hon Alf Cannan MHK Chief Minister and Chair of UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man

Your Excellency, Lady Lorimer, Minister, Members, and our awards entrants...

As chair of UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man, it's my pleasure to be here today at these, the fifth UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man Awards.

The human race faces some unprecedented challenges in the form of climate and biodiversity emergencies that threaten catastrophic impacts on us all.

And recent global events have impacted on our daily lives and wellbeing in ways we have not experienced in most of our lifetimes.

While, sadly, not all are affected equally across the planet, we all have a duty to do what we can to counter these challenges and build a better world.

The Isle of Man Government takes this responsibility enormously seriously and is taking progressive steps.

Ensuring a secure, vibrant and sustainable future for our Island is the driving principle behind the Government's Island Plan.

The fact the Isle of Man is a UNESCO Biosphere – indeed, the only entire nation UNESCO Biosphere - gives us an extra layer of responsibility to step up and make the decisions and take the actions that will ensure a sustainable future.

Globally, UNESCO Biospheres have three functions. They promote sustainable development, conservation and learning.

They connect people with, and encourage them to foster a better relationship with, their environment in every sense, whether understanding the threats it faces or simply appreciating and taking pride in it.

Locally, UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man delivers its work via our strategy 'Working Together for a Sustainable Future and its five Es of economy, education, engagement, enjoyment and environment.

It's around these aims, plus the category of energy, that our awards are based.

Government must play a major role, but it cannot work alone to progress actions that benefit our planet.

The input and innovation of everyone – from large organisations to individual citizens – will be increasingly important.

You are here today because of your impressive contribution to that sustainable future.

It may sound clichéd but to me that means you are already winners.

The range of projects and the impact of work that is under way is hugely inspiring and these awards provide an opportunity to showcase these, and for us to thank you for them.

Your positive work not only contributes to a sustainable future – it influences and inspires others, which is the lasting legacy of these awards.

Please take a moment, now, to reflect on that and be proud of what you have done, and the challenges you have perhaps overcome in the process.

The breadth and depth of entries never ceases to amaze me. Some of the stories you will hear shortly are heart-warming and offer hope.

I, for one, am glad I was not a judge as they had some very difficult decisions to make. My thanks go to the judges.

So, whether you take home an award today or not, please celebrate the fact you are here, be proud of your achievements, and continue your amazing work and your support for our UNESCO Biosphere.

Enjoy the afternoon and thank you for coming.