

Minutes of the 129th Annual General Meeting of The Japan Society

Held at the Embassy of Japan, 101-104 Piccadilly, London W1 at 6pm on Wednesday 23rd July 2025.

Greg Clark, Chair of The Japan Society, welcomed the members to the 129th Annual General Meeting, expressing his delight at attending his first AGM as Chair. He thanked Ambassador Suzuki and invited him to say a few words.

Ambassador Suzuki

Ambassador Suzuki began by thanking the members of The Japan Society for their continued support. He reflected on his recent visit with the Duke of Gloucester, patron of The Japan Society, and noted the Duke's genuine interest in the Society, particularly regarding membership growth. Ambassador Suzuki also expressed appreciation for Greg Clark's work as Chair, praising his energy and leadership, and highlighted the remarkable contributions he has made since his appointment.

He also recognized the outstanding leadership of Michael Rivera King, CEO of The Japan Society, noting that under his guidance, the Society welcomed nearly double the number of new members in 2024 compared to the previous year. In 2025, this number is expected to grow.

Ambassador Suzuki thanked the departing members of the Board of Trustees for their efforts that have strengthened the Japan-UK relationship. He closed his speech by thanking the current and new members for their continued support. He expressed that the members play a crucial role in the Society's success, stating that it is their commitment to the Society that will allow it to continue flourishing in the future.

Greg Clark

Greg thanked Ambassador Suzuki for his kind words and reflected on the tremendous impact the Ambassador has had since his arrival in November 2024. He spoke of Ambassador Suzuki's enthusiasm for British life, including his memorable social media moments, such as singing the Welsh national anthem in Welsh and taking Paddington Bear on his travels across the UK, but also of the seriousness and thoughtfulness that Ambassador Suzuki brings to his role.

After thanking his fellow trustees and previous chair, Bill Emmott for their tremendous support as he has adjusted to his role as Chair, Greg expressed his pride in being part of the Society during this dynamic time, with UK-Japan relations being closer and stronger than ever. He spoke of initiatives being made to deepen industrial and economic ties between the UK and Japan, which the Society will take part of through a series of roundtables for Japanese businesses in each of the eight sectors of industrial strategy to further deepen the commercial relationship. Greg discussed the Society's involvement with key events, including the Hiroshige exhibit at the British Museum and the upcoming Grand Sumo Tournament at the Royal Albert Hall. He thanked the Society's partners for the work they have done to make these collaborations successful.

Greg shared the Society's commitment to expanding its educational outreach, highlighting the Japan Youth Collective and efforts to encourage more students to study Japanese language and culture during a time where Japanese culture interest among youth is at an all-time high. In the last two years, he stated, the Society has been able to reach over 200,000 school-aged children in the UK. Emphasizing the importance of Japanese language and culture studies, he expressed regret of the decrease in Japanese educational activities implemented by universities but informed the attendees that the Board of Trustees are addressing it.

Greg spoke of future activities and events that will be held by the Society, emphasizing a focus on increasing support from corporate sponsors to strengthen economic relationships. He spoke of continuing initiatives to encourage the surging enthusiasm amongst the young people of the UK. Lastly, he highlighted the initiative to encourage maximum use of the Japan-UK Youth Work Visa, as only 1500 places out of 6000 are currently being used.

He gave warm thanks to the trustees coming to the end of their term who are departing from the board, including Neil Riley and Pernille Rudlin. He particularly thanked Yasuyuki Okazaki, who will be departing to the embassy in Washington, for his important role in trade negotiations. He concluded by thanking the corporate and individual donors, old and new, whose contributions are essential in maintaining the Society's work, in particular Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Nomura, and JTI.

Michael Rivera King

Michael Rivera King began by expressing his gratitude to Greg for his ongoing support. He highlighted the growth in membership over the past year, with 150 new individual members joining, along with JERA Nex Ltd, Brunswick and Deloitte joining as supporters and the British Museum joining as a charity and institutional member. This year, the organization has held 48 events so far, attracting over 7,000 attendees. Michael commended the team for their dedication and hard work in making these achievements possible.

In the area of education, he noted a positive shift with external parties now approaching the organization to develop school resources. Recent examples include a sumo resource pack and a newly completed pack on samurai. He highlighted upcoming work focused on arts and culture, contemporary issues, special events, and business-related programming.

Michael echoed the ambassador's call for active engagement, reaffirming the team's openness to feedback and collaboration. He concluded by thanking Ambassador Suzuki, Greg, and all attendees for their continued support.

Formal Business

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

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.
2. To reappoint Richard Place Dobson as auditors and to authorise and approve the Board to approve renumeration as so fit.
3. To appoint Yasuko Fukuda as an ordinary trustee.
4. To appoint Darren Goff as an ordinary trustee.
5. To appoint Mohan Manuel as an ordinary trustee.
6. To appoint Julie Rogers as an ordinary trustee.
7. To adopt new articles of association in the form produced to the meeting for the purposes of identification in substitution for and to the exclusion of the company's existing articles of association.

Following a suggestion that The Japan Society trustees are to attend Japan Society events on a regular basis, allowing trustees to meet members of the society and support members of staff, Greg encouraged trustees to be visible and attend events on a regular basis.

Greg Clark

Greg Clark concluded the meeting by guiding attendees to the reception area and thanked everyone once again for their support.