



JLGC/The Council of Local  
Authorities for  
International Relations

Founded in 1988, CLAIR is a joint  
organisation representing Japan's 47  
prefectures, 17 designated cities and 1,788  
municipalities.



*Autumn in Sankeien Garden, Yokohama* (©JNTO)



# Myriad Leaves

## JLGC Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2008

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# 万葉

**Myriad Leaves** is the English language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry, *Manyōshū*. It contains 4,516 *waka* poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title: it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.

**Japan-UK 150 Anniversary:  
Medway William Adams Seminar**

On the 12th of September, JLGC in cooperation with Medway Council, the Japan Foundation, and All Nippon Airways hosted the William Adams Memorial Seminar at St Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham, as part of the Japan-UK 150 celebrations. The seminar featured talks by Michio Hemmi, resident priest of the Jodoji Buddhist Temple (Adams' family temple), Yokosuka, Japan, and Wataru Nishigahiro, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Embassy of Japan, London. Michio Hemmi spoke mostly on Adam's life in Japan, his connection with the Jodoji temple, and his relationship with the people of his domain and Shogun Ieyasu.

Wataru Nishigahiro's speech centred on a possible connection between William Adams and William Shakespeare who were born in the same year, and introducing the theory that Adams attended Shakespeare's plays while living in Limehouse, London, and the Netherlands, and then re-enacted these plays both on his ship, and in front of Shogun Ieyasu himself. In her concluding speech, Cllr. Susan Haydock who chaired the seminar drew on the many similarities between the UK and Japan at the time, despite being so far apart – religious tensions and the role of religion in society, and the fact that both the Jodoji Temple in Hemi and St Mary Magdalene Church in Gillingham are around the same age, 800 years old, and were used for the recording of births and deaths.

JLGC is very grateful to all those who helped make the seminar a success, especially Mr Hemmi and Mr Nishigahiro, Cllr. Susan Haydock from Medway Council, and Revd. Suzanne Pattle of St Mary Magdalene Church. Page four of ML looks at JLGC Seminars in more detail.

**Japan-UK Links:**

**Hiroshima Council take a leaf out of Westminster Council's Book**

UK Local government took a decidedly global turn last week when Japanese councillors from Hiroshima visited their elected counterparts at Westminster. The contingent from Hiroshima City Council made a special effort to visit Westminster City Council as part of their tour of London. Hiroshima was particularly interested in Westminster because of the extensive regeneration work it undertakes, despite being one of the capital's more affluent boroughs. They also discussed the congestion charge and Westminster's transport policies before undertaking a tour of the Lisson Grove and Mozart estates to see the council's regeneration projects first hand.

Leader of Hiroshima Council, Councillor Tadaaki Sakairi said: "We were highly impressed with what we saw in Westminster. Managing the effects of the car economy through better traffic management and making communities better places to live are challenges both London and Hiroshima face. "Such visits allow our authorities to better understand how to face them and react according to the public's needs." Westminster's Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Alexander Nicoll said: "We are always extremely happy to welcome visitors from all over the world to learn more about how to tackle the issues that affect everyone." Hiroshima is a fantastic city and we were glad to receive their councillors and give advice on how to tackle complex issues such as transport in congested cities."

**JLGC Activities**

**Japanese Local Government Officers UK research**

September saw the arrival of six local government officers for a three month training programme to the UK. The officers are from Tochigi, Nagano, Fukuoka, Tokyo, Miyazaki and Hyogo Prefectures. The first part of the research visit was an intensive English for International Communication course in Bournemouth, with a specific focus on communications in local administration. From there each researcher attended another intensive course at the INLOGOV centre at the University of Birmingham on the structure and history of UK local governance,

before splitting up and going to placements throughout the country with UK local authorities in Argyll and Bute, Denbighshire, Middlesbrough, Gateshead and Leeds. Each member of the research team will be looking at a specific area of UK policy relating to themes such as tourism, education and the environment and how policy is carried out by the different local authorities. The group will then travel to France to look at the French local government system during similar research placements, with one continuing onto Poland.



*JLGC Staff with the researchers at INLOGOV visit to Parliament*

**JLGC visits to UK Councils**

**Study Placement in Spelthorne Borough Council**

From the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24 of October, JLGC Assistant Directors Ms Ryoko Matsunoshita (seconded from Tokushima prefecture) and Mr Seiki Kimura (seconded from Tokyo metropolitan government) visited Spelthorne Borough Council in Surrey to learn about UK local authorities. On these study placements staff seconded to JLGC in their first year from Japan with the aim of studying systems of local governance.

This placement was kindly arranged by Japan Study Tour alumni from the borough council, Chief Executive Mr Roberto Tambini who took part in 2000, and Assistant Chief Executive Terry Collier who took part last year. The JLGC staff were first of all warmly welcomed by Mayor Simon Bhadye and all the staff from Spelthorne BC. They were able to look at the arrangements for local elections, Shepperton Studios and recent modernisation of the town's commercial centre as well as the British Airways HQ and Heathrow Airport which are major local employers. They were also made a visit to local primary and secondary schools where together with learning about the difference between the UK and Japanese education systems they were left with the strong impression after a Q&A session that the students had a great interest in Japan. On this study visit, JLGC staff were also able to have the valuable experience of discussing the current state of UK and Japanese local government, as well as learning about the provision of public services by local authorities. JLGC would again like to offer our thanks to Ms June Stillwell as well as all the staff at Spelthorne BC for arranging the visit and for the warm welcome.



*JLGC Staff with June Stillwell (left), Roberto Tambini (2nd left) Mayor Bhadye (centre) and Terry Collier (far right)*

## Topic

# The Difficulty of Evaluating Public Services

**JLGC Director Noboru Fujishima**  
Translated by Jason Buckley

JLGC was lucky enough recently to have Dr Peter Watt of the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham give a presentation entitled the *Drive for Efficiency*. Dr Watt's lecture provided a fascinating insight into the 'why' and 'how' of assessment in the UK public sector, and the ways in which further improvements and increases in efficiency will be made. However while listening to Dr Watt I was reminded of my own experiences when I was a deputy mayor in Yokkaichi city.

The concept of assessing public sector performance goes back quite a long way in Japan too. The National Diet (Japanese Parliament) receives reports on public services which outline spending levels, what was achieved, and how society benefited. The aim of such reporting is of course to amend any poor or inefficient areas and provide improved services under the following year's budget.

Although in reality, the most important element – the extent to which residents are satisfied with the services they are receiving – has not been covered under this type of assessment in Japan because of a lack of objective criteria for assessment; and the difficulty in defining what constitutes a *good service*. Rather, assessment in Japan has been limited to formalities such as verifying that a service remained within budget, or if set rules were followed in spending funds, or ensuring that the service provision was within the confines of the law.

In private industry in Japan, and the manufacturing industry in particular, strict objective quality control standards and continual improvement to products and services has resulted in world-renowned high quality and high-value added products. This is in stark contrast to Japanese public services which have been criticised for their low standards.

However there are arguments in defence of public service administration: Setting objective standards in private industry is easier because it is measured ultimately by profit. In a business environment raising revenue above necessary costs or reducing losses is considered *good practice*, and doing the opposite is *bad practice*. But for *good practice* in public services administration there is no clear objective measure such as private industry's "profit" – all government practice is, in some way, invariably tied to the improvement of taxpayer's services, so it is impossible to draw a clear line between correct and incorrect practice. Consequently, if a government service based on a budget drawn up by a democratically elected mayor and approved after democratic deliberation by an elected council is correctly implemented as per the set budget, then we have no choice but to say that this constitutes correct conduct.

Within government budgets biases that advantage some parts of the populace more than others do exist, and there are some government services which are also provided by the private sector, such as schools, hospitals, and transport. Therefore not conducting performance assessment in government administration is problematic. But what was missing were effective technical solutions on how to objectively assess public service performance.

Public performance assessment began in the UK, US, and New Zealand, and information on positive results began to be noticed in Japan. From the latter half of the 1990s onwards increasingly numerous local authorities in Japan were introducing new public sector assessment, but they faced many problems, some of which I will outline below:

As there have been no national uniform standards for evaluation in Japan, local authorities have set assessment standards independently without being able to compare results with other local authorities, resulting in poor objectivity. Lack of clarity about eventual use of the data gained from the assessment process has led to the inability to make improvements.

There has been difficulty in getting correct information from those parties being assessed if the results of the assessment affect future budgets or resources.

Even in situations where assessment standards have been objective and the data accurate, the data itself has not necessarily reflected the true nature of the party being assessed because of outside conditions and influences (eg. socio-economic conditions, unforeseen circumstances etc.), and agreement and compliance with the evaluation process of staff was often low.

Conflict between areas being assessed has meant that improving one area has led to a decrease in quality in another, so that improving all areas has become impossible.

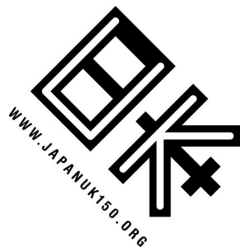
Public service performance management in the UK has been standardised and objectified at the national level from the very beginning. It has been made clear from the start that based on the outcomes of the assessment process, central government will guide or even intervene in local government, and perhaps this is the reason why there are fewer problems in the UK than in Japan. However I am interested in the way the UK intends to tackle problems which have also been experienced in Japan, such as external circumstances influencing assessment, conflict between elements being evaluated, the increase in the work load caused by assessment, and problems in relation to the psychological burden on the parties being evaluated.

Dr Watt explained that in contrast to the previous system which assessed councils, CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) is a cross-inspectorate approach which looks at how well people are served by all their local public services, comparing each year to the previous, rather than setting an absolute standard against which a service is measured.

I am also quite interested in the effect that performance assessment has on staff motivation and whether there are any schemes that combat demotivation. I will look to the UK and its experts for good examples to use for the improvement of local public services in Japan.



Professor Peter Watt from INLOGOV at University of Birmingham talks on Evaluating Public Services at JLGC's last Speaker Series seminar. JLGC holds regular events for researchers and Japanese organisations on aspects of UK current issues of interest. Other themes have included CIPFA's activities and hot issues about Public Accounting and UK Audit Systems, International Financial Reporting Standards, Epson Europe's European Strategy, Why City Branding is Necessary, The Modernisation of Local Government with special reference to congestion charging, as well as many others.



By Seiki Kimura/Jason Buckley

2008 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce, and in commemoration of this a number of events have taken place across the UK and Japan. JLGC in cooperation with other organisations held three seminars throughout the year looking at historical relations between Japan and the UK, with a special focus on particular Britons, Thomas Blake Glover, William Adams, and Sir William Armstrong, whose lives and works left a lasting effect on Japan. The seminars were held in the home towns of each respective figure and featured presentations by experts on Anglo-Japanese history and relations.

The first Japan-UK 150 seminar was held at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July where Professor Brian Burke-Gaffney of the Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science and Kazuki Kusano of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Europe talked on the influence Thomas Glover had on early Western shipbuilding in Japan and the modernisation of the country as a whole. More information on this seminar can be found in the July 2008 issue of *Myriad Leaves*. The second Japan-UK 150 seminar was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September at St Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham, looking at the life of William Adams, thought to be the first Briton to ever reach Japan. The seminar featured talks by Michio Hemmi, resident priest of the Jodoji Buddhist Temple (Adams' family temple), Yokosuka, Japan, and Wataru Nishigahiro, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Embassy of Japan, London.

Michio Hemmi spoke mostly on Adam's life in Japan, his connection with the Jodoji temple, and his relationship with the people of his domain and Shogun Ieyasu. Throughout his speech Mr Hemmi continually referred to Adam's courage, confidence, and great worldly knowledge which strongly influenced many of Shogun Ieyasu's policies, and the dignity and respect with which he treated the people in his adopted homeland. Mr Hemmi concluded his speech by expressing his hope that Adam's example of respect and understanding of a different culture and his tolerance can be an example for all mankind in a world riven by wars and environmental destruction. Wataru Nishigahiro's entertaining speech centred on a possible connection between William Adams and William Shakespeare who were born in the same year, and introduced to the audience his theory that Adams attended Shakespeare's plays while living in Limehouse, London, and the Netherlands, and possibly re-enacted these plays both on his ship during his voyage to Japan, and in front of Shogun Ieyasu himself. Videos of the Medway seminar on William Adams will soon be available on our website, as well as others. Please see <http://www.jlgc.org.uk/en/williamadams.html>

The third Japan-UK seminar was held at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, looking at past and future relations between Japan and the North East of England. Speaking at this seminar was Professor Marie Conte-Helm, Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, Trevor Mann, SVP Manufacturing for Nissan Europe and Managing Director for Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK, and Consul General Kenichi Suganuma of the Embassy of Japan in the UK. Prof. Conte-Helm's presentation concentrated on the historic aspects of the relationship between the North East and Japan. This ostensibly began under the Bakufu era in Edo (now Tokyo) with the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and was followed up by a visit of Japanese delegates to Newcastle in 1862. On their visit they met William Armstrong, a local industrialist and munitions expert (Engineer of Rifled Ordnance at the War Department), who later began to supply armaments and vessels to the Imperial Japanese Navy. This was followed by the Iwakura Mission to Britain, of which a group



*Priest Michio Hemmi meets Mayor and Mayoress of Medway at the William Adams Festival at St Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham*

visited Newcastle, in particular the Gosforth Colliery. They also visited the new industrial settlement of Middlesbrough in the south of the region, where they witnessed iron ore extraction and foundries. Connections to the region then flourished, with the establishment of a small Japanese community around Armstrong's Elswick shipyards (some graves of Japanese sailors killed in accidents in the city remain) and another small Japanese community in Middlesbrough – the UK port on the Japanese shipping company NYK's European route in the early 20th century.

Japanese involvement in the region continued apace with the establishment of the NSK Group's engineering works in Peterlee in 1956 (a global leading supplier of bearings, automotive components and steering systems), followed by the Nissan car plant at Sunderland in 1984 (now the UK's largest). The plant was opened by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1986, at a time when unemployment in the region was as high as 20%.

The Nissan connection was continued by the next speaker, Trevor Mann of Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK. Mr Mann outlined the factors behind Nissan's decision to build its European base in Sunderland, having examined eight possible sites in 1981. These included the presence of skills among the local labour force from the era of heavy industry, the supply of local labour because of unemployment, the presence of port and rail in the town, the availability of land on the former airfield site and the provision of government grants as an Enterprise Zone. The plant is now the largest in the UK and has been for nine years. Productivity has increased from 246,000 cars per year in 1992 to 450,000 in 2008, with the same level of staff (5,000) thanks to efficiency and improved production techniques.

Consul General Kenichi Suganuma was the third and final guest speaker and addressed the topic of UK-Japan relations past, present and future: 'Future Possibilities of UK-Japan Cooperation: Sharing Values and Culture in an Uncertain World'. Consul General Suganuma spoke of the past 150 years of intense relations, which had matured into a mutually-beneficial arrangement in recent years.

Mr Suganuma spoke of the Anglo-Japanese imperative of a world in which democracy, human rights and markets are upheld and both island countries' status as an ally of the US. He argued that Britain and Japan should join forces to promote their common values, in cooperation with the US. However, this could only be achieved through softer forms of global interdependence such as cultural and academic exchange. In particular, he envisaged lasting cooperation around political development, diplomatic initiatives, global threats, trade issues and research beneficial to both around the ageing society and education.

All three seminars were resounding successes and JLGC would like to pass on its sincere appreciation to all the individuals and organisations that made them possible. For further information on JLGC's activities please visit [www.jlgc.org.uk](http://www.jlgc.org.uk) for frequent updates about future activities and seminars, and other activities we are involved in to promote exchange local authorities and cultural institutions such as supporting research into local governance, organising the JET Programme employing UK graduates in the Japanese education system.

## Guest Article

# My Japan Study Tour

**Gareth Newell, Head of International Policy,  
Strategy & Enterprise,  
Cardiff City Council**

First of all, a confession: before my participation in the Japan Study Tour in October 2006 my knowledge of Japan was largely, though not solely, based on Nintendo computer games, manga comics and high-quality electrical goods. These were all signs of Japan's economic and cultural influence in the everyday life of a 25 year old Welshman, and the role it has created for itself in the post second war global economy. From the outside looking in, to the casual observer, it appeared a stable, successful society, where change was gradual and traditions maintained. In October 2006 a dozen intrepid local government employees, including a couple of Councillors, a Chief Executive, an academic, a host of senior managers from a variety of fields, and myself, Executive Officer for SOLACE in Wales made the trip to Japan on the Study Tour, organised by the Japanese Centre for Local Government in London, and CLAIR (the Council for Local Authority International Relations) in Japan.

As I read on the plane what therefore surprised me then was the turbulence of Japan's recent history, with so much happening in so short a period of time. Emerging from self-imposed isolation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when American ships arrived in Tokyo (then Edo) harbour and demanded Japan open for trade. The opening of Japan proved to be the first step in the fundamental change from the Samurai ruled feudal system to Japan becoming the world's second largest economy, all within 150 years.

Such a rapid pace of change, economic growth, industrialisation and urbanisation, combined with the fact that Japan, when considering the amount of habitable land in this mountainous country, is the most densely populated country in the world, brings with it significant environmental challenges.

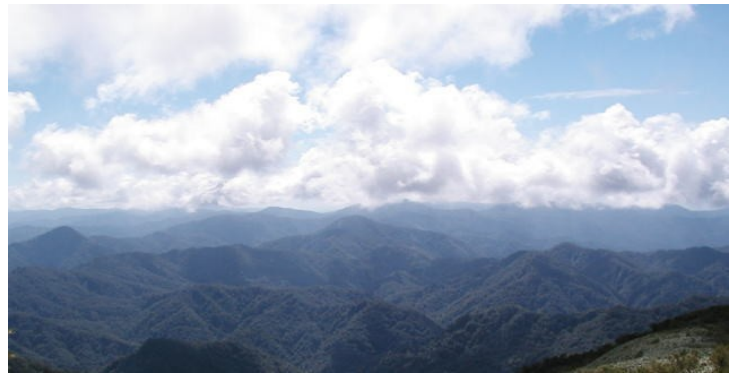
No wonder then that the "conservation and use of the natural environment," the theme of the 2006 study tour, is such an issue of import to Japanese people, and therefore to Japanese local government.

We were fortunate to see both ends of the spectrum of the natural environment: Tokyo, one of the world's great cities, and Aomori Prefecture, the most northerly on the main Honshu island of Japan and a place noted for its natural beauty, and whose main industries are tourism and agriculture.

My expectations for Tokyo were high. Much has been said and written over the years about this city and it didn't disappoint. By day it was hard to keep my mind on the seminars on local government



JST participants from the UK meet at Shirakami-sanchi for a tour with a local guide, looking at conserving the area.



**Shirakami-Sanchi** (白神山地, lit. *white god mountain area*) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site of unspoiled virgin forest straddling both Akita and Aomori Prefectures. Of the entire 1,300 km<sup>2</sup>, a tract covering 169.7 km<sup>2</sup> was included in the list of World Heritage Sites in 1993. Siebold's Beech trees make up a large portion of the forest. Picture © Modeha

finance and governmental systems when the city buzzed outside our 15<sup>th</sup> floor window. At night, it simply dazzled. After a few days in Tokyo, visiting the Edo museum, the fascinating Central Disaster Prevention Centre and the busy districts of Asakusa, Aomori offered a refreshing contrast.

Visits to sights of natural beauty such as Lake Towada and the Shirakami Mountains, whose virgin beach forests have been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, were combined with visits to important local historical and cultural centres such as the Sannai Maruyama Historical settlement dating from 3000BC and the newly opened Aomori Museum of Art.

All of the facilities were of exceptionally high quality, and it appeared that the many were funded by the public sector. My colleagues and I cast envious eyes over buildings like the Museum of Art, a fantastically modern gallery and museum built in a field in rural Japan. As our hosts were keen to emphasise, the trip was as much centred on learning about Japanese culture as about local government systems, and our homestay with a Japanese family for the weekend proved to be an integral, and one of the most fascinating, parts of the visit. Mark Barrow, then Deputy Chief Executive of Great Yarmouth, and I had the pleasure of living for a weekend with a local Buddhist monk and his family, in a temple on the outskirts of town. Over the weekend we visited local attractions like the Nebuta, gigantic carnival floats of Gods fighting each other, stored away for winter. Each evening we'd go to the onsen, or public baths, where our host, Sasaki-san would sit in the hot baths, place a towel over his head, and snooze before heading into town for a karaoke sing-song at a back-street bar. At night we slept on the temple's tatami floor, in partitioned rooms within the temple's main public area. All of this communicating via hand signals to our non-English speaking host. Without doubt, the homestay was a unique experience that will live long in my memory.

Our hosts for the weekend, the staff at CLAIR and the JCLG, and indeed every Japanese person, without exception, who we met over the 10 days were polite, helpful and most of all good fun. I had worried, after British Airways had lost my baggage and I was forced to wear jeans and T-shirts to the first day's business meetings, that this would be a cause of offence. On the contrary, once the situation had been explained, it became instantly a cause of concern, and then of comedy. I'd like to thank all those involved in being so friendly and helpful. Finally, a few words on the food: it was uniformly delicious.

Looking back, the study visit served as a fantastic introduction to Japan, its people, culture, environment and government, and as a foundation on which to build a lifetime of links between myself and Japan. Earlier this year we hosted the JLGC Annual Seminar in Cardiff, an event supported by the Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff University, local businesses and ourselves at Cardiff Council, and I had the opportunity to show Japanese visitors around Cardiff and the South Wales valleys, thereby in some small way repaying the favour for their hospitality during the study tour. Equally, hearing the karaoke skills of fellow participants was a cultural experience that I shall never forget, despite my best efforts!

## UK-Japan Relations

Simon Woodroffe

OBE

Original Dragon in the Den and sushi purveyor

By Keith Kelly



Sushi and Japanese food is now ubiquitous on the UK high street, and such is sushi's growth in popularity that it is now outselling the traditional staples such as the BLT sandwich in many places. It is fast becoming a national dish alongside ploughman's, pizza and curry. Brits now get through £500m-worth of sushi each year, and from one sushi restaurant in 1974, we now have an estimated 350 nationwide. Sales in supermarkets have risen by 30 per cent each year for the last two years. When you compare that with the fish'n'chips sector's annual growth - a paltry 6 per cent - Britain's extraordinary enthusiasm for raw fish, particularly over its battered counterpart, is startling. These days Mr White Van Man is just as likely to eat a few uramaki as ladies who lunch, even Butlins is trying out £7.95 sushi platters on its holiday makers. One of the most recognisable sushi brands in the UK was started up in 1997, and YO! Sushi last year while celebrating its 10th anniversary opened its 30 restaurant, now a national chain with restaurants in Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds and several in London as well as abroad; a successful British brand selling Japanese products.

Founder Simon Woodroffe OBE started the chain in 1997, and has appeared as a 'Dragon' on the first UK series of Dragons' Den. Simon left Marlborough College towards the end of the 1960s, at the age of 16, with 2 O-levels. He went on the road with the likes of Rod Stewart and The Moody Blues before becoming a stage designer. After a spell in television, he conceived and launched YO! Sushi in 1997. The business established conveyor belt sushi bars featuring call buttons, robot drinks trolleys, Japanese TV, self heating plates and other such novelties. In September 2003, Woodroffe sold his controlling interest in YO! Sushi in a £10m deal, backed by private equity firm Primary Capital. Woodroffe still retains a 22% stake and continues working as a business entrepreneur, also taking time to present TV programmes. He currently speaks around the world at corporate and promotional events, and has appeared on stage at the Edinburgh Festival to discuss his YO! Sushi venture. Woodroffe received an OBE on 17 June 2006.



Kaiten sushi, literally meaning *revolving sushi*, is now commonplace on the UK high street, as sushi becomes more and more popular sandwich chains and supermarkets stocking up on Japanese products (picture by chenyun)

YO! Sushi is part of the YO! Company, which has also introduced Japanese capsule style hotels at UK and European airports, with plans to bring other Japanese concepts to the UK such as onsen (hot-springs resorts), webcasting, home furnishings and clothing under the YO! brand. YO! Sushi uses the Japanese style conveyor belt method of delivering sushi to customers. In each restaurant various sushi dishes and other Japanese cooked foods are prepared in a kitchen in plain view of customers and then set on the thin conveyor belt. The belt carries food around the restaurant in a circuit, allowing diners to pick any dish from the belt for consumption. The restaurants are mostly based in the UK but restaurants have also been opened in the Middle East in Dubai, Bahrain and Kuwait, with others in other countries such as Malaysia, Russia and Ireland. ML recently posed some questions to Mr Woodroffe on his business and its Japanese flavour:

*"What was it that first attracted you to sushi as a business?"*

I loved sushi and searched it out wherever I could find it in the world. A chance remark by Uehara San from Fujisankei television got me up and running on kaiten sushi

*Was it difficult introducing sushi into the UK, famous for not being very adventurous when it comes to food?*

I never did any market research – I simply opened one rather large restaurant in Poland Street on January 22nd 1997 and announced "World's largest conveyor belt Sushi bar" to a Britain that had never even heard of Kaiten Sushi. I had robots serving drinks and digital voices great music and felt like a theatre of Japan– even if you didn't like sushi you still wanted to be part of the fun and that's how I get people in and tasting sushi.

*Why do you think that Yo! Sushi has become so successful?*

I think I opened YO! Sushi at the right time and I made it mainstream with a brand that was not all *Japanesey* – I banned Katakana and Kimonos – and people felt it was theirs and were not afraid – the reason it has grown and continued is that it has been well run and grown paying good attention to the food and service by CEO Robin Roewland and his team.

*Why do you think we have seen a "Japanese boom" in recent years in the UK?*

Japan is the last great mystery of the east to Europeans – I say it is "The most different place on earth " and unlike Thailand not many westerners have been there

*Where did you get the inspiration for your very strong branding?*

I always loved branding in fact at the time having been in Showbiz and rock concerts most of my life I thought branding was the new rock n roll – people asked if I miss showbusiness and I said ' I'm still in it'

*A lot of the YO! brands have a very Japanese flavour; what is it about Japan as a brand that you think can be so successful?*

I LOVE JAPAN – it's that simple

*Do you have any other plans for Japanese style products or business you are looking to develop in the future?*

Yes I do I am developing YO! Zine a spa and YO! Home residential property with moving furniture all influenced by Japan design and technology

*In your experience, is there anything the UK can learn from Japan on branding and service?*

Service is great in Japan as are manners and kindness to others

*How about the other way around?*

Japan is not as efficient in best practises as Britain and decisions take a long time – Brits generally do not know that

*Do you have any advice to anyone wanting to start their own business?*

I never met the person who went out to follow their dreams and regretted it regardless of whether they later succeeded or failed but I met many people who looked back on their life and said I wish I'd done that when I had the chance. ALSO, get rid of your TV set and don't give up the day job – instead start working in the evenings and ,make decisions once you have knowledge"



## JETAA Careers Information Day



September 18th saw the London JETAA chapter organise the 12th annual Careers Information Day for JET Programme participants returning from Japan in the summer of this year, and for former JETs interested in a career change. The event was held at the impressive venue of HMS President RNR training

centre, St Katherine's Way on the river Thames with great views of Tower Bridge and the London Assembly. On the day a variety of companies from various industries such as the NHS, NTT Europe Ltd (Japan's BT), Mitsubishi Corporation, Ernst & Young, Deloitte as well as others manned stalls looking to offer advice and discuss opportunities in the job market for recently returned JETs.

Also providing advice and recruiting were various specialist Japanese recruitment companies offering help for those looking for a specific Japan related career in the UK. Further to this, the event was also attended by SOAS, Universities of Sheffield, Bath, Newcastle, the Japan Foundation, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and the Embassy of Japan looking to offer guidance for those interested in education opportunities, whether in teaching or developing language skills acquired in Japan. The day also saw workshops by JETAA London chapter members on acting, teaching, HR and recruitment, fundraising, tourism, events, UK civil service, and others as well as a CV surgery service offered by University of Reading Careers Office to make sure returnees were crossing all those *Ts* and dotting the *Is* when contacting potential employers.

Following CID, JLGC held a reception in the Ward Room to welcome back JETs to the UK with an address from JLGC Director Noboru Fujishima and Consul-General Kusaka from the Japanese Embassy to thank them for their time working on the programme. Stuart Butcher from JETAA also made a speech on behalf of the London chapter executive. With great views of the river and some glorious weather in the evening to enjoy the canapés and wine on the jetty on the Thames, this year's CID was particularly successful, with a high proportion of this year's returnees attending, through the hard work of JETAA London chapter executive members Charlie Fisher, Steve Turner and Chairman David Giddings, as well as all the JETAA volunteers on the day. JETAA offers a broad range of advice and help for people participating in the JET Programme, with Q&A sessions for people going on the programme, helping with orientation before departure to Japan, as well as networking events for those back in the UK, a jobs bulletin board on the JETAA-UK website and calendar for the cultural events organised by them throughout the country.

## 2008 JETAA-International Conference Paris

### Paris matches JETAAI delegates' ambitions

The JET Alumni Association, **writes Stuart Butcher, UK delegate and International Executive Treasurer**, held its Annual International Meeting in Paris in late September, the first time that it has been held in a non English-speaking alumni country. 15 representatives from JETAA countries around the world and the JETAAI executive committee, as well as six guests from CLAIR and MOFA attended the three-day long conference.

Before the meeting started, the conference was opened with

welcoming words from CLAIR and the Embassy in Paris, who kindly provided support to the France JETAA chapter in organising the event, before dinner on a Seine boat. Getting an Eiffel of the famous tower, lit up with stars in honour of France's EU Presidency, certainly added sparkle to the evening.

The meeting proper kicked off the next day, at the Maison du Japon in the Cite Universitaire to the south of Paris city centre. This astonishing building was designed in a Japanese style, and sits in a wooded grove along with buildings representing architectural variety from around the world. The beautiful setting stimulated a lively debate amongst delegates.

It is easy to dismiss such meetings, but it is so important for JETAA representatives from around the world to get together and share ideas, as well as to receive the latest news from CLAIR direct from the horse's mouth and to ask questions. CLAIR representatives from Tokyo outlined the short-term future of the Programme, which unfortunately is likely to continue to show a downward trend in participants, and this has an impact not only on the work within the programme but also the support that CLAIR can offer JETAA. In saying this, CLAIR asked JETAA chapters to make sure that their funding is used to the best of their ability. Country representatives around the world had different ideas on how the alumni associations could help CLAIR on various points, with suggestions ranging from more involvement in pre-departure events, to offering a drop-in clinic for those thinking of applying for the programme. It is always interesting and heartening to see the different solutions from around the world, and delegates were able to take away some innovative ideas to their chapters.

Another large section of the meeting was taken up with discussion on communications and social networking sites. This wasn't, as it sounds, an invitation to update our statuses on Facebook, but rather, how JETAA could use such sites to promote chapter activities. The project to launch a new website ([www.jetalumni.org](http://www.jetalumni.org)) and membership database also received much talk time. The site is now up and running, and the database project should be live in early 2009. Watch this space! JETAAI have also adopted their first ever charity – Room to Read, who sponsor English language libraries in schools in developing countries. Although early days, the delegates talked of several novel ways to raise money for this worthwhile cause. It is hoped that the organisation can make a difference to English language students around the world.

Outside of the meeting, delegates were also treated to a reception at Ambassador Imura's residence near the Place de la Concorde. At the event in this modern yet strikingly Japanese building delegates also got to meet many of the JETAA France chapter members, with the trilingual environment proving tricky for some attendees. As well as the UK, France is also celebrating 150 years of diplomatic relations with Japan, and this event was planned to commemorate that milestone too.

JETAAI conferences are always stimulating and provide impetus to the organisation for the dark winter months ahead. This year's was no exception, with a Parisian *esprit de corps* added to the mix. Many thanks to all involved at JLGC London and Paris, the Embassy in Paris, CLAIR, MOFA and JETAA France chapter.



## Environmental Model Cities

By Toru Murase, JLGC Deputy Director

Translated by Keith Kelly

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July this year, the Government of Japan announced the selection of six local authorities as “model environmental cities”, after a summit focusing on how Japan’s plans for a low carbon society will be met through pioneering strategies. The chosen cities are Yokohama city in Kanagawa prefecture and Kita Kyushu city in Fukuoka prefecture at the major urban level, at the medium size level the regional centres of Obihiro city in Hokkaido prefecture and Fukuyama city in Fukuyama prefecture, as well as Shimokawa town in Hokkaido and Minamata town in Kumamoto prefecture, as small scale towns and villages. The government went on to explain the local authorities had been chosen on the basis of fulfilling the following five conditions:

1. Having the objective of seeing a marked decrease in greenhouse gases. In effect “cutting emissions by half by 2050” and seeing an “above 30% increase in energy efficiency by 2030”
2. To excel in forward thinking and modality. To have no other peer model, and to be seen as having a national and international impact
3. To have an impact within the region and include the characteristics of the region in a novel strategy.
4. Realise the possibilities at a high level
5. Have the strategies for continuous development

The chosen cities and towns presented strategies based upon their achievements up until now.

While the heavy industries of steel manufacture and shipbuilding formerly flourished in the area, more recent problems of decline and air pollution for the 990,000 population of Kita-Kyushu city has led to environmentalism and as a result the self-proclamation of being Asia’s frontier environmental city promoting a low carbon society. Focusing on energy efficient industries, companies are working together on projects for flexible eco-industrial complexes, such as the “Toda Green Village Project” with industry and the consumer together using heat and energy from gas engines for electricity production, resulting in a 20% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>. Together with Tienjian city in China, advanced projects such as the agreement by Japan and China on “eco-town construction” will continue through inter-city diplomacy under a joint advisory body headed by both countries to seeing the 23,400,000 ton reduction rising to 31,400,000 tons. Yokohama is building on a tradition of partnerships between public bodies and citizens with the development of autonomous organisations developing strategies to improve daily life, such as the scheme called “Sharing of knowledge, expanding choices; achieving zero carbon urban living through citizens’ power”. Further strategies like the so called “Yokohama Method anti-pollution measures” relating to the environment, industry and the focus on pollution prevention, tough regulation and leadership have been put in place to strengthen the national Environmental Pollution Prevention Act, all of which have become a focus point for the country. As a result the volume of general waste processed by companies is 2,700,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, a

reduction of 47% (2003 compared with 2006). Further, the city district of Kounanku’s neighbourhood council “Ecohamama – Energy Reduction Challenge Project” was successful in seeing an average 15.4% reduction in waste output in February to March of this year. From this successful joint strategy with citizens, the city aims tackle household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, towards a target of a 40% reduction in output by 2025.

For mid sized regional urban centres, Obihiro city (Hokkaido) with a population of 170,000 surrounded by abundant Nature and a centre for model dry field farming and a traditional dairy area, is promoting turning “Obihiro Forest” back into the ancient woodland that disappeared about 100 years ago, as well as living together with Nature through systems of recycling and environmental protection, reduction of waste, the implementation of specific recycling and appropriate management of agricultural waste, proposing a rural environmental model based upon these kind of achievements. Particular to this farming strategy is the use within the area of biomass from disposed and partially used material from farming and industry, reducing the emissions of green house gases through sponsoring land management methods of close agriculture ploughing cultivation techniques. In conjunction, the practical use of wind break forests on arable land for the absorption of greenhouse gases over the wide arable landscape are being promoted. Also in the mid-sized category, with a population of about 420,000, Toyama city is adding to the existing Light Rail Transport system while at the same time, speeding up the policy of persuading car users to switch to public transport in order to further reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

At the small town level, Shimokawa town with a population just under 4000, is making use of the surrounding 90% forested land, with “Houses Grown and Built in Shimokawa”, as well as the introduction of public facilities such as a wood biomass boiler, the cultivation of early matured willow timber for biomass that has no effect on the production of foodstuffs, the trial use of willow for industrial carbon offsetting, and the promotion of construction with a low environmental impact, all of which will be promoted as a next generation environmental model with the aim of creating a “Northern Forest for a Symbiotic Low-carbon Model Society”. Minamata (pop. of about 50,000) notorious for Minamata disease caused by mercury contamination of the water supply in 1952, was the first place to be declared a model environmental city in 1992, and has come to be valued as an exemplary model for its achievements in being the first city to introduce a strategy for the separation of and reduction of waste, and as a pioneer local authority in the use of the ISO standard system for households and schools throughout Japan, as well as others such as the Environmental Master System and District Environmental Agreement system, Citizens’ Woodlands, all measures taken to effect a reduction in greenhouse gases through environmental protection as a result of citizens cooperation. The city will continue to advance various strategies as a “Small Scale Local Authority model for a harmonious sustainable environment and economy”.

The chosen Environmental Model Cities were selected from 83 applications from across Japan. The government also decided on an action plan from these standards for the next selection process to choose another 7 local authorities (Kyoto city, Sakai city in Osaka prefecture, Iida city in Nagano prefecture, Toyota city in Aichi prefecture, Yusuohara town in Kouchi prefecture,

Miyakojima town in Okinawa prefecture and Chiyoda district in Tokyo). Those local authorities not chosen or that did not take part in the application process are being identified in the publishing of project highlights. The chosen LA s as well as others hoping to participate as well as relevant government departments will also join in the establishment of a provisionally titled “Convention for the Advancement of Low-carbon Cities”.

The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR. CLAIR is a joint organisation of local authorities, working to promote and provide support for local internationalisation.

The main functions of JLGC, London are to conduct research on local government in the UK and northern Europe, and to promote exchanges between individuals, including government officers and local government representatives in the UK and Japan. We are also involved in implementing the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which employs UK graduates in the fields of international exchange and English language education in Japan.

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