

A Farewell Speech to Director General Michael Houlihan
by Ambassador Hayashi
at the “Japan House London Welcome & Farewell Reception,”
on Wednesday 26 October 2022

Good evening,

I am pleased to see you all again in person here, but in a sense this is a pretty sad occasion. Director General Michael Houlihan, an outstanding leader and friend of Japan, will be leaving Japan House London at the end of this month, just a few days from now. We all know how much Mike loves JHL and how much he has contributed to making it what it is today. We will certainly miss him deeply.

As the first Director of Japan House London, Mike was closely involved in the project from the very beginning. He has overseen the process in which the ambitious concept of Japan House took shape and culminated in the magnificent showcase for Japan since it opened in June 2018. He has thus nurtured and developed Japan House London over a total of six years, much longer time than Prime Ministers’ terms these days.

As you are well aware, creating something from scratch is an extremely daunting task. However, Mike's foresight, energy, outstanding leadership, and deep understanding and love of the Japan House project and Japanese culture have enabled him to successfully steward the venture from its rocky beginnings, going on to lead a remarkable team in organising 14 exhibitions and more than 650 events.

In the four years since its opening, Japan House London has attracted a total of 1.2 million visitors eager for a taste of Japanese culture. During that time, despite the unexpected challenge posed by the pandemic, JHL has never stopped moving forward and has continued to promote Japanese culture online, attracting more and more visitors not only from London but literally from all over the United Kingdom.

Without Mike, JHL would not have been able to flourish and establish itself so firmly as a cultural institution in the heart of London in just four years, when there are numerous competing attractions.

We will miss Mike very much and hope that he will continue to be a keen supporter of what we do and a valued friend of Japanese culture. I wish Mike all the best in his forthcoming endeavours.

Thank you, Mike, once again!