



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.

Yushima Tenmangu Shrine (Yushima Tenjin Shrine) (©JNTO)



Myriad Leaves

JLGC Newsletter

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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'.

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明けましておめでとうございます!

Akemashite omedetou gozaimasu — Happy New Year from the director and staff at JLGC

C40CITIES

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP GROUP

気候変動東京会議 2008



International Links in Japan C40 Tokyo Conference

The C40 Tokyo Conference on Climate Change - Adaptation Measures for Sustainable Low Carbon Cities was held from 22-24 October 2008. The Large Cities Climate Leadership Group, also known as the C40 Cities (and originally as the C20 Cities) is a group of cities working to reduce urban carbon emissions and to adapt to climate change. It believes it has an important role to play as cities contain around 50% of the world's population, consume 75% of the world's energy, and produce

80% of its greenhouse gases. The Group's secretariat is based in London. The group was founded after a meeting of delegations from more than 20 cities at the October 2005 World Cities Leadership which was organised by the Mayor of London. The following joint statement was issued by the Chair of the C40 and Mayor of Toronto, David Miller and the Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara: "We, the C40 Chair and Mayor of Toronto and the Governor of Tokyo, have shared the following awareness on climate change. Many experts are warning that if we do not put drastic measures in place within the next five or six years, we may find that we have pushed ourselves beyond the point of no return, with devastating consequences to humanity. To avoid such a situation and ensure that a thriving global environment will be passed on to generations to come, the international community must cooperate in making an abrupt shift in direction for drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have started from this year based on the Kyoto Protocol, but challenges still remain. A new global network for the period from 2013 is now under discussion, but all nations of the world must reduce their emissions. The role of the nation is crucial in addressing global warming, cities account for a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions and therefore nations must recognize the leading role that cities can play".

On August 1, 2006, the Group signed a memorandum of understanding with the William J. Clinton Foundation's Climate Initiative, under which the Clinton Foundation will provide technical and communications support. Thirty-two cities participated and 13 Joint Actions for adaptation to the impacts of climate change were agreed to be implemented. The Group held their first summit in 2005 in London and their second in 2007 in New York. At the second summit, 13 cities joined the group. The third summit will be held May 18-21, 2009 in Seoul.

Japanese Society Global ranking number one in children's development

Japan ranks number one in children's development according to a recent global report. Save the Children announced on the 10th of December – World Human Rights Day – the first large scale rankings by country of "indicators for children's development" analysing the basic rights of children. Unsurprisingly the high ranking nations are developed countries with sub-Saharan African nations occupying the bottom rankings. The indicators are from three important fields in children's development; health, education and nutrition, comparing and monitoring about 140 countries from around the world. The data is researched from three periods split between 1990-1994, 1995-2000 and 2000-2006. with findings taken from the general UN Human Development Index, based on the concept of a comprehensive global economic ranking system,

but with a specific focus on children. In the results, two quite different trends can be seen amongst the rankings, which points to the need to differentiate the needs of children from adults. The data, based on research released by the UN, could not be collected for all countries every year, so the groupings were divided into three time periods, with the values averaged for each of the three categories; 1990-1994 – 88 countries, 1995-1999 – 118 and 2000-2006 – 137 countries. The values are, from 0-100, 0 indicating no child poverty and 100 the highest child poverty. Japan had the highest ranking of 0.4. Niger was the lowest scoring 58. Save the Children is calling on the high ranking nations, including Japan, to do more to help the lower ranking nations.

Japan—UK Relations Japan Day Seminar 2008 helps celebrate Toyota City—Derbyshire twinning

The concept of linked local authorities, also referred to as twinning or sister cities, aims to foster a cultural or economic relationship between two areas that are geographically distinct but have in common such things as industry, population size, or some sort of historical link. Between Japan and the UK there are a number of linked local authorities with one of the most successful being that of Derbyshire and Toyota. Both areas have a history of car manufacturing, and in 1998, almost ten years after Toyota Manufacturing announced their decision to set up a manufacturing operation in Derbyshire, a formal twinning relationship was established which has seen many rewarding cultural, school and other exchanges. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the relationship, and as well as hosting the **2008 Japan Day Seminar**, events and festivities were held to mark the anniversary. This year's JDS in Matlock saw 65 participants take part including the mayor of Toyota City. For more details on the points discussed during the day please look at **pages 4 and 5** for more details. JLGC can help UK local authorities in twinning activities with Japan. Please contact the office directly for more information.

JLGC Activities Visit to JETAA North West and Tatton Hall Japanese Gardens.

In support of JETAA activities JLGC Staff made a visit to the NW Chapter for their visit to Tatton Hall Japanese Gardens on a very wet October weekend. Luckily the weather lifted somewhat for the tour of the gardens created by Alan de Tatton in 1910, inspired by a visit to the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition in London. Artefacts, including the Shinto shrine, are believed to have been brought from Japan for the construction of the garden. The Japanese Garden is to the west of the southern end of the Broad Walk and is considered to be the finest Japanese garden in the United Kingdom, if not in Europe. Artefacts in the garden include the Shinto Shrine, a tea house, a bridge over the Golden Brook, and a number of stone lanterns. The garden contains plants, stones and rocks which have been placed to provide a natural balance. The stones and rocks are selected for their shapes, and a mound has been formed to replicate Mount Fuji with its snow-capped summit. The plants include specimens of Japanese maple and various mosses. JLGC later joined chapter executive members for a discussion on how the JLGC can best support JETAA activities outside London. Thanks go to the chapter executive members, Helen, Joubin and Amy from JLGC for organising the visit. JETAA chapters organise a variety of Japanese themed events throughout the UK as well as helping to support the JET programme through volunteering and holding pre departure activities



Shinto shrine in the Japanese Garden

Guest Article

My Japan Study Tour

**Dr Peter Smart, Hon. Reader,
Aberdeen Business School**

I enjoyed a whole new set of experiences of Japan in November 2008. Previously, I had seen plenty of open countryside – on the plane circling over Honshu and on the shinkansen ‘bullet’ train – but my schedule had been confined to meetings and tourism in the metropolitan areas of Tokyo, Osaka/Kobe and Nagasaki. On this occasion, with the eleven other members of the Japan Study Tour 2008, I was immersed for almost a week in the beauty and tranquillity of rural Japan, sandwiched between two days in Tokyo at either end of the tour.

The formal programme started at the CLAIR offices in Tokyo, with an introduction to CLAIR, followed by a briefing on local government and local autonomy in Japan, and on local administration and finance. The briefings were delivered by experts from CLAIR and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and were supported by a clutch of handouts which will continue to be useful reference documents for a long time to come. We also had the first of our formal ‘courtesy visits to’, this time to meet Mr Michihiro Kayama, the Chairman. The activities on the first day set the scene for a frenetic programme of visits, functions and social activities that were timed and ran to the minute, just like the shinkansen.

On our second day in Tokyo we visited the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s Waste Management Centre: a state of the art centre where all domestic garbage from Tokyo’s 23 wards is taken for sorting, composting, power generation and landfill as appropriate, the latter creating a series of islands in Tokyo Bay which will become recreational parks in due time. The coach then took us directly to view the outside of the Imperial Palace and on to Ginza for lunch.

Later the same day we headed by shinkansen to Nagano Prefecture for the start of the main theme of the 2008 Study Tour, sustainability in rural communities. Our first host authority, gave an introduction to public administration in the prefecture and a discussion on ‘green tourism’. We then headed south for a programme of visits arranged by Iida City and Achi Village, and the Minami Shinshu Joint Association of Local Authorities, a non-statutory co-operative of local authorities in south Nagano set up to tackle some of the challenges of rural communities.



This part of the tour had a balance of meetings, lectures and ‘courtesy visits to’ on the one hand and less formal activities on the other. Where else but the Kakinowasa district of Iida City would you find two councillors, assorted chief officials, the chair of a UK government commission,

an academic, a policy manager from COSLA and his counterpart from a German association of towns learning to make *gohei mochi* rice cakes for lunch – and working in total harmony? Where else would the local press and cable TV station cover such an activity? Where else but the hot springs public baths and hotel in Hirugami would you find the same group and their Japanese guides literally up to their necks in hot water, stark naked (but gender separated!)? Or sitting cross legged on *tatami* (rush) matting in their *yukatas* (kimonos) eating dinner whilst being entertained by *taiko* drummers? Fortunately as a group who had only met briefly once before in London, we gelled as a collection of old friends, developing our intellectual capacity and enjoying our social time together.

What did we learn? Perhaps one of the biggest surprises was that in Japan, the elected governor of a prefecture or mayor of a local authority is also formally designated ‘chief executive officer’ by law. There is a separation of powers between him or her and the main body of elected members. He or she even has power to dissolve the rest of the council if there is an insoluble disagreement between them. Try transferring that to the UK context!



Another difference from the UK is the large number of relatively small towns and villages that are local authorities in their own right. Whereas in Scotland and Wales, and an increasing part of England, we have moved to unitary authorities serving either a large population or large area or both, Achi village, for example, which was on our itinerary, was a village council with its own mayor, serving a population of about 6000 and running four schools, a library and other services of its own. There was a clear closeness to the people and an interest in local affairs, but it would have been good to have had a debate about the ability of such a small authority to attract high quality professionals to run its services, or how it is able to sustain its services effectively.

We heard many concerns about the depopulation of the more remote villages (this is an area with mountains rising to over 3000 metres, heavily forested, with black bears amongst the indigenous wildlife), the aging population in many villages and the migration of young people to the towns and cities of Japan to attend university or college or for work, with no real plans to return to their roots. The population of one village we visited (and where we had lunch cooked over charcoal in a local inn) had dropped from more than 200 to just 32 over the past few years, with more than 60% over the age of 60. This was indicative of the scale of the problem being experienced.

But we visited a number of initiatives, including a young company set up to market local agricultural produce by mail order, drawing supplies from a range of local farmers. This company employs 150 and is seeking to grow its business beyond the shores of Japan. We also visited a residential school set up within the past few years, which attracts youngsters normally for one year of their schooling from the metropolitan areas, with a view to introducing them to rural life. Both initiatives and a pottery some of us visited from our home stay had some stunning architecture.

We all left Japan with abiding memories. Visually, for me, they ranged from fresh snow on the tops of the *Japanese Alps*, to the size of the local apples and the ubiquitous strings of persimmons hanging on verandas to dry before winter, to the number and length of the tunnels on both the Shinkansen lines and the expressways. Socially, they included my first experience of *karaoke* (I wasn’t the only *karaoke* ‘virgin!’) and two of our number bursting into a rendition of *The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen* and *You’ll never walk alone* in the Korean Restaurant in Iida. Culturally, they must include everything to do with the home stay – the graciousness and courtesy of my host family; enjoying meals with them and an early morning walk to the local farmers’ market where many of the locals were out in kimonos and slippers to buy their vegetables; and the tea ceremony which my hostess’s sister arranged for me and the three other tour members who were staying in the same village, and their hosts.

My thanks are extended on behalf of all the delegates to the Director and his staff at JLGC London, to the staff of CLAIR and to the many officials and friends we met during the Tour. We are all the more knowledgeable about Japan and its local government system than we were a few weeks ago.

Japan Day Seminar 2008 Celebrating 150 Years of Japan-UK Relations



・日英交流セミナー2008・



The 2008 Japan Day Seminar, held in Matlock, Derbyshire in November last year offered many unique insights and opinions from an array of experts both in local government and industry in Japan and the UK. After formal introductions and welcomes by **Chair Prof. Robin Hambleton** and

Cllr. Joyce Sanders, Tom Levitt MP, speaking in place of Phil Hope who was unable to attend, took to the stage for the day's first presentation. Mr Levitt had recently been appointed Assistant Regional Minister for the East Midlands and began the seminar with his speech on 'The Government's Response at National and Regional Level to the Economic Downturn'. He outlined the role of the regional ministers, as introduced in summer 2007, particularly with regard to the East Midlands Development Agency and the Government Office for the East Midlands. As far as the East Midlands was concerned, since becoming regional minister, Phil Hope had announced his five priorities for the region as being the economy, skills, housing, social exclusion and public services.

Mr Levitt explained that, in terms of actual activity in the East Midlands, the minister, Phil Hope had convened two regional economic cabinets since the creation of the new economic councils, in October and November. This was intended to discuss specific action required in the region to prevent any burdens on local businesses and to ensure joined up government policy locally. He believed that the leadership of the Prime Minister and the provision of local intelligence from the region would ensure that its economy would be strengthened against problems in the global economy. Locally the fruits of this strategy were in evidence at the Toyota plant where the new Avensis model was due to enter production and significant investment continued to be made through employment of local people and in their skills, which benefited the wider regional.

While the East Midlands had its own economic challenges, the region was helping the rest of the UK economy advance on a global level, he argued. However, in order to do so, it was key to engage with other countries, to both learn from them and grow trust.

Frank McArdle (South Derbyshire District Council): Where does East Midlands stand in terms of other European regions and what is the RDA doing to narrow that gap?

Tom Levitt: To some extent Derbyshire is a success by European standards as it has not suffered from some of the knocks encountered by other regions amid the financial crisis. While it's true that the region is not in the higher division of European regions, it is adjusting the regional economic strategy to take this into account.

The second speaker of the day was **Noboru Fujishima, Director of the Japan Local Government Centre**, whose talk on 'Successful Government-Business Partnerships in Japan' was to introduce a Japanese context to the discussion. The Director's presentation showed the levels of regional disparity in Japan throughout the last decade and went on to explain measures that the central government had put in place to tackle this through reforms such as merging

municipalities, from over 3,000 to 1,800. The Ministry of Internal Affairs & Communications was at the time considering a 'Permanent Autonomous Residents' Zone as a means of tackling rural depopulation. He then set regeneration in a Japanese context by detailing the example of Yokkaichi City, where he had served as a deputy mayor, which was once the leading location for the petrochemical industry in Japan. In particular, he drew attention to the investment plan drawn up by the city council and key local agencies and partners in order to mitigate against the decline in the industry, which had been affected by domestic and foreign trends. While some aspects of the plan had not come to fruition, others exceeded projections, with an overall net benefit to the local area. He also introduced a further example of an innovative local zoo, which had used the internet to drive up entry levels and save it from decline.

Peter Matanle (University of Sheffield): In my experience of Japan, quite often some local governments create short-lived tourist booms which saddle the locality with obsolete and expensive facilities. How did Yokkaichi guard against this?

Noboru Fujishima: It is true that Yokkaichi did build a tower that failed to deliver on expectations but lessons have been learnt from this and local governments are far more prudent about this sort of thing now, out of necessity.

Robin Hambleton: At this stage it might be useful to outline how local government is funded in Japan?

Noboru Fujishima: Compared to the UK, Japan relies more strongly on local taxation to fund local services.

Cllr Dave Wilcox (Derbyshire County Council): Can I ask how the semiconductor plant you mentioned came to be built as it wasn't in the original investment plan for Yokkaichi yet ended up contributing the most investment.

Noboru Fujishima: Luck, basically, though the deregulated local environment played a part in the decision to relocate there.

Peter Dougal (Gateshead Council): What criteria were used in the merger process of municipalities, were there any negative effects and is this now complete?

Noboru Fujishima: Yes, there were some unintended negative effects, such as the loss of local identity in the move towards larger municipalities, though the Ministry has learnt from this and is considering the Permanent Autonomous Residents' Zone as an alternative to gain efficiencies in local government.

The final speaker for the first session was **Andy Sawford, Director of the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)**, who spoke on 'Partnerships and the LGIU'. In the past local government in Britain had remained wedded to notions of deference, the class system and hierarchy and while he did not know what the situation was in Japan, this had thankfully given way in Britain as these were not relevant in a global economic era. In its 25th year in existence, the LGIU is hoping to remain relevant by addressing four key policy areas; local sustainability, children's services, service transformation, local democracy



He noted the high level of Japanese investment in Britain.

Furthermore, he hoped that rumours of a possible scaling down of the government's response to the Sub-National Review consultation were not true, as research from the Local Government Association had shown that the effects of the recession would not be limited to only London. In concluding, he said that leadership was more important than structures and devolution from the centre needed to go further and faster.

In opening the floor for questions, Prof. Hambleton suggested that recent conditions had shown the limits to what the central state can achieve and that the Sub-National Review was an opportunity to reverse this. Furthermore, like in Japan, issues such as demographic change had come to the fore, as evidenced by the recent Policy Exchange report recommending abandoning underperforming regions or demands to tackle the postcode lottery. Andy Sawford agreed with these points and sought to argue that the approach taken by Policy Exchange was wrong.

Cllr Dave Wilcox: In Japan, projects such as the Shinkansen (bullet train) have actually exacerbated disparities between regions by drawing even more people into urban centres. How can Britain avoid this?

Andy Sawford: Transport infrastructure remains a thorny issue for regional competitiveness in the UK also. The recent debate over Crossrail shows this.

The first speaker after the break was **Dr Peter Matanle of the White Rose East Asia Centre at Sheffield University**, whose presentation was on 'Higher Education and the Challenge of Japan's Shrinking Regions', concentrating on the example of Sado island. He analysed depopulation in one region of Japan, Niigata Prefecture and showed that population shrinkage has been proceeding from rural areas towards urban centres, affecting progressively larger settlements, and argued that, under the current national population decline, regional depopulation and its consequences should be understood as illustrating possible futures for urban Japan. He demonstrated that the most significant cause of net out-migration from Sado has been for educational advancement. He concluded by stating that regional depopulation has been a predictable outcome of Japan's national developmental project, and the lack of success in dealing with this amounts to a major policy failure by successive Japanese governments. However, the future for some of Japan's regional communities need not be bleak, given the implementation of policies suited to local, rather than national, strengths and needs.

Koichi Kawai (Embassy of Japan): Is it not the case that if every failing region decides to establish a new university that an already overcrowded market will get even more crowded? Is there any best practice from the UK to avoid this?

Peter Matanle: Yes, it is my contention that the British system has worked well in this regard in recent years, by networking institutions across a wider area it is possible to tailor provision according to local needs and avoid over-concentration of provision.

The next speaker was Mr **Clive Bridge, Corporate Affairs Director, Toyota UK**, who was the only speaker on the day from a purely industry perspective and gave a presentation titled 'Toyota Manufacturing UK – Working Together with Partners'. Mr Bridge outlined the process behind the decision to build its car manufacturing plant at Burnaston in Derbyshire, having examined a number of potential sites in Europe for its operations, as well as its facility at Deeside in North Wales. The site was constructed on a former airfield and the local councils had played a part in attracting the company to the area. Mr Bridge went on to outline the management ethos on the site and how it engaged with the local community, both local people and local councils. For instance, the company was striving to be carbon neutral through high levels of recycling on-plant and a tree-planting programme. Furthermore, during periods of low demand for production, rather than lay off workers and then rehire them it loaned them to the community for volunteering

projects. Furthermore, the management engaged with the workforce through joint decision-making and constructive dialogue with the trade union Unite. It had also invested heavily in the workforce through training and qualifications.

Susan Handley (LGA): How typical of Toyota is it to take the long term approach as taken in Derbyshire?

Clive Bridge: It is a core company value so therefore typical across the group. Toyota takes a long term view and provides deliberate support to the local community.

Robin Hambleton: Toyota has invested in the local environment for the benefit of the local community. How can local government match that?

Clive Bridge: There are many ways local government could help, such as the provision of better infrastructure to enable the company to recycle more effectively.



The final presentation of the day, 'Partnership Working in Economic Development', was given by **Nick Hodgson, Chief Executive of Derbyshire County Council**. Mr Hodgson's presentation concentrated on the recent example of the

Markham Vale business park, the council's flagship regeneration project, which he contrasted with the process behind the construction of the Toyota plant. While the Toyota plant had been built in the south of the county at Burnaston, the Markham Vale development was situated in the north of the county near Chesterfield. The site of the development was on the former Markham Vale colliery, transforming a disused facility and former major local employer into a functioning source of economic activity once more. The £62m project will not only bring 5,000 new jobs and £130m of private investment to the county but will also transform the appearance of the disused colliery. Funding for the project has come from a variety of sources including £14.5m from the Department for Transport (for a new motorway junction), £7.5m from English Partnerships, nearly £6m from EMDA/Alliance SSP (sub-regional strategic partnership), £5.9 million from the European Union's Regional Development Fund and £1.6m from British Coal. Furthermore, the council had worked with a private developer Henry Boot in order to bring this about, he said.

Chris Watson (INLOGOV): What sort of companies does the council wish to attract to this new development?

Nick Hodgson: We would very much like to attract jobs of value for local people, long term skilled jobs in manufacturing if possible.

With the main business of the seminar concluded, Prof. Hambleton made closing remarks as chair and focused on four themes he had drawn from the presentations given. Firstly, that the challenges facing the English regions are very real. Secondly, economic crisis can be an opportunity. Thirdly, we should value international dialogue for the fresh thinking it can provide to such problems. Finally, we should recognise the importance of place in what we do. In this, the seminar closed and retired to the reception, which heard from Toyota City Mayor Suzuki and High Sheriff of Derbyshire Lord Ralph Kerr.



UK-Japan Relations

C W Nicol MBE

Afan Woodland Trust, Kurohime, Nagano-ken

By Keith Kelly



HRH the Prince of Wales with Princess Takamado and Nicol, left.

*C W Nicol MBE is one of Japan's best known environmentalists. Since taking up residence in Japan he has written many books as well as other literary works, and in 1980 won the Japan Broadcasting Writer's Award for best television drama written in Japanese. He continues to be an active environmentalist, and currently travels in Japan and elsewhere giving talks and lectures about the environment including as a visiting professor at the prestigious Kyoto University, addressing issues such as deforestation and the preservation. He is particularly interested in restoring Japan's vast woodlands, and is well known in Japan. He now holds Japanese citizenship, which he wrote about in the book **Boku ga Nihonjin ni natta riyū** ("Why I became Japanese") and he owns a plot of forest land in Japan where he lives with his wife and two daughters. He has written both fiction and non-fiction in Japanese, including books about whaling, the environment, and children's fiction. In 2005, he was awarded an MBE. ML recently spoke with him about his thoughts on environmentalism, Japan and HRH the Prince of Wales' recent visit to Afan Woodland Trust, in Nagano Prefecture:*

"I came to Japan in 1962 for the first time in order to study martial arts, particularly Karate. I came after my third expedition to the arctic, which was a 19 month expedition with the Arctic Institute of North America, to Devon Island, Canada. I had studied Judo since the age of fourteen in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, and was once honoured to receive three days of instruction from the great pioneer of Judo in the UK, Gunji Koizumi of the Budokai, London. I stayed for that first time in Japan until I got my first dan in Karate, then returned to Canada to work for the Fisheries Research Board of Canada's Arctic Biological Station as a marine mammal technician.

I came to Kurohime for the first time in 1978 to visit my friend and mentor Tanigawa Gan, the famous poet. As I worked with Gan-san on translations of the Japanese myths of creation and other works, it was convenient to choose the area, which is alpine and very beautiful, with a 70% cover of woodland, ski areas, wild bears, and even a tradition of ninjas.

In order to start the trust, basically, I personally hired our chief forester, paid all his salaries and so on. I also paid for other foresters to help out from time to time. When the woodland became a trust (with me donating the land and money) then we were able to get volunteers, local, and from all over Japan, to help with tree planting, clearing brush, and with our programmes for abused children, for children who are visually challenged and so on. Certainly, local authorities have never ever stepped forward to offer help, and I have conducted a running battle with the Forestry Agency for their abuse and neglect of forests, and with corrupt officialdom linked to the dumping of toxic waste in watershed area in Nagano, a practice carried out under false company names by the criminal underworld - very dangerous and very nasty people. Local officials are either scared of them or are getting 'favours'. It is a few very courageous officials, like our former governor, and a handful of even more courageous local citizens who have openly supported me. Twinning with the Afan Argoed park in

Wales has given us a friendly 'big sister' and a lot of friends in forestry in Britain. It was important, I believe, in Prince Charles' decision to show his interest by visiting us. We visit each year and exchange information and encouragement. On our part, we have given the Afan Argoed forest Park a hell of a lot of publicity in Japan which they would not have gotten otherwise.

The efforts to improve the rivers in Britain have been a great inspiration, as have the various programs in woodland for children and young people.

Japan has a long tradition of using trimmed out hardwood logs, from mostly crowded coppiced woodland, to grow a variety of mushrooms such as shiitake. This gives produce and income from woodland, while improving woodland health and biodiversity at the same time. Nagano prefecture, whose people on average eat more mushrooms, in quantity and variety than the rest of Japan also has the lowest cancer rate. Japan also has a rich tradition of using woodland plants for food and medicine - for example, in our woods we have 137 wild edible plants. Japan also has a unique tradition of growing food (fish, loach, snails, plants) in woodland ponds and streams, a practice which also improves biodiversity and local beauty. There is much we have in common. We also make a very high quality charcoal which can be used for many purposes. This is the charcoal that can be burned in a beautiful tatami room without smelling the room up or degrading paintings, scrolls, screens and so on.

Already, we have had a couple of areas following our advice to improve woods as a healing ground for troubled or disadvantaged children. We want to help areas all over the country to bring back woodland to healthy, productive biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is a very impassioned yet extremely practical man. He really does know woodland. He was very interested in our mushroom growing, in our use of the woods for children, in our bears and in our wild Japanese bees which produce a marvellous honey. The Japanese bee is the only one that can combat the big, predatory hornets that will kill off other bees. Japanese bees quickly form a ball around a hornet scout, and by vibrating wing muscles, raise the temperature inside the ball high enough so that it kills the hornet. The Prince was also sympathetic with a problem we have in both our island nations of former policies to plant single- species plantations of conifers that now surely need to be trimmed out to grow better timber, or, when possible, be replanted with broad-leaved trees to improve wildlife, diversity and water retention of the soil. We talked about many very specific topics. It was very good too that Princess Hisako Takamado came, because she really knows birds and wildlife, and is a very dear and special friend who has visited us a few times before with her family. As she went to university in Cambridge, her English is brilliant."



C W Nicol MBE accompanies HRH the Prince of Wales through the Trust's woods outside Kurohime in Nagano Prefecture (Pictures © Kenji Minami)



Dr. James Murphy, Accident & Emergency Senior House Officer, Watford General Hospital.
A former JET writes about differences between the Japanese and UK medical systems

"I am very privileged to call Japan my second home. In 1999 after completing my first degree I was lucky enough to spend two incredible years on the JET Programme in Osaka, Japan's second city. Fortunately being in good health during this time, I never had reason to visit a Japanese hospital during my previous stay in Japan and from the rumours spread by the expatriate community I was lead to believe that this was a blessing. The overall consensus was that Japanese hospitals should be avoided. I was of course eager to find out if these opinions were justified.

At the core of being a good doctor is the ability to teach, communicate and to empathise with people, often from backgrounds very different to my own. These are all skills JET helped me develop and when the opportunity came to spend a month studying medicine at the University of Tokyo Hospital, I leapt at the chance.

Hospital stays are longer in Japan with an average of 33 days in the hospital, but surgery is only 1/3rd as prevalent, mostly owing to a resistance towards invasive procedures. Payment for both hospitals and clinics is done on a fee-for-service basis. Government regulates the fees, as well as prescription prices. In Japan, primary care services are often more expensive than specialized care services, an inversion of most countries and the Japanese visit the doctor's office 2.5 times more than their British counterparts. Like in the UK, Japanese health care is relatively cheap consuming 7.6% of GDP, however in 2000 with the health insurance system on the verge of bankruptcy, the government was forced to raise patient contributions for treatments received from 10 to 30% in the past six years. A frequently cited cause for the crisis is the famous longevity of the Japanese combined with a rapidly dropping birth rate.

Japan's health insurance is predominantly employer-based, and has been since 1922. Universal insurance was achieved in 1961, through the National Health Insurance Act. Large companies are required to operate insurance plans for workers and their dependents. Dependents are required to enrol in the plans and the whole system is funded through payroll taxes. Small companies' employees and dependents are automatically enrolled in the small business national health plan operated by the government. The "citizen's insurance program", which covers the retired and the self-employed is administered by prefectural governments who levy a compulsory premium on the self-employed in their districts. Furthermore, the employer run health care and the government run small business system are both required to contribute to the citizens program in order to cover the retirees. The unemployed remain in their employer's program (or whichever program they were in before) with the payroll contribution waived. All plans are required to cover a range of benefits, which include dental care, maternity care, and prescription drugs.

The plans place no restriction on hospital or physician choice and have no preauthorization requirements. Japan has a much more independent class of physicians, with most clinics and small hospitals being family-owned and operated by independent doctors a far cry from our non-profit and private-based care. The government builds and operates the large medical centers.

At my placement in the department of Gastroenterology where the professor is not just a figure head, he has almost total autonomous power over his department and he frequently made major decisions without any form of consultation on issues ranging from clinical policy to hiring and firing staff. Most senior doctors appeared very subservient and nervous when he was

around. Several referred to him as a "mafia boss" because he has total control over every doctor's life and their future. When a doctor qualifies they complete a two year "internship". After this they must then choose a speciality and a job at a particular hospital. From this time on they are indebted to the departmental professor for life. They have no control over where they work and can be asked to move anywhere in the country with just a few weeks notice. They cannot change job without the professor's permission and a doctor who offends the professor's sensitivities is more likely to stay within the department doomed to a career in obscurity rather than being granted permission to move on elsewhere.

I found this system of virtual bondage very difficult to understand. Indeed many Japanese doctors seemed to share my concerns that so much power in one man's hands was bound to lead to injustice and mistakes, but there remained great respect for the professor at every level, and there was no doubt that his academic record was beyond reproach. I was also reminded that the same system of dedication of a team to their master, as samurai warriors were to their daimyo lords, is deeply engrained in the Japanese psyche and common throughout institutions to this day. Thankfully, being a gaijin (foreigner) I was deemed to be outside the usual hierarchy and could therefore speak to the Professor almost as an equal. I was even invited to his family home and found him to be very insightful and agreeable. Nevertheless, I gave thanks for the relative freedom of the British medical profession.

I was given free access to the full range of clinics and procedures offered by the department of gastroenterology and I soon found myself an accepted member of the team. Junior doctors work on average 16 hours a day, 7 days a week with 3 weeks annual leave per year. Consultant level doctors still only have one day holiday per week and regularly work 14 hour days. Despite these harsh conditions loyalty, camaraderie and moral remain strong, on the outside at least. The junior doctors frequently remarked that they were able to cope because of the kindness and support of their seniors. Furthermore, while the hours are long, often the pace of work appears more relaxed than in the UK. I was in awe of their dedication but felt grateful that greater respect was given to the work life balance of doctors in the UK.

One of the major differences between UK and Japanese clinical medicine appears to be the incredible reliance on treating on the basis of investigation findings to the point where the British tradition of "treat the patient not the investigation" is almost totally reversed. The reliance on investigations was strongly reflected by the lack of history taking and physical examination skills of the junior doctors I observed. Indeed I never observed a thorough clerking throughout my 5 weeks. The reason given was that the CT scan or the X ray or the blood test results all pointed to a particular diagnosis and therefore a thorough history and examination were not necessary. The investigation rate per patient in Japan must be several fold higher than in the UK. Nevertheless, the Japanese consistently outperform most other developed nations when it comes to successfully treating patients which means that the UK must be able to learn something from their approach.

I was pleasantly surprised by the way patients were treated by medical staff. There was a strong emphasis placed on dignity and respect. Doctors even bowed to their patients when they entered the consultation room. As with the UK, the elderly appeared more willing to defer decisions to the doctor. However doctors said they had noticed a greater desire among patients to discuss their care now that they were being forced to make a greater financial contribution towards it. In the few consultations I watched performed in English, I was impressed by the empathy shown by doctors and I felt I would happily be treated at University of Tokyo hospital if I had been ill."

Editorial

Japanese Media Coverage on the Effects of the Financial Crisis on Local Authorities

By Toru Murase and Jason Buckley



The current global economic crisis has seen various problems come about in Japan. The number of corporate bankruptcies up to November 2009 exceeded the total figure for the previous year, and is the highest number recorded in the post war period,

particularly for listed companies (Kyodo News). Conditions are in fact deteriorating for many companies in Japan. Leading auto-maker Toyota, one of Japan's most recognisable companies, announced that their operating profit as at the end of this fiscal year (31st March 09) will have reduced by one trillion yen (£7.23bn) on the previous year. In similar instances, Honda was forced to withdraw from the F1, Sony announced the reduction of staff by 16,000, Panasonic is reporting a large decrease in profit, and many other companies are showing worsening results.

Corporate bankruptcies and reduced corporate earnings have a big effect on local government tax revenue in Japan and local authorities are also feeling the effects.

There are two types of corporate taxes at the local level in Japan - corporate inhabitant tax, and corporate enterprise tax. Corporate inhabitant tax is made up of two parts – a levy according to the size of a company, and a surtax on corporate tax (a national tax). Part of corporate enterprise tax, and this corporate tax surtax come from corporate earnings, so a decrease in corporate earnings has a large effect on tax revenue. This can be devastating for large metropolitan areas where many businesses are located.

For Aichi prefecture, home to Toyota Motor Manufacturing, estimated tax revenue for the 2009 fiscal year (beginning April 1st) is forecast to decrease by 360 billion yen (£2.6 billion) (Chunichi newspaper), which would be a 26% decrease on the estimated tax revenue for the current fiscal year.

Osaka prefecture is expecting a billion yen (£721 million) reduction in tax revenue in the next fiscal year (Sankei). And in Tokyo tax income for this fiscal year is expected to be 700 billion yen (£5 billion) less than the original estimate of 6.85 trillion yen (£49.25 billion), with a high possibility that it may increase even more so (Sankei). Shizuoka prefecture announced a 30 billion yen (£210 million) decrease (Nishinippon), with Chiba prefecture predicting about the same.

The situation is not much different for most of Japan's other prefectures. In fact, of Japan's 47 prefectures, more than 40 have seen major differences between forecast and actual tax revenues (Kyodo News).

In addition to this, prefectures are also facing the problem of having to pay back tax already received. Companies in Japan pay an estimated amount of tax based on the previous year so when the amount of tax payable is less than the amount of tax already paid the difference must be refunded.

The amount of tax that Aichi prefecture will have to return to Toyota Motor Manufacturing will total 100 billion yen (£719 million) due to Toyota's reduction in income (Mainichi). Toyota and Tahara cities will have to return an equivalent amount (Asahi).

Land prices are also falling which is causing a loss in tax revenue for municipalities as their main source of finance is fixed asset tax, calculated on the value of property and buildings. In Tochigi prefecture average property prices for the 2009 fiscal year dropped 14.5%, and in one area 22.4%, on the previous estimate three years prior (Shimotsuke).

In the current economic climate local authorities are facing an up-hill struggle with insufficient tax revenues and budgeting for the next financial year. Some are considering issuing bonds to make up for the forecast reduction in tax revenue (Kyodo News). Suspension of public works and reductions in labour costs are also being considered (Nikkei).

In Yamaguchi prefecture the salary of the governor will be cut by 10%, officials' by 5-6%, and regular employees' by 3% for the next three years (Nikkei).

In Hino city, outer Tokyo, construction of the 'citizens' hall' was halted, and officials' salaries cut.

There have also been cases of misreports in the media over what exactly will be cut from local authorities' budgets. One media agency was forced to apologise after mistakenly reporting that budget cuts would mean potholes in roads would not be repaired.

The effects of the economic crisis are not just limited to decreases in tax income. There has also been a rise in unemployment which many worry may lead to social instability. To help prevent this, prefectures and municipalities across Japan have been putting together plans to temporarily hire people made unemployed in order to ease the pressure. Aichi prefecture is one of these, having announced that they will hire 200 temporary workers to help maintain roads and rivers, or do support work at schools or hospitals (Nikkei).

Kitsuki city, Oita prefecture, will be hiring temporary staff to perform similar jobs, and nearby Bungotakada and Oita cities will begin renting out council houses to people made unemployed for as little as 4500 to 8200 yen (£30 to £60) per month (Mainichi).

A number of universities are going down a similar route, hiring temporary workers to perform tasks such as cleaning, or bicycle sorting (Mainichi).

Overall the situation looks rather grim for local authorities in Japan but hope lies with proposed stimulus packages totalling 75 trillion yen (£543 billion) to cushion the effects. Like stimulus packages proposed by other governments

around the world, these aim to boost spending and help people who have found themselves unemployed or without adequate housing. The packages also aim to boost business activity which, if successful, will provide local authorities with the much needed tax revenue they have seen disappear since the crisis began.

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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