

27<sup>th</sup> October 2024

# Encouraging people to protect the earth

## DBU honours Franziska Tanneberger and Thomas Speidel






**Osnabrück.** Ways to better protect the planet are currently being debated at the World Summit on Nature in Cali, Colombia, and soon at the World Climate Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan. Today in Mainz, two people are demonstrating what practical solutions can look like: Peatland researcher Dr Franziska Tanneberger and electrical engineer Thomas Speidel will therefore be presented with the German Environmental Award of the German Federal Environmental Foundation (*Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, DBU*) in the Rheingoldhalle. Both will share the prize totalling 500,000 euros, which is one of the most highly endowed environmental awards in Europe. The prize will be presented by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

*Setting an example of confidence despite wars and crises*

DBU Secretary-General Alexander Bonde calls both award winners "real practical pioneers". Tanneberger proves "even in rubber boots at meetings with farmers that peatland protection and peatland utilisation are not contradictory and that sustainable use of wet peatlands is possible". Speidel, according to Bonde, convinced "with his innovative strength, strategic foresight and economic daring". DBU Board of Trustees Chairman Prof Dr Kai Niebert: "We must not capitulate to the acute problems. Franziska Tanneberger and Thomas Speidel make this impressively clear to us. It's about recognising and exploiting opportunities for change." The DBU also wants to send out a message of confidence with this year's German Environmental Award. "Because in both natural climate protection and electromobility, we have the technologies, the skills and the knowledge to inspire ecological change," says Niebert. And Bonde adds: Tanneberger and Speidel are people "who dare to break new ground and thus encourage others. Despite the many wars and crises, we must not despair but continue to work to preserve the planet."

*Bonde and Niebert: Climate and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin*

Why the conservation of biodiversity and the preservation of ecosystems are essential for human existence is currently becoming clear on the other side of the Atlantic in Cali: at the 16th *United Nations (UN)* Conference on Biological Diversity (COP16), almost 200 countries are struggling to find answers to the questions of how to stop the overexploitation of nature and the environment and, above all, how to implement the resolution passed at COP15 in Montreal two years ago: to place at least 30 per cent of the world's land and sea areas under protection. While COP16 is shining a spotlight on fragile biodiversity, the UN Climate Change Conference will soon begin in Baku with a focus on the worrying issue of global warming. As in Colombia, the focus in Azerbaijan is on the practical implementation of agreed targets. At the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference, the almost 200 countries involved agreed to limit global

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warming to 1.5 degrees compared to the pre-industrial age. Bonde and Niebert: "Climate and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin. People must protect both - to preserve the earth and their own existence." Tanneberger and Speidel, according to Bonde and Niebert, were also selected for the German Environmental Award "because they show with vigour how we can do something to protect the environment and biodiversity".

*Rewetting peatlands is essential for storing climate-damaging carbon dioxide*

The DBU is honouring the internationally renowned peatland researcher Tanneberger, who played a key role in the first global peatland status report, with the German Environmental Award because, according to Bonde, "as a driving force, she has advanced the revitalisation of peatlands and at the same time managed to build bridges between science, politics and agriculture". The rewetting of drained moors is "indispensable for storing climate-damaging carbon dioxide". The task is huge: worldwide, artificially drained peatlands are responsible for around two billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents every year - around four percent of global greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans. According to Bonde, peatlands are not only carbon sinks, "but also water reservoirs and a guarantor of biodiversity". Tanneberger had succeeded in "getting farmers on board for better protection of the climate and biodiversity, because peatlands can also be used wet". As examples, the DBU Secretary General cited innovative materials for building and insulating, the use of gritting material in Bavaria, for example, and reed roofs on houses in northern Germany.

*Multi-tools function like a Swiss army knife for the energy transition*

According to Niebert, electrical engineer Thomas Speidel in turn received the German Environmental Award "because he is a pioneer of the energy transition". As Managing Director of ads-tec Energy in Nürtingen near Stuttgart, which is now listed on the stock exchange, he is "virtually a living transformation". Niebert: "He has transformed his business from a combustion technology company into a company that has developed the so-called *ChargeBox* and *ChargePost* battery-buffered fast-charging systems, thus ensuring greater speed in the development of electromobility." The highlight: refuelling is possible in a matter of minutes instead of hours. The two systems slowly draw power from the grid, storing it to charge an e-vehicle in one go when needed - similar to a toilet cistern that slowly fills up and empties in a flash. Speidel talks about "multi-tools that work like a Swiss army knife for the energy transition": fast charging, grid stabilisation, bridging the lack of charging infrastructure and even a digital advertising pillar. This is because the ChargePost also offers the option of large advertising displays. Bonde and Niebert: "Environmentally friendly e-mobility offers the opportunity to significantly reduce emissions of climate-damaging carbon dioxide. We must capitalise on this. The global transition of the automotive industry to e-mobility is in full swing."

➤ **Data, facts and figures also in our DBU Environmental Award blog:** <https://www.dbu.de/umweltpreis/umweltpreis-blog/>

**Background:**

*The DBU's German Environmental Award, which will be presented for the 32nd time in 2024, honours the achievements of people who make an exemplary contribution to protecting and preserving the environment. Candidates are nominated to the DBU. Employers' associations and trade unions, churches, environmental and nature conservation organisations, scientific associations and research communities, the media, the skilled trades and business associations are all eligible. Self-proposals are not possible. A jury of independent experts from business, science, technology and social groups appointed by the DBU Board of Trustees recommends award winners for the respective year to the DBU Board of Trustees. The DBU Board of Trustees makes the final decision. Information on the German Environmental Award and award winners: [www.dbu.de/en/environmental-award/](http://www.dbu.de/en/environmental-award/).*

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