

Remarks by H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Hiroshi,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
on the Occasion of the Celebration of
the 50th Anniversary of Panasonic Manufacturing
UK and Unveiling of the Panasonic HX
on Tuesday 3 December 2024

President Shinada,
Minister Evans,
Distinguished Guests,

My name is Suzuki Hiroshi, and I am the new
Ambassador of Japan to the UK. I arrived to take
up my post just last month and visiting Wales was
a top priority. Wales is a vital partner for Japan,
with long-established economic and cultural ties
that I hope to strengthen further during my tenure.

Today is the first time that I have set foot outside Greater London as Ambassador. Coincidentally, Cardiff was my first destination out of London when I previously served at our Embassy 13 years ago. I am therefore particularly grateful to Panasonic Manufacturing UK for their kind invitation to today's celebrations in Cardiff. I would also like to congratulate Panasonic on the 50th anniversary of its presence in Wales and applaud their drive and dedication towards decarbonisation through the Panasonic HX initiative.

The launch of the Panasonic HX, the first Panasonic project of its kind outside Japan, demonstrates the company's dedication to decarbonisation and its commitment to Wales. The technology is unique as it combines hydrogen fuel cells, solar cells, and storage batteries to provide energy that adapts to changes in weather and demand. As we all know, the ability to adapt to sudden weather changes is especially important in the UK! The system is also designed so multiple cells can operate together, ensuring continuous power during maintenance.

The hydrogen technology used here is based on Panasonic's EneFarm household fuel cells, first installed at the Japanese Prime Minister's residence in 2005. I personally had the opportunity to see this technology in action during my time as Executive Secretary to the Chief Cabinet Secretary and later as Executive Secretary to the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It's exciting to see this technology move from Japan to Wales, and I look forward to seeing it expand across the rest of the UK to help the country to decarbonise.

Panasonic's 50th anniversary in Wales also highlights the strength of Japan-Wales relations. In 1974, Panasonic was one of the first Japanese company to expand its business to Wales, and today over 50 Japanese companies operate here, employing around 6,000 people.

The Welsh Government's "Year of Wales and Japan" in 2025 offers a wonderful opportunity to further strengthen our cultural and economic ties. The Embassy and I will be strongly supporting this initiative of the Welsh Government.

I have also been informed that a Welsh mission will travel to the Osaka next year for the 2025 World Expo. I look forward to promoting fruitful exchanges between Wales and Japan during what's shaping up to be an incredibly important year.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved in this project. Your work not only advances technology but also deepens the bonds between Japan, Wales, and the rest of the UK. I'm confident that initiatives like the Panasonic HX will not only benefit the company but also contribute to global decarbonisation efforts. Please join me in congratulating Panasonic on 50 years of innovation in Wales.

Thank you very much.