

Minutes of the 127th Annual General Meeting of The Japan Society

*Held at the Embassy of Japan, 101-104 Piccadilly, London W1
at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday 11 September 2024*

Bill Emmott, Chair of The Japan Society, welcomed the members to the Annual General Meeting, thanking Ambassador Hayashi and inviting him to say a few words.

Ambassador Hayashi

Ambassador Hayashi thanked members of The Japan Society for their support of the State Visit by Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress, noting that this had certainly been of profound significance in developing bonds of friendship between Japan and UK – a relationship that has been steadily cultivated over many decades. Ambassador Hayashi thanked The Japan Society for its steadfast commitment to UK-Japan relations.

Ambassador Hayashi also thanked Bill Emmott for his long years of service to The Japan Society and looked forward to continuing cooperation with his successor to further advance the Japan-UK relationship. Ambassador Hayashi noted that his tenure would end in the coming months and wished members a premature farewell ahead of his return to Japan.

Bill Emmott

Bill thanked Ambassador Hayashi for his kind words and for his support during his time in London.

Bill discussed the eventful year of 2024, including the Imperial State Visit.

Bill thanked former and current CEOs Heidi Potter and Michael Rivera King for contributing to making the transition of leadership a smooth and successful one.

Bill reflected on the State Visit, which had been delayed for a number of years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The visit had been a great success, and he was particularly pleased that The Japan Society played a leading role in the Reception with the Japanese Community and Friends of Japan. This event had demonstrated very clearly how well Japan-related organisations in the UK work together. The affection the Emperor and Empress clearly have for the UK, as expressed in their speeches, was particularly inspiring and heart-warming.

Bill then spoke on matters closer to home, and reported that in March 2024, The Japan Society has been appointed secretariat of the British Japanese All Party Parliamentary Group and felt that this would offer opportunities to promote UK-Japan relations.

Membership continued to be strong, with more new members were recruited in the first 6 months of 2024 than the entire 2023 calendar year. He thanked in particular those who supported and took part in The Japan Society's education programmes. Of particular note in 2024, was the collaboration with Japan House and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation who supported the Japan Youth Collective.

He gave warm thanks to the trustees coming to the end of their term who are departing from the board, including Martin Hatful and Julie Rodgers and Tim Harding. He particularly thanked Satoru Yoshida, who had been honorary treasurer for the past 16 years, but who would be standing down in the coming year.

The Japan Society desired to broaden the range of the kind of people who participate in and support its activities and Bill encouraged anyone with ideas for new members to help the Society expand its reach. He concluded by thanking the corporate and individual donors, old and new, whose contributions were essential in maintaining the Society's work, in particular Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Nomura, and JTI.

Michael Rivera King

Michael thanked Ambassador Hayashi and colleagues at the Embassy of Japan for hosting the AGM, and Bill Emmott and all the trustees for their support in his first year in office. He echoed Bill in thanking donor companies and individuals for supporting education programmes.

He reflected on activities in 2024, which had been a milestone year for UK-Japan relations and The Japan Society, with the Imperial State Visit as a particular highlight. Looking forward, he noted new and significant future events, including the Inaugural Sir Hugh Cortazzi lectures to be held in the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office. Other upcoming events including a lunch with Lord Mandelson, the Japan Matsuri and The Japan Society Annual Dinner 2024 on 11 November.

Formal Business

Before moving on to the main agenda of the AGM, the Chair invited comments and questions from members.

Questions

It was noted that members attending events were not always aware of who trustees were, or their backgrounds. Bill clarified that trustee biographies and descriptions were available online as well as in AGM papers when elected. However, both he and Mike agreed that 'badging' trustees and staff at events (as was done at the AGM) would make it easier for members to identify them.

In response to an inquiry about efforts on a national scale, Michael Rivera King discussed the education programmes, many of which involve visits to schools in remote areas as well as current plans for an event with the University of Sheffield. This was an area staff and trustees were actively working on, in partnership with other Japan-related organisations in different parts of the country. It was proposed that a regular report about nationwide outreach would be beneficial in efforts to develop this further.

Asked whether The Japan Society would consider doing collaborative events with other bilateral societies, Michael reiterated his interest in developing relevant partnerships and welcomed opportunities to discuss further.

Agenda Items

The Chair then gave a brief reminder of the AGM vote and the board and trustee structure and tenure. He also discussed the new Articles of Association which members would be asked to approve.

The following resolutions were passed:

1. To receive and adopt the audited annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2024 and the Trustees' report.

2. To reappoint Richard Place Dobson as auditors and to authorise and approve the Board to approve remuneration as so fit.
3. To appoint Greg Clark as chair of The Japan Society with effect from 1st January 2025.
4. To appoint Anna Dingley as an ordinary trustee.
5. To appoint Tomoko Sasaki as an ordinary trustee.
6. To appoint Akiko Yano as an ordinary trustee.
7. To re-appoint Steven Barber as an ordinary trustee.
8. To re-appoint Yoko Dochi as an ordinary trustee.
9. To re-appoint Emma Hickenbottom as an ordinary trustee.
10. To re-appoint Helen McNorton as an ordinary trustee.
11. Special resolution to adopt new articles of association, including change of status for embassy representatives to observers from full trustees, changing of three other posts to observers, and a rotation system with honorary treasurer.

Greg Clark

Following his appointment as Chair-Elect of The Japan Society, Greg Clark expressed his gratitude and excitement at taking up this role. He thanked Bill Emmott for his work during a very successful term as Chair and acknowledged the success of the Imperial State Visit in further cementing the UK-Japan relationship. He gave personal thanks to Ambassador Hayashi and wished him well on return to Japan.