

# **Cross-Party Group on Japan Meeting**

Wednesday 12 June 6 pm- Hybrid Meeting CR3 Scottish Parliament & MS Teams

## **Present**

### **MSPs**

Colin Smyth MSP (Convenor)  
Alexander Stewart MSP (Deputy Convenor)  
Liam McArthur MSP  
Pauline McNeil MSP

### **Invited Guests**

Consul General of Japan in Edinburgh, Mr Tadashi Fujiwara  
Deputy Consul General, Minori Ishii  
Professor Ian Gow, OBE, Chairman Japan Society of Scotland

### **Non-MSP group members**

Boyd, Louise  
Fujiwara, Tadashi (Consul General)  
Gow, Ian (Professor)  
Graham, Michael  
Hyde, Byron  
Inder, Reiko  
Minori, Ishii (Deputy Consul General)  
Kuwhara, Cameron  
Loveday, Colin  
Martin, Jennifer  
Moore, Aaron  
Millar, Jim  
Noreika, Ruta  
Pinsky, Anna  
Quinn, Michael  
Shand, Seona  
Simpson, Mag  
Sutherland, Ken  
Taji, Takashi  
Wylie, Neville

### **Apologies**

Cameron, Liz  
Dalglish, Russell  
Gow, Katy  
Graham, Jo  
Hayes, Victoria

Johnstone, Scott  
McCallum, Antony  
Moworth, Peter

## **Agenda Item 1- Welcome and opening remarks**

Colin Smyth (CS) opened the meeting, welcoming the attendees and provided some introductory remarks.

CS highlighted the purpose of the group as described on the CPG website to promote relations between Scotland and Japan, which is the third largest economy in world and one of the largest investors in Scotland.

He emphasised the important economic, cultural and educational ties between Scotland and Japan. CS hopes the CPG can play a part in strengthening these links, including within the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.

CS commented that he was conscious there were many organisations already playing a really important role in fostering those links and he didn't want the CPG simply to be a reinventing the wheel, doing things people are already potentially doing. It was important to ask what the CPG can add to the work that already takes place, what added value can we bring to fostering those links?

CS also highlighted that one of the main aims of the CPG is to engage with the Consul General of Japan Tadashi Fujiwara (TF) in Edinburgh, and wider Japanese community in Scotland. CS thank the Consul General and Deputy Consul General for their support for the re-establishment of the CPG and invited TF to address the meeting.

## **Agenda Item 2- Presentation from the Consul General of Japan**

TF's presentation provided an overview on the recent developments in Scottish and Japan relations. Prior to his presentation he said he was very honoured to be invited to appear before the CPG.

TF began by highlighting political delegations from Japan to Scotland and vice versa. This included a visit in November 2023 by the Governor of Gunma to learn about the Scottish education system and in April 2024 by the Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy to learn more about Scottish university spin off companies.

TF also mentioned the visit to Japan in November 2022 by then Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport Michael Matheson MSP and a visit in April 2023 by then Cabinet Secretary Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy Neil Gray MSP.

TF then moved onto discuss the economic relations between Japan and Scotland with reference to recent investments. He provided four examples.

First, Marubeni Europower opened an office in Glasgow in November 2022 for developing Ossian windfarm and hydrogen energy projects. Second, Flotation Energy bought by TEPCO in November 2022. Third, Sumitomo Electric is in the process of building a factory to make cables for renewable energy sector. And finally, Japanese retailer Uniqlo opened its first store in Scotland, in Edinburgh in April. The company has announced it will open a second Scottish store in Glasgow.

TS moved on to discuss Scotland-Japan trading relations. He provided the following information: Scotland exports to Japan in 2023 was £543 million; Scottish exports to Japan account for 9.8% of total UK exports to Japan; Japan in 2021 was Scotland's 14th largest export market; it was Scotland's 3rd largest non-EU market and the destination of 2% of Scotland's exports.

In the final section of TF's presentation, he highlighted recent cultural events. This included support for the annual Japan Foundation touring Japanese film festival; continued fostering of close ties with Orkney Islands; continued strong Japanese presence at Edinburgh festivals; support for the recent Sakura festival at Lauriston Castle in Edinburgh; and supporting the Dundee V&A Kimono to Catwalk exhibition celebrating the kimono.

#### **Discussion and questions for Consul General**

CS thanked the Consul General for his presentation and opened up the meeting. He began by asking TS how we can strengthen the links between Parliament, Scotland and Japan.

**Liam McArthur (LM)** thanked TS, his team and his predecessor in the role for their support for the Orkney Japan Association. He said this support has been invaluable and that they could not have asked for more.

Without this support it would be difficult to develop the work of the Orkney Japan Association that has e.g. fostered business relationships, it has seen regular visits by drummers, other bits of theatre, school links etc.

LM said it illustrates the extent to which those pre-existing connections are there in communities around the country, what they need to develop and expand.

LM said that the CPG promotes those connections at the national level. However, he said it was important not to lose sight that the stronger the foundations at the grass root level in communities around the country the better we will be able to take those relationships forward at a national level.

**Alexander Stewart (AS)** said he was delighted to be back on the CPG and had been involved in the previous one when Dean Lockhart was the convenor.

AS highlighted the fact that the Consul General and others have identified the strong cultural, educational and economic exchanges between Scotland and Japan and these were continuing to blossom and grow.

He said strong links in science and technology would play a massive part in what we want to see for the future. AS commented that there are opportunities to expand and develop some of these over the next two years we have within this Parliament.

AS said there were opportunities to build on the foundations that were put in place before, find areas of interest and commonality. He said there is also potential for exchange between the Parliaments here in Scotland and Japan and highlighted that links we have in local government between the two countries were very strong and we might want to tap into these.

AS ended his contribution by saying he looked forward to exciting opportunities over the next few years to see where we can add value to the work of others in developing links between Japan and Scotland and said there were lots of opportunities for those links to prosper and flourish.

**Ian Gow (IG)** commented on the discussion around exports. IG emphasised the importance of not just talking about exports to Japan but develop them. He said that Japan, by taking the leadership in the Indo-Pacific/rules-based area, can be a base by which joint ventures can go into the region. He said we should start to think of Japan as almost the foremost forward based aircraft carrier for companies to the area.

IG also said there are areas like the defence industry where Scotland is very strong and that Japan is now re-energising its defence industries. He said joint enterprises could be very useful. IG ended his contribution by emphasising that Japan is recovering and is taking leadership in the rules base order.

**Mag Simpson (MS)** interim Scotland Director of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said the Confederation would do all it can to support the CPG and develop links between Scotland and Japan and would be happy to outline at a future meeting what the CBI does as an organisation to bring different parties together between nations.

CS thanked MS for her really helpful offer and commented that the economic links are crucially important. He also mentioned that Liz Cameron from the Scottish Chamber of Commerce (SCC) had very kindly made the offer to take on the Secretariat of the group. CS proposed that the CPG could perhaps hear from Liz and Mags at a future meeting about the importance of Japan to SCC and CBI's many members.

**Mike Graham (MG)** said that his particular interest he was bringing to the CPG was on his work with international standardisation bodies, e.g, IEC which deals with electrical standards for computers, cars, microphones and also European standards. He said there's a general interest in all these internal standardisation bodies to facilitate international trade.

MS said that if there is an interest in plugging gaps in standards, ways of working, to identify common technologies, management or quality standards, he could be a Scottish contact for that. MS said that he could approach the main standardisation body, The British Standards Organisation, if there was any interest in these areas.

**Michael Quinn (MQ)** Japan policy officer in the Scottish Government said that at the moment the main focus with international and trade investment colleagues is preparations for the Osaka Expo 2025. He said the conference has an overarching theme of developing future society for our lives.

MQ said the Scottish Government's focus at that conference will be on Net Zero, Food and Drink and Culture and Tourism. He said over the course of the conference 150 countries will be taking part so it would be a great opportunity to promote Scotland to the rest of the world. MQ said the last event in Dubai was a great success and it is hoped this can be replicated and help build on our already strong relationship with Japan.

MQ referenced two points from the Consul General's presentation. One was his mention of the power cable factory which was a real economic highlight for the Highlands and Islands. The other was on the cultural side - the Kinmono exhibition at the VA in Dundee. The Scottish Government is trying to see how it can support cultural exchanges between Scotland and Japan.

**Neville Wylie (NW)** from the University of Stirling thanked the Consul General for his presentation. NW mentioned he was looking forward to going to Japan in the Autumn where he will be talking to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry around working in their super aging population and dementia proofing buildings etc.

NW also asked TS about the Japanese film festival and whether they were still looking for venues to screen films as part of the festival over the year. He said the University of Stirling would be delighted to host a screening at one of its venues. The Deputy Consul General Minori Ishii said that they were still in the planning phase and details hadn't been finalised yet but the Consulate would keep in touch.

CS thanked NW and said he would be interested to hear about the trip and having that fed back into the CPG at its next meeting. NW confirmed he would be happy to do that.

**Cameron Kuwhara (CK)** from Nikko Asset Management based in Edinburgh thanked CS and the Consul General for their introductions. CK picked up on a couple of points that the Consul General mentioned in terms of investments. He highlighted that Nikko invest circa \$200b around the world in global companies and they have a hydrogen fund which they launched a few years ago to Japanese investors.

CK emphasised that energy is a very big export for Scotland, and he asked whether enough was being done by Government and the Parliament to support more inward investment into Scotland from around the world but particularly from Japan. CK stated that Scotland has a sizeable proportion of renewable energy in Europe and Japan is a net importer of 90% of energy. Japan is hugely dependent on the world for energy. There's a great opportunity for Scottish wind energy technology and businesses.

**Colin Smyth (CS)** emphasised that the energy sector is hugely important for both nations. He said there was an opportunity and need to get that investment in place to deliver that growth and ambition around net zero. But he said there was also a need to make sure that

the transition to Net Zero is a just transition and jobs particularly around the supply chain are being created here in Scotland. CS commented that we often look at Net Zero as a barrier to economic growth but at this moment in time it is a pathway to economic growth. CS asked Consul General whether there are barriers to bringing that investment into Scotland.

**Aaron Moore (AM)** representing the University of Edinburgh's (UOE) Asian Studies Department highlighted that Edinburgh delivered the only single degree Japanese programme in Scotland which trains students to speak Japanese and navigate Japanese cultural environments.

He said at the moment the UOE have 12 exchange relationships with Japanese Universities. AM said he wanted to remind the CPG when it comes to higher education in Scotland on Japan it's generally being carried out at UOE. The university also has an ambition to fund a national centre for Japanese studies. In addition, AM mentioned he was an Executive member of the Japanese Foundation and said that they had been supporting local government exchanges between Japan and Britain. He commented that there's a lot of work that could be done to develop this area.

AM concluded by saying if there are events that UOE perceives has some benefit to the university as researchers but also to our students then the University can also host those sorts of activities and potentially serve as a hub for funding exchanges between local government, as long as there is an academic element.

**Ruta Noreika (RN)** from the Orkney Japan Association emphasised that the association is very good at partnering. She said they started because of 3/11, because Japanese high school students wanted to know about clean energy, and they came to Orkney through connections with one their cutting-edge clean energy companies.

RN said last year the association started a partnership with Orkney International Science Festival. This was run by the same individual who started the Edinburgh International Science Festival which has become the model for such festivals around the world.

RN said that because they can work with excellent organisations like the international science festival, they are able to think beyond our borders and look for ways of empowering young people and allowing them to work internationally from anywhere in the world. RN said that Scotland could be really good at that and hopes the CLP will help facilitate this.

The Consul General provided some closing comments and thanked the CPG for the invitation to address the group.

### **Agenda Item 3- Presentation from Professor Emeritus Ian Gow, Honorary Professor East Asian Studies at Edinburgh University on First Contact: The Earliest Scots in Japan**

CS introduced IG who provided an overview of Scots who had arrived in Japan in the 1850s, including Thomas Glover, Admiral Sir James Stirling and Lord Elgin. He commented that standard history books on Japan/Scotland have nothing on Scots who arrived in Japan before then.

IG therefore has begun to research this period. He said that the first Scots must have come by sea. He said we know that Scots served on European power's ships. IG briefly covered the late 15th to 16th centuries touching on the maritime powers in the Far East, Portugal being the most dominant.

IG also referenced the Dutch, Spanish and English presence and activities in the region. Further, he provided a brief overview of Scotland's tremendous maritime reputation and James VI interest in the Scottish navy.

He then moved onto to the three Scots who he has identified as the first Scots in Japan. First was Henry Shanks from Leith in 1617 who was a gunner. The second was John Porteous who arrived in 1617 from Burnt Island which had a port. Porteous was much better educated, navigator, officer class.

IG said the third was Patrick Copland, a major figure who was the first Aberdonian in Japan and the first Minister to live in Japan and visit Nagasaki. IG said that Copland had raised money and funded the first chair in divinity and religious studies at Aberdeen University then raised money for the first college in the American colonies.

IG said there was a lot of information about Copland's time in Asia and in the colonies but nothing about trip to Japan, but he was probably the first Graduate from Britian, certainly the first Scottish graduate of Marischal College Aberdeen to Japan.

IG said here we have a real Aberdonian. First Aberdonian in Japan, and in Nagasaki and the first protestant minister to live in Japan. He was also the first Scot writing about a horrific trip to Japan (blood and thunder lecture), wrote a wonderful essay in the colonies about his visit to Nagasaki. IG ended his presentation commenting that there are many books about Japan/Scotland from 1860 onwards but what he would like to try and do is a book of Scots in the earlier period covered in this presentation, which would be the first part of the book.

### **Agenda Item 4 - Possible Subjects for future meetings**

CS said that a number of suggestions had been made during the course of the meeting for subjects at future meetings and he would discuss these with AS to develop the next agenda items. He said that if anyone had any other suggestions of topics for future meetings, then they should feel free to get in touch.

### **Agenda Item 5- Date of next meeting**

CS said he was keen to ensure the CPG meets regularly. He said that there would be a short online AGM for the CPG in September to appoint office bearers for the year ahead, but a more substantive meeting would take place in October/November with a date to suit possible speakers.

### **Agenda Item 6- Any other business**

CS thanked everyone for joining the CPG and for attending the meeting. There being no further business, CS closed the meeting,