

# 万葉

# MYRIAD LEAVES

THE JOURNAL OF THE JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTRE • LONDON  
FEATURING ASPECTS OF JAPANESE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

多摩川に晒す手作  
何ぞこの子のここだかなしき  
さらさらに



Takachibo Gorge,  
Miyazaki Prefecture



Imaban Itoyama Bridge,  
Ebime Prefecture



Mt Aso, Kumamoto Prefecture

tamagawa ni  
sarasu tezukuri  
sarasara ni  
nanizo kono ko no  
koko da kanasiki  
  
Who can behold  
The maiden  
Bleaching cloth  
In the crystal Tama waters  
And not be smitten

## MYRIAD LEAVES

Myriad Leaves is the English-language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry. 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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## NEWS ROUND-UP

## Bed-blocking in Japan

The UK's health system is grappling with the urgent problem of bed-blocking. In Japan too, elderly patients suffering from long-term illnesses are facing the problem of having nowhere to go. From April 2004, chronically ill patients who occupy a hospital bed for over 180 days will see an increase in their hospitalisation costs. This is being implemented as part of the policy to reform the medical insurance system to stem the rising costs of medical care. Hospitals are also encouraging patients to be discharged early. Many patients occupy hospital beds despite not requiring medical care, but simply because they cannot go home, and providing these so-called "social patients" or bed-blockers with alternative accommodation is reaching crisis point.

Under the new system, a patient occupying a hospital bed for over 180 days will see his or her medical care costs rise by 15% (in addition to the monthly contributions every Japanese adult pays through the national insurance scheme), which represents monthly payments of between 40,000 to 60,000 yen. The reforms will be implemented in 2004, but as an interim measure, hospitals will be allowed to charge their long term patients an extra 5% during fiscal year 2002, and 10% during fiscal year 2003. The first patients who will be asked to pay are those exceeding 180 days hospitalisation from October 2002. Current patients have already started to panic and look for alternative accommodation in special nursing homes, but these are mostly full, with a two to three year waiting list in the bigger cities; yet if they cannot find alternative care, they will have to pay the additional costs of their hospital bed. Because there are so few who can pay the additional costs, the hospitals are encouraging early hospital discharge, and patients and their families are increasingly worried.

Originally, the term "social patients" referred to long-term occupants of hospital sick beds, but because of the rising costs and therefore pressure on the national insurance system, hospitals have been discharging these patients, and nursing homes have been used as alternative accommodation. In the meantime, patients in serious long-term medical care were also considered "social patients", which is one of the reasons why a new government-run contributory nursing care insurance system was introduced. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Welfare, there are roughly 50,000 "social patients" who are currently occupying hospital beds covered by ordinary national insurance. Plans to transfer these patients to nursing homes or to home day care services covered by the new nursing care insurance system have failed because the nursing homes themselves already have waiting lists.

The original idea was that all nursing care patients would be covered by the new system, hospital beds would be freed, the strain on the national insurance system reduced and the problem of bed blocking solved. However, because of fears that the new nursing insurance premiums would soar, a compromise was reached whereby hospitals would change the "status" of some of

their beds from medical care beds to nursing care beds. In terms of care conditions, there is no difference in numbers of staff or space per patient provision between hospitals and nursing homes, yet the fees payable to the nursing homes are not medical fees, but rather represent 10% of the government-set price for using the nursing care. A bottleneck has been caused as the transfer of medical beds to the nursing beds is not going as smoothly as anticipated. Out of an available 300,000 beds nationwide, 194,000 should have become new nursing care insurance-covered beds, but in fact only 115,000 have been converted and there is a shortage of them. There is also an inherent problem with the changover: moving from a medical bed to a nursing home bed was supposed to be cheaper for the patient, but in fact there is little change in price. Add the 10% of the nursing care costs (roughly 40,000 yen) to costs of meals (roughly 24,000 yen) and extras not covered by the insurance such as towels or incontinence pads, and the cost to the patient amounts to between 120,000 and 170,000 yen, which is roughly what patients are asked to pay for medical care and a bed.

Finally there are also problems with definitions: in theory, national medical insurance is used to pay for necessary medical treatment and the new nursing care insurance for nursing care, but the definitions of medical and nursing care are not clear, and are often left to the better judgement of the doctors. Some doctors also say that the actual treatment, be it covered by medical insurance or nursing care insurance, is exactly the same. The new nursing care system was supposed to be introduced with options and regulations, but with a national shortage of nursing beds, the decision to move patients from one system to another has been left to the doctors; this means that there is worry about the lack of nursing places for "social patients".

This acute shortage of nursing places has come to light as local authorities around the country carry out their first review of the system since it was introduced in 2000. It is the local authorities who levy the contributions for the nursing care insurance, and the cost to the average worker is set to increase to an average of 3241 yen per month from next April, which represents an increase of 11.3%. Moreover, the gap between regions is set to multiply eightfold. Premiums will rise in line with an increase in service charges, and faced with more and more elderly people, the costs of care can only go up; yet there are big differences in contributions between some authorities who levy over 6,000 a month and others who charge under 2500 a month. This is one of the reasons the Ministry of Welfare is supporting the joint provision of services, or even authority mergers.

So after three years since its introduction, what with regional imbalances in terms of demand pressure, facilities and the contributions they levy, together with the natural rise in premiums due to Japan's rapidly ageing society, the new nursing care insurance system is still experiencing teething problems.



Caring for "social patients"

## LINKS

## Japan Day in Cardiff

On November 1st, the JLGC held its annual Japan Day, in partnership with Cardiff CC, the University of Cardiff and the Japanese Embassy, in the beautiful oak-panelled committee rooms of the Glamorgan Building at the University of Cardiff. Cardiff was chosen as a venue because of the energy and enthusiasm displayed in Wales in general, and Cardiff in particular, during Japan 2001. We hoped to build on this tremendous momentum to enable those who wished, to deepen their understanding of Japan through our event.

Japan Day was a day of information on Japan, its local government and education systems. It featured a keynote speech on UK-Japan education issues, presentations on our respective education systems, features of Japanese local government and successful educational exchanges. Following the re-organisation of promotion and recruitment procedures of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme by the Embassy, the JLGC has also become increasingly involved with these activities. JET is a Japanese Government sponsored programme which gives graduates in all disciplines an opportunity to live and work in Japan, for a minimum of one year, either as an Assistant Language Teacher, or for a local authority as a Coordinator of International Relations. So the second part of the day concentrated on presenting the JET programme to potential applicants, followed by a Q&A session - another reason why we chose the University as our venue.



The audience takes in Ms Oyama's communication tips

Deputy Director Mr Kimura kicked off proceedings by welcoming everyone, and introduced the first speaker, Director Mr Ando, who outlined the features of the Japanese local government system. Mr Ando described Japan as an homogeneous two tier system, with directly elected governors at the prefectural level and directly elected mayors at the second, municipal level. He then dwelt in more detail on local authorities' tax-raising powers. Dr Christopher Hood, Director of the Japanese Studies Centre at the University of Cardiff, then gave a very inspiring talk on the background of international exchange and the role education can play in fostering these exchanges. A former Jet Programme participant himself, he reminded us of the fact that JET is currently the single largest recruiter of graduates in the UK, second only to the entire Civil Service.

A temporary glitch in the data projection system delayed the next presentation, which was an overview of Japanese national education policy by 2nd Secretary at the Embassy Mr Asano, but Huw Knight gallantly took over his slot and delivered a thought-provoking update on the current role for local government in education in this country. Chief Schools' Officers for Cardiff County Council, Mr Knight reflected that what with the very strong central government-led direction in education, in parallel with an equally strong emphasis on school autonomy, the traditional role of local government could be seen as eroded; in fact, there is a developing role for local government in fostering equality of opportunity, and creating a local culture of lifelong learning, both at pre-school and further/adult education stages.

Armed with a restored Power Point system, Mr Asano then summarised the Japanese government's education system and policy; as well as facts and figures, Mr Asano's talk covered current issues and proposed reforms of the system. Perhaps even more so that the British system, Japanese education policy is extremely centralised, and many local authorities are looking to the government to seek guidance in dealing with problems of truancy and bullying, the effects of which they see at the community level.

Mrs Stephanie Oyama had the unenviable task of keeping the audience's attention away from stomach rumblings during the last slot before lunch, which she rose to superbly with a very informative presentation on dealing with the Japanese in a business context; Ms Oyama divided a fictitious meeting between a British and a Japanese party into three stages:

- before the meeting: one needs to concentrate on preparation, briefings, accuracy and neatness in the provision of information and documents, and the management of expectations
- during the meeting: emphasis here is on communication, clarity, use and interpretation of silence, humour and colloquialisms, and respect for different decision-making procedures
- after the meeting: importance of debriefing and sharing information upon return, of commitment to the project and to long term relationships, and patience in expected outcome

The group broke up for lunch, during which the university's catering service provided us with Japanese tasters in the form of bite-size sushi and tempura against a backdrop of clever and perceptive photographs set up by the JET Alumni Association as part of its travelling exhibition. Half the group spent the time networking and discussing the morning issues, whilst the other half sat down to a mesmerising performance of Ikebana, presented by the dainty yet highly energetic Takahashi Sensei. Mrs Takahashi took us

through the symbolism and use of the array of containers she had brought, and demonstrated the fundamental principle of three-directional arrangements - Heaven, Man and Earth - in a series of simple yet very effective displays.

Unfortunately her time was cut short as it was Mr Clive Warlow's turn to entertain us with the fascinating background to the teaching of Japanese at Cantonian High School. Currently Head of Modern Languages, Mr Warlow introduced Japanese to the school and oversaw its growth from strength to strength, culminating in a successful exchange between the school and a school in Mikawa, Japan - a lesson in positive and pro-active leadership. He also echoed Ms Oyama's advice to maintain long term relationships and show commitment to a project.

The last hour or so of the day concentrated on the JET programme. JLGC staff and former Jets Madelaine Clarke and Elizabeth Aveling appealed to students looking for an exciting alternative to taking a year off, to consider the benefits of participating in such a widely known and reputable government scheme, which combines cultural immersion with the chance to gain considerable working experience. Both stressed adaptability and open-mindedness as well as strong English language skills as essential criteria for selection. Their description of their respective jobs was followed by questions, and application forms were available for those inspired to take up the challenge.

We would like to thank all the speakers, Cardiff County Council and the University of Cardiff for their support and assistance in ensuring the success of the day. If your authority would like to find out further information on these days, with a view to asking the JLGC to hold one in your area, please contact Elizabeth Aveling at the JLGC.



Heaven, Man and Earth;  
3 concepts in ikebana

VIEWPOINT

VIEWPOINT

**Work Placement in Derbyshire County Council, by Saori Shibata**

The County of Derbyshire lies in the centre of England, forming the north-west part of the East Midlands Region. There are strong contrasts between the rural west and urban east, and the Peak District National Park. This national park encompasses more than a third of the total land area of the county. People in Derbyshire are very proud of this national park, but we were surprised to learn that it is the second most visited national park after Mt. Fuji in the world.

Derbyshire County Council's administrative area covers 3 boroughs and 5 districts councils and there are 241 town and parish councils, serving a total population of about 735,000.

Our placement covered many aspects of the Council's work, and I would like to highlight a few of the many things we learnt about the authority.

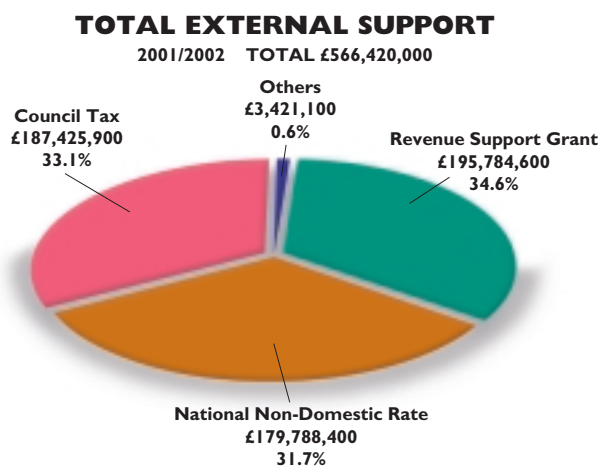
**Structure**

A leader and cabinet structure; a new cabinet made up of 9 council members with portfolios (Labour) and 1 member of the opposition (Conservative). The portfolios are:

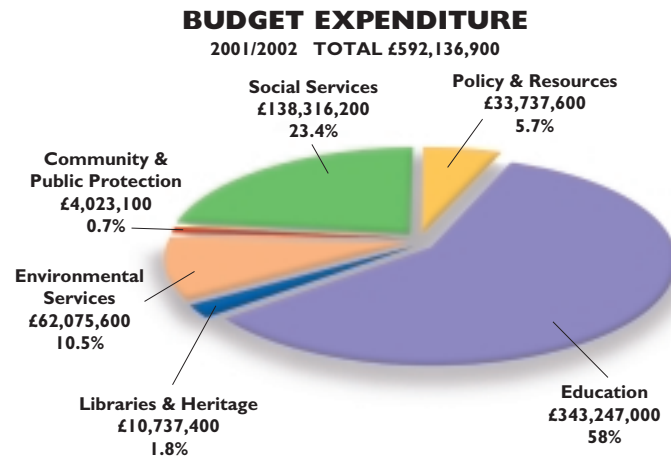
- 1 Strategic Policy/Budget
- 2 Best Value/Service Effectiveness
- 3 Regeneration
- 4 Health and Social Care
- 5 Education for All
- 6 Environment and Transport
- 7 Community Safety
- 8 Community Services
- 9 External Affairs

**Budget**

Total External Support in 2001 is shown in the pie chart below. 33% of total revenue comes from council tax, and this is slightly higher than average council tax revenue for local governments in this country, because 39% of dwellings fall in Tax Band A.



Expenditure for 2001 is illustrated below. As most local governments in this country, education accounts for the largest chunk of expenditure, but because of its location and the importance as a touristic resource of the Peak District National Park, DCC spends a relatively high percentage of its budget on Environmental Services.



What I found interesting was the similarities and the differences between Japanese and British local governments regarding tax revenue and expenditure. I compared the figures of my own prefectural government, Kumamoto, with DCC, and observed that neither authority receives enough local tax revenue compared with its spending. We have a similar budget system in this respect and central government provides some grants for the shortfall. The difference is that Japanese local governments spend more than England even if they have to take out loans to bridge the gap.

**Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

As stipulated by the Local Government Act 2000, Derbyshire County Council has a 4-year strategic plan, which focuses on 10 main issues, such as strengthening the local economy and supporting neighbourhood renewal, or protecting and enhancing the environment. In particular, DCC has put a lot of effort into Best Value in service delivery.

When we first met the chief executive, Nick Hodgson, he seemed quite happy about the result of the CPA which gave the authority a final score of 38; this was not "excellent", but good, and he mentioned that the change in work culture in the council stemmed from the leadership of the chief executive, and that the approach to the introduction of the best value adopted by the council was wonderful.

As mentioned in the Audit Commission report, DCC has improved tremendously in recent years, especially in the way the council has clear and coherent aims and visions, and also in the way the council is open with the partners with whom they work. The change in the culture in the council is felt by many people, not only by the Audit Commission but also by many officers of DCC, and has been largely attributed to the chief executive. He has introduced

changes and improvements, and enjoys a very good work relationship with the leader of the council as well as with the new cabinet.

Sugino san and I had always thought that chief executives in this country do not have enough power to influence or introduce change to the council, because we understood that elected members were in a stronger position than the chief executive. This is true on one hand, but on the other hand, a chief executive and his staff can implement change which will then have a positive effect on the council. This was a very interesting fact.

Another interesting thing which arose our talks with one of the chief officers, concerned the introduction of CPA: he believed that when the government introduced Best Value, it was forecast that Best Value would lead to the privatisation of public works, but that did not happen as central government wished, and so Comprehensive Performance Assessment was introduced. He also explained that he saw CPA as an external form of inspection, whereas BV was more like an internal inspection. We had been confused about the differences between BV and CPA at the beginning, but his explanation gave us a clearer idea of the differences.

**Education**

The interesting thing about education for us is that in comparison with the Japanese system, where the local authority is involved with every school within its boundaries, some schools in the UK are managed by trusts. The school we visited in Ashborne was one such school, under reconstruction by means of system similar to PFI, to which DCC does not contribute financially. This means that the school has to raise its own funds, and also implies that head teachers demonstrate business and administrative skills, and commercial awareness besides their abilities as educators. Private schools like this are exempt from interference by local authorities, but the chief officer of the Education Department told us he takes care to create good relationships with the headteachers of private schools because he thinks it is important for the benefit of the children in Derbyshire.

His words left a deep impression on me; after all DCC has no financial or legal obligation to private schools, and technically their financial troubles, should they experience any, are of no concern. However, he made me realise the importance of good relations with such schools, because he cares deeply about Derbyshire and does his best in order to make Derbyshire a good place for its children and families. This is the one recurring impression I got throughout my placement: I met quite a number of people who work at DCC and who genuinely care, because they love the place. I was happy to see this and I realised this love and respect towards one's hometown is an essential attribute of the "good" local government officer/member.

**Social Services/Voluntary Sector**

For this part of our placement, we visited some day care centres and a local voluntary group for the elderly.

The day care centres are quite similar to those in Japan, but it struck me how much more active and involved the voluntary sector is in the UK. We visited an independent voluntary organisation

which provides bus services for the elderly or disabled, who without it would be unable to leave home. The bus is designed to cater for the disabled and was bought with a grant from the National Lottery. The bus drivers and managing staff are all volunteers, supported by DCC, who also provides them with a grant. We were impressed with the flexibility and openness of this voluntary organisation, which, in contrast to a Japanese one, lends its buses to other people for various activities and events, such as children's camping expeditions or excursions of one sort or another. If a Japanese local authority provided such a bus service, they would not be prepared to use these buses for other people beside disabled and elderly people. This may be because its use is subject to the regulation governing grants or perhaps simply that Japanese local governments are not flexible enough. The Derbyshire buses are widely used and recognised by residents which in turn attracts more volunteers.

We found it amazing that such a voluntary activity was organised and that buses actually ran in many places in Derbyshire with only some financial help from government and a handful of grants. This partnership between local authorities and the voluntary sector is one of the single most important things Japanese local governments can learn from local government in the UK. The system itself seems very simple, but takes courage to be flexible and to recognise the rewards gained in doing little things for others and making them happy.

**Regeneration**

Lastly a few words on regeneration. Derbyshire is world famous as the home of the Peak District National Park, which masks the fact that it has had to deal with high levels of unemployment and wasted brown field sites, the legacy of a declining coal-mining industry. One such site is Markham, which the Council wants to develop into an Employment Growth Zone (MEGZ). Based around a former colliery, the development would be DCC's largest regeneration project to date, creating around 8,000 jobs and attracting £130 million in private investment to the area of north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire, a region whose communities were deeply affected by the collapse of the local mining industry.

The idea is to divide the restored area into two separate zones, one as a recreation area for local residents, and the other as a business park. About half the land needed for the MEGZ is already owned by the county council, and the remainder, most of which is either scrub or derelict land, or agricultural land, will be subject to purchase.

Again, this project was a good example of partnership, this time across boundaries since notices for purchase will be available for inspection at the County Council's offices in Matlock, and also in various places within Chesterfield Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and the District of Bolsover; authorities which will also be considering applications for planning permission for the MEGZ development since the land lies within these areas.

My colleague Mr Sugino and I are both extremely grateful to Derbyshire for hosting us on our work placement, for the insight we have gained into the practical workings of local government in this country and the hospitality and helpfulness of everyone we met.

FOCUS

**Miyazaki, Land of Ancient Gods and Palm Trees**

Miyazaki Prefecture is situated on the Southern island of Kyushu, facing the Pacific Ocean. Miyazaki is also the name of the administrative capital and largest city in the prefecture. Home to 300,000 inhabitants in an area of just under 287 square kms, Miyazaki boasts one of the lowest population densities in the country; its reputation for being easy-going and its exceptionally rich natural environment also contribute to the high quality of life it offers its residents. The prefecture stretches along a very splendid coast line to the East, and over some spectacular mountainous regions to the North and West, rising only a short distance from the ocean. This region is steeped in Japanese mythology: it is believed to be the legendary place where the gods, from whom the emperor is said to descend, first touched the earth with their feet; Takachiho is also famous for a cave where Amaterasu Omikami, the Goddess of the Sun, horrified at the brother's antics, is said to have hidden, thus casting darkness upon the land until she was enticed out again by appealing to her curiosity.



Miyazaki's palm trees

Miyazaki's balmy climate is close to subtropical, very hot and humid summers are cooled slightly by the breeze coming from the Pacific and winters are relatively mild. The seasons are still distinct, and the traditional festivals which accompany seasonal colour and blossom changes are still celebrated, but there is also rather a surprising amount of tropical plant life in Miyazaki, first and foremost an abundance of palm trees. Some of these are indigenous to the area, but most have been planted purposefully – among them the palm trees which are now an integral part of Miyazaki's appeal and public relations strategy.

Every visitor to Miyazaki, whether arriving at the newly refurbished airport, at the train station or by road, will be greeted by rows and rows of palm trees running throughout the city and along its main arteries. Most of these are tall trees with straight trunks and a head of large rustling palms, but there are also squatter trees with thicker trunks and ringed with several crowns of palms. These are called Phoenix trees and are indigenous to the Canary Islands and to Hawaii, and it is from there that they were introduced to Miyazaki. At the beginning of the last century, a gardener by name of Nakamura Rintaro received a Christmas card from a relative in Hawaii, depicting an avenue of palm trees. "This is what the city needs," he thought, and had seeds sent to Miyazaki, which he then cultivated. Understandably this did not happen overnight. However, in 1936, his Phoenix palm trees were planted along the Nichinan coastline south of the city and in Tachibana Park. Instrumental to this was the "Father of Miyazaki Tourism", Iwakiri Shotaro, who used the palm trees to promote the image of Miyazaki as a southern resort. It was very successful and Miyazaki became famous for becoming a domestic "Hawaii", and the prime honeymoon destination. To this day, palm trees are part of Miyazaki's attraction and image.

Following one of the major roads out of Miyazaki City, the visitor follows another continuous line of palm trees in a southerly direction, past the airport, to Aoshima. Aoshima is a tiny island linked to the beach by a bridge, and densely populated with 200 or so species of rare tropical plants, most of which do not grow naturally anywhere else in the prefecture. The island is also surrounded by a curious natural stone formation, similar to Northern Ireland's Giant's Causeway, which appears at low tide and is called the "devil's washing board" because of its rib-like structure. On the island is a large Shinto shrine, and its easy access on foot from the main road ensures a steady flow of visitors in the summer. The same stone formation also appears at various points along the coastline down to the southern city of Nichinan, which undoubtedly is one of the finest in Japan: views of the ocean and crashing waves are splendid, and it is bordered by exotic plants such as cacti and poinsettia. The latter grow wild along the steep slopes down to the sea and show a profusion of red flowers during the winter months. To the West, the views stretch out to the high mountains and volcanoes, Miyazaki's other natural attraction.

The enduring appeal of Miyazaki as a beautiful region with a lovely climate led the prefectural government to risk killing the proverbial goose, in an attempt to promote the tourism industry even further. At the beginning of the 90s, the prefectural government invested heavily in a new venture to the north of Miyazaki City, a huge resort combining hotels, golf courses, state of the art international convention facilities, a tennis club and a giant indoor pool facility with a real beach, artificial waves and a retractable roof, called the Ocean Dome. They gave the resort the name of Seagaia, a combination of the English "sea" and the Greek "gaia" for earth. Though the hotels became operational beforehand, Seagaia was opened in 1993 amid a huge fanfare and quickly became a landmark in Miyazaki, with its distinctive hotel tower soaring over the coastline. However, economically it was not such a success story: it cost billions of pounds to build, and entrance fees for the Ocean Dome were set so high that a day trip for a family of four could easily cost 80 pounds. And by 1993, the economic "bubble" had burst and people were not spending as freely as a few years previously.



Aerial view of Aoshima

The low population density of Miyazaki, which makes it such a pleasant place to live, was a disadvantage in terms of visitor numbers. Seagaia needed to market itself nationwide and even abroad as the first "fake seaside" resort, and, as its website proudly proclaims, the world's largest indoor water park, as certified by the Guinness Book of World Records. In February this year, it came under receivership and is currently run by the American Sheraton Group; the Ocean Dome is closed for refurbishment, a new golf venture has opened (the David Duval Golf Academy) and the marketing team are busy offering a

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multitude of special offers for accommodation and facilities – but whether it can "turn around" and become profitable in the near future remains to be seen.

Unfortunately, Seagaia's troubles are not the only cloud on the horizon of the clear Miyazaki sky: other important local businesses also are feeling the pressure. Also in the Spring of this year, the local and very popular Kotobukiya department store, and an affiliated supermarket chain went bankrupt, creating a feeling of unease in the local resident and business community. Kotobukiya occupied a prime location in the heart of the city, and such a completely abandoned large building and adjacent parking space lent an air of sadness and depression to the area. Meanwhile the supermarket chain has been bought and shops are being reopened under another name, but no conclusion has been reached for the main building and possible options for use are still being considered.

Despite this, on the whole Miyazaki is coping reasonably well with the difficult economic climate and will finish the year gratified that it has pulled off quite a coup: attracting and hosting two participating football teams – Germany and Sweden – in this summer's World Cup. No other local authority in Japan was able to do this and the excitement in the city was palpable. The German team stayed in one of the smaller hotels in the Seagaia complex, and hundreds of media-related people filled the other hotels and

roamed the city in search of material, especially as access to the team and practice sessions themselves was restricted. This ensured a wide international media coverage of Miyazaki, and a friendly match between the German team and a local team of sixteen year olds was even broadcast live on German television! The unforeseen success of the German team also increased the level of excitement in the local population: from the army of volunteers stationed at strategic points at the airport, throughout the city and at the media centre, whose responsibility was providing assistance and information, to ordinary Miyazaki residents with no previous connection to or interest in football, who became caught up in the excitement, spurred on by the array of events held by the prefecture in connection with the world cup. The Swedish team stayed in a resort hotel close to Aoshima. They were not surrounded by such a large entourage as the German team and were much more accessible, also playing friendly matches prior to the start of the tournament.

By hosting two high profile teams, the prefecture drew the focus of the world in, without alienating its local residents: by involving them in a wide range of activities, and simultaneously making the region known to a wider audience, the local authority reinforced a sense of local identity and pride, whilst at the same time exposing them to a wider range of people and cultures. Miyazaki has put its name firmly on the world map.

JLGC UPDATE

U P D A T E  
**Visit to Town Councils**

Staff from JLGC visited 2 town councils in Hertfordshire, Harpenden Town Council and Hatfield Town Council. This is part of the research conducted on community development in England.

**1. Harpenden Town Council**

On 21st of November, Ms Shibata and Mr Yamaguchi visited Harpenden Town Council and interviewed the Town Clerk, Ms



Ms Anita Pack, Town Clerk of Harpenden Town Council

Anita Pack. Ms Shibata said she felt that there were many differences between parish councils in England, with some readily embracing the idea of having more power and others not willing to see an increased workload. She was impressed by the management system of Harpenden Town Council, because it is subjected to audit, through its Best Value plan and

financial strategic plan; it also has a variety of unique policies, such as its Youth Town Council and Planning Guidance. As the closest and most accessible form of local government to the general public, Ms Shibata sees parish councils as playing a much larger role in the future, and this can only be good for their residents.

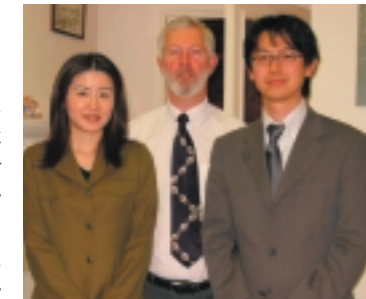
She writes: "In Japan, many people expect local governments to provide every kind of service for the community and the responsibilities which local and central government shoulder

have reached huge proportions. This has created large financial deficits and is a serious problem at all levels of public government in Japan. Under these circumstances, local authorities will no longer be able to provide certain things for their residents, and it is also expected that community groups will increasingly take over some of the local government's responsibilities.

Some Parish or Town councils in England are self-governing bodies and these councils could be good models for future Japanese community organisations".

**2. Hatfield Town Council**

Hatfield Town Council is smaller than Harpenden Town Council, though it still serves a the population of 28,000 and is one of the town councils governed by "Best Value".



Mr. Clark, Town Clerk of Hatfield Town Council, with his Japanese visitors

This means that it is easy to compare or be compared with other town councils, and it creates an incentive to try harder to compete or strengthen their relationships, not only with local authorities but also within the private or voluntary sectors. How to nurture good relationships with a variety of organisations and individuals is a hot topic for Japanese local authorities and looking at ways in which Parish and Town councils build theirs give us good guidelines and examples to adopt.



AICHI



AKITA



AOMORI



CHIBA



EHIME



FUKUI



FUKUOKA



FUKUSHIMA



GIFU

The big change currently facing Hatfield is the continuing development of the University of Hertfordshire. Because of this, the population is growing and its age groups are shifting. This in turn means that the town council is having to review its targets and services to meet the change in needs of its population. The council is currently holding consultation meetings not only with the university but also with its students, despite the fact that students do not contribute to local coffers since they are exempt from taxes.

This made Mr Yamaguchi realise that there are many Japanese cities and towns which have a university, but far fewer local authorities which think about the students' needs and value the contribution they do make economically. "The two local government systems are inherently different, but I suppose we should learn how to be closer to the residents and to respond to their needs," he said.

Ms Shibata and Mr Yamaguchi would like to express their thanks to Mr. Clark, Town Clerk of Hatfield Town Council, and Ms Anita Pack, Town Clerk of Harpenden Town Council for their valuable help in their research.

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### Short Term Trainee Programme

This year again, Japanese local governments have been feeling the pinch of the economic downturn and have reduced their overseas training budgets significantly.

Four slightly anxious local government officers arrived in London at the end of August to begin their three month overseas training course. They spent their first week recovering from jetlag and attending lectures on British local government in Japanese, before meeting representatives of the local authorities who will host them for a two week placement at the end of October. They then travelled down to Bournemouth for an intensive five week course in English language and communication skills, and were able to enjoy fully the Indian summer whilst on the coast. They were then joined by an extra five trainees currently seconded from local authorities to CLAIR, to attend a tailor-made course at the University of Birmingham's INLOGOV, also attended by the four Japanese study fellows



Attentive trainees

spending the year at the University and members of JLGC staff who participate in some of the lectures and activities as part of their continuous training. The course looks in depth at some of the fundamental features of public administration in this country, as well as recent changes and current issues. It also offers the trainees a chance to see things for themselves, with visits to various services and focal community spots in the Birmingham area.

Mr Hitomi, originally from Nara prefecture and currently in his second year at the JLGC, reports on a typical day in the life of a trainee:

"I attended the course on 14th of October. The day was fairly typical in that it balanced classes in the morning and a site visit in

the afternoon. The first lecture, delivered by Professor Y Oyama, covered the work done by Groundwork in the U.K. and the second taught us about the audit system in the UK public sector.

Groundwork started in 1981. Headquartered in Birmingham, there are 47 groundwork trusts across the U.K. The main aim of Groundwork is to try to solve inner city problems from an environmental standpoint. Groundwork approaches its projects in a "bottom-up" style - from the level of community residents, through partnerships with local authorities, other public sector bodies, and the private and voluntary sectors. The environment is a subject dear to the hearts of the Japanese and this is why many Japanese local government officers visit the U.K. to carry out research on Groundwork. The trainees were also paying particular attention to the presentation and asked many questions.

The next lecture was just as important, if perhaps less sexy, in that it covered the role of the Audit Commission, and the system of audit generally. Of particular interest here was the independence of the auditor, since there is still no real external audit system in Japan; this led to a healthy debate on the validity of an internal audit system.

In the afternoon, the group left the Conference Park for a small excursion to Handsworth Park in Birmingham, to take a closer look at green space development. This park was first established as a public Victorian style park in 1898 enjoyed by families and children, and romantic strollers alike. However in the 1960s the park fell into disuse, and subjected to both passive neglect and active vandalism, and people, especially children, were discouraged from using it, which brought on the vicious circle of more ruin.



Explanation of development of Handsworth Park

At last, after about 30 years, Birmingham City Council has decided to tackle the renovation of the park, and has engaged its residents in a consultation exercise, but with a slight difference - they gave a voice to those who can neither vote nor pay council tax: the local children. An excursion to Handsworth Park with the children was organised in order to listen to children's ideas and wishes for the recreation facilities of the park. The excursion also afforded an opportunity to educate the children on the importance of the park and of respect for the environment. The project to renovate the park will be making full use of the funds received from the National Lottery.

So today the trainees were able to understand the importance of an independent audit system and the vital input from residents in the process of regeneration work".



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The JLGC is the UK office of CLAIR - the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations.  
Founded in 1988, CLAIR is a joint organisation representing Japan's 47 prefectures, 12 designated cities and 3,232 municipalities.