

## **Minutes of the 126<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of The Japan Society**

*Held at the Embassy of Japan, 101-104 Piccadilly, London W1  
at 6.00 p.m. on Friday, 7 September 2023*

### **Bill Emmott**

Bill Emmott, Chair of the Japan Society, welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting, and invited Minister Matsuura from to say a few words on behalf of Ambassador Hayashi and the Embassy of Japan.

### **Minister Matsuura**

Minister Matsuura regretted that the Embassy hasn't been able to host the Society's AGM in the past few years due to the pandemic and Emperor and Empress's visitor for the state funeral of the late Queen last year. He was pleased to welcome everyone back to the Embassy once again for the AGM.

He recognised the strengthened relationship between Japan and the UK in the past year which was illustrated by the visit of the Emperor and Empress to the state funeral and the attendance of Crown Prince and Princess at the coronation of the new King. He noted the signing of the Reciprocal Access Agreement between Japan and the UK, the joint development of a next-generation fighter aircraft by the two countries and Italy, the success of the UK in joining the CPTPP as well as the visits by Prime Minister Kishida to the UK and Prime Minister Sunak to Japan as further examples to the long-term strong relationship between the two countries.

On the cultural side of things, the Royal Shakespeare Company's long-term and immensely popular performance of *My Neighbour Totoro* was proof of new cultural bond between Japan and Britain, with its success providing good future prospects for a separate reproduction of *Ghibli's Spirited Away* by another theatre company. He hoped that with the combination of everything positive the suspended state visit by the Emperor and Empress will take place soon.

Minister Matsuura acknowledged The Japan Society's efforts in serving the British society in its interest in Japan by providing enticing programme to the constantly changing interests in the society. He noted the surge in the interest of Japan in Britain will provide the Society with more opportunities to attract more British citizens and companies.

With the Japan Society entering a new era under Bill's strong leadership as chairman and Michael as the new Chief Executive, Minister Matsuura looked forward to hearing and exchanging ideas with the Society at the AGM and congratulating everyone at the Society.

### **Bill Emmott**

Bill Emmott thanked Minister Matsuura for his kind and generous remarks about the future of the Japan Society and its very welcome relationship with the Embassy.

He introduced Michael Rivera King as the new Chief Executive and thanked Heidi Potter for her efforts in the past 15 years as the Chief Executive

Bill described past year as a year of transition, with the change of a new Chief Executive and the transition back to in-person activities after COVID, noting the Annual Dinner at the Chelsea Physic Garden, the annual lecture at Nomura Security by the British Ambassador, Julia Longbottom, as well as the visit by Governor Koike from Tokyo. He gave congratulations on the resumption of the Japan Matsuri at Trafalgar Square on 1 October this year after the few years gap during COVID and encouraged everyone to attend the event. He also highlighted the resumption of other regular in-person activities within the Society, noting the academic lectures, film and book clubs, bilingual speaking club, as well as in-person education activities with schools.

Concerning the financial accounts in the past year, Bill began his report on the sale of the library of the Society, a decision made by the board in October 2018 due to its high insurance cost and the fact that it was no longer being actively used. Following professional advice to write down the value of the library to more realistic £350,000 than a previous valuation, the £130,883 realised from the sale at the auction in the autumn translates to a evaluation write off of £219,117 in the accounts. About 400 unsold books from the library have been donated to the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures.

In 2022, the accounts also showed a modest deficit of £46,581 which is due the rising operation cost. However, Bill reassured everyone that the Society is a financially strong organisation with strong reserves of more than 12 months of our income, exceeding the current reserves policy. The Investment Committee has begun to actively manage the reserves by investing the extra in a mixture of endowment fund and securities. In addition, the Society is also benefitting from the high interest rate currently available with the cash management system which enable us to get 4-5% annual interest on the rest of the reserves

Concerning the future financial performance of the Society, Bill noted it will be in the hands of new Chief Executive Michael and the new strategy and ideas he and the team wish to bring in. He then invited Michael to introduce himself and before moving onto the formal items of the AGM.

### **Michael Rivera King**

Michael thanked Ambassador Hayashi, Minister Matsuura, Mr Okazaki and the team at the Embassy for all their support. He also thanked Bill, the Trustees, the Japan Society's team, and members for their kindness, warm welcome, and support. He extended this gratitude to former Chief Executive Heidi Porter for her dedication in promoting UK-Japan relations in the past three decades. He thanked her support in his new role and praised the Society on how much the team was able to achieve transitioning out of lockdown

Michael announced the launch of a new 3-year strategy in January 2024 and invited members share any ideas, advice and values with him. He announced upcoming activities in the autumn, highlighting the launch of new monthly academic lectures, joint lunches with JCCI, Japan Matsuri, and regular activities such as the film club, book club and the Sixth Form Japan Day in November. Michael also mentioned about special session for members at various upcoming events. He is also pleased that the Japan Society Proceedings and Reviews are back up and running and invited members to collect their copies today after the AGM.

Reporting on the activities of the Education Programme, Michael thanked the wonderful support of the Society's donors. In the past year, the education team and its volunteers worked with over 5,500 students in the UK, coupled with the thousands of downloaded of our education resources, the estimated reach of which is between 60,000 to 90,000 students. He was pleased to also announce the success of the launch of the Society's latest education initiative, the Japan Youth Collective which is supported by the Japan House London Trust and The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

As a final note, he expressed genuine excitement for the future and asked for the continued support from everyone.

### **Agenda Items**

Before moving on to the main item of the AGM, the Chairman invited comments and questions from members. The Chairman then gave a brief reminder of the AGM vote and the board and trustee structure and tenure. Members will vote by a show of hands on 5 separate items.

In this AGM members were asked to re-elect or elect 3 candidates as ordinary trustees: Clare Weaver (re-election), Rie Yoshitake (re-election), and Nick Woodford (election), Biographies for each candidate had been circulated in the official AGM papers.

**The following resolutions were passed:**

1. To receive and adopt the audited annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2022 and the Trustees' report.
2. To reappoint Richard Place Dobson as auditors and to authorize the Board to approve their remuneration as thought fit.
3. To re-appoint Clare Weaver as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society.
4. To re-appoint Rie Yoshitake as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society.
5. To elect Nick Woodford as an ordinary trustee of the Japan Society.