

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Awarding of the Ambassador's Commendation
to Mr Steve Dalton OBE
on 10th November 2023

Distinguished guests,

Prynhawn Da! And thank you for joining us here in these lovely surroundings at Pencoed House Estate.

Today, I have the privilege of honouring Mr Steve Dalton OBE for his outstanding contribution, over many years at SONY, to expanding the presence of Japanese business in Wales and strengthening the Japan-Wales relationship through economic growth in the region. Though those present here today are well aware of Mr Dalton's many achievements, I would like to touch upon just a few of them now.

Mr Dalton began his career at SONY back in 1983, initially working as an electronics graduate at the company's plant in Bridgend, making computer monitors and televisions. Over the years that followed, his hard work and talent led him from the factory floor to the position of Managing Director in 2005, which he continued to hold until recently.

During his long tenure, his dedication, vision, and leadership helped SONY achieve significant increases in sales and employee numbers, while transitioning to a more diverse and sustainable business specialising in the manufacture of high-end broadcast and professional technology for worldwide markets. Such successes have been welcomed in both Japan and the UK. Mr Dalton's accomplishments were also recognised when the Pencoed site received the UK's Best Factory Award back in 2013.

Of course, there have been difficult times as well. Mr Dalton helped steer the company through a challenging period which saw a factory closure and job losses, during which the manufacturing industry as a whole was undergoing and adapting to rapid and far-reaching change.

Thanks to Mr Dalton, SONY has been one of the shining lights for Japanese companies in the region and has contributed significantly to the development and revitalisation of the local economy in South Wales. His endeavours are also reflected in the standing of SONY within the local community. He has played a considerable role in the education and career development of the company's staff while enjoying engagement with the local community through many charity and sponsorship initiatives. His achievements must surely have led to other Japanese companies deciding to establish their activities in Wales, with more than 50 Japanese companies now having major business operations here.

In telling Mr Dalton's story, I would also like to touch upon why SONY decided to establish factories here in Wales all those years ago. I have heard that in the 1970s, the then-Prince Charles met Mr Akio Morita, one of the founders of SONY, and gently suggested that if SONY were to open a factory in Europe, they should do so here in Wales. And a few years later, that is exactly what SONY did, making the most of the excellent location, skilled people, and hardworking culture. And when Prince Charles visited the factory at Pencoed as part of its 40th anniversary celebrations, it was Mr Dalton who gave his Royal Highness a tour of the factory.

In conclusion, it is certainly difficult to comprehensively cover all of Mr Dalton's many contributions and achievements towards economic cooperation between Japan, Wales and the UK through his work at SONY. However, his sterling efforts in this field are clear for all to see, and I am very pleased to be able to award the Ambassador's commendation to Mr Dalton in your presence. Please join me in congratulating Mr Dalton on this richly deserved award.

Congratulations!