

Remarks by H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Hiroshi,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group
on Japan Meeting
On 28th May 2025

Convenor Colin Smyth,
Deputy Convenor Alexander Stewart,
Members of the Scottish Parliament Cross
Party Group on Japan,
Distinguished Guests,

Thank you very much for inviting me to meet
the members of the Scottish Parliament Cross
Party Group on Japan.

On my first visit to Scotland as Ambassador, it is wonderful to speak with a group that is committed to furthering Japan-Scotland relations.

First, I would like to thank Convenor Colin Smyth for steering this Cross-Party Group and making great contributions to strengthening the relations between Japan and Scotland and hosting this wonderful meeting.

I am also very grateful to Consul General Takeda and the Consulate General of Japan in Edinburgh for your tireless endeavours.

Japan-Scotland relations date back more than 400 years.

First, King James I and Tokugawa Ieyasu, who unified Japan were contemporaries.

In 1613, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established for the first time with the opening of a British trading post in Hirado, Nagasaki.

Second, Thomas Glover arrived in Nagasaki in 1859 and established Glover & Co, which later became one of the leading trading companies in Nagasaki, contributing greatly to the modernisation of Japan.

And today, his hometown of Aberdeen is a sister city of Nagasaki.

Third, Masataka Taketsuru utilised the knowledge and experience he gained in Scotland between 1918 and 1920, in whisky making.

Upon returning to Japan, he established the Nikka Whisky Distilling Company, launching the Japanese whisky industry in earnest.

The town of Yoichi in Hokkaido, where he started his business, is a sister city of East Dunbartonshire, where his wife Rita was born.

So, Japan and Scotland have a long historical connection, as well as some interesting cultural ties.

At graduation ceremonies across Japan in March, the Scottish folk song “Auld Lang Syne” by Robert Burns is sung as a farewell song.

Today, more than 60 Japanese companies are active in Scotland, contributing 10,000 jobs to its economy.

There has been significant Japanese investment in manufacturing, and in recent years, there has been a notable expansion in renewable energy sectors such as offshore wind.

Sumitomo Electric invested £350 million in Port of Nigg to build a cable facility, supporting green electricity transmission.

The Ossian floating wind farm, led by Marubeni and its partners, could generate 3.6 GW of power once completed, making it one of the world's largest renewable projects.

The Expo opened on April 13 and has now been underway for over a month. The six-month long world exhibition will showcase innovation in AI robotics, green transformation, healthcare, and digital technologies, among others.

It will also provide Scotland with a chance to explore business opportunities in Japan. Scotland is a key trading partner for Japan, with exports such as Scotch whiskey and salmon totalling £543 million in 2023.

I whole heartedly welcome Scotland's enthusiasm to expand its presence in Japan.

The Scottish Government is sending 3 high level delegations to the Expo.

First, Minister for Business Richard Lochhead led a delegation to Japan from 12th to 18th April, promoting Scottish businesses in Japan, and launching Scotland's events at Expo 2025 in Osaka.

This will be followed by the delegation led by Minister for Insurance and Social Security Neil Grey on 26th June.

Finally, Minister for Net Zero Energy Gillian Martin will lead her delegation on 18th September.

I have great expectations for these high level delegations to serve as a catalyst, so that concrete progress will be brought forth in the months and years ahead.

Thank you very much.