

Remarks by H.E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,  
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,  
at the Hanami event at St Fagans National Museum of History  
on 12th April 2024

First Minister Gething,  
Chairperson Eden,  
Distinguished Guests,

Good afternoon, “Prynhawn Da”.

It is indeed a great privilege to be able to invite you all here today for this Hanami, or Cherry Blossom viewing, event at St Fagans National Museum of History. In fact, my wife and I visited here privately exactly a year ago and we were so impressed to see the beautiful cherry trees in full bloom. I am very pleased that the cherry trees, which symbolise the bonds between Japan and Wales, are planted in such a wonderful setting and give people in Wales a spectacular treat every spring.

I note with great satisfaction that the relationship between Japan and Wales has deepened over the years. In the economic and business fields, we celebrated the significant milestone of 50 years of Japanese investment in Wales with a Kizuna Reception at the Embassy of Japan in December 2022. I am happy to see more than 50 Japanese companies have major business operations in Wales today, which have led to greater opportunities to local economies as well. In this regard, I would like to commend the roles played by First Minister Gething, who has been personally and continually involved in strengthening our economic and business ties as the former Economic Minister of Wales. We continue to promote further exchanges not only in the economic and business but also in the cultural and educational fields. I believe it is very important that these exchanges, which have been built up over the past half century, lead to interaction and cooperation in other areas, further blooming the friendship between us.

In addition to our remarkable partnership, I must mention and celebrate the fact that there is a flourishing move in the Senedd to establish a Friends of Japan group, which will be a deeply-rooted force to take forward our cooperation. I am very much look forward to working with this group to further develop our relationship, both at a high political level and on the ground.

In Wales, almost a thousand cherry trees have been planted thanks to the efforts of the Sakura Cherry Tree Project and the passion of the people at the relevant sites. I am aware that there was a ceremony to mark the planting of 20 cherry trees in the very place where we are now standing in November 2020, three and half years ago. I would like to thank everyone involved in the Project, especially the Chairman, Mr Sandy Sano, and the Honorary Consul of Japan, Mr Keith Dunn, for their efforts in planting such an impressive number of trees across Wales and trying to build a bridge with cherry trees.

I believe this is the first time since then that a cherry blossom viewing event has been organised here. I recognise that the staff at the museum have been very supportive in organising this gathering. May I thank the National Museum of Wales for its role in preserving the history and culture of Wales, stimulating the intellectual curiosity of visitors and providing a place for people to interact.

Lastly but not least, I have to express my utmost appreciation to those who have been taking care of these invaluable cherry trees because their dedication nurture not only the trees but also the bond between Japan and Wales.

I trust that we can continue to create such an opportunity for people to gather each spring under the beautifully blooming cherry trees, thereby giving a further boost to the friendly relations between Japan and Wales.

Thank you very much, “Diolch yn fawr iawn.”