# WRITTEN STATEMENT

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# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Visit to Japan** |
| **DATE**  | **08 October 2019** |
| **BY** | **Rt Hon Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales** |

I have recently returned from my first official visit to Japan as First Minister.

As host to the 2019 Rugby World Cup, this was a real opportunity to promote Wales in Japan and strengthen existing links between our two countries. My visit coincided with one of Wales’ largest ever trade missions to Japan and the opening rounds of the Rugby World Cup.

The links between Wales and Japan span many decades and cover many areas – there are 60 Japanese-owned companies in Wales employing more than 6,000 people. Japan is an important market for Welsh exports, worth almost £250m last year, a rise of 25%.

The Welsh trade delegation included 17 companies, from a range of sectors, all exploring new business opportunities in Japan. It followed a Welsh Government food and drink trade mission to Tokyo earlier this year and a successful trade mission in 2018, involving seven companies, which secured export orders worth more than £670,000.

During my visit, I attended several events at the Tŷ Cymru immersive dome in Shinjuku Station – a fantastic showcase for Wales in the centre of Tokyo, attracting thousands of visitors. The dome experience is part of a much broader campaign in Japan, which includes a partnership with the WRU, media relations and social media marketing aimed at Japanese audiences and business investors.

During my first day in Japan, I attended an event to promote Wales’ world-renowned cyber security sector to some of Japan’s biggest cyber-related companies, organised in conjunction with the Tokyo Cyber Cluster. I met NTT, a group including one of Japan’s largest telecommunications companies and one of the largest security companies, to promote Wales as a business location.

I held a meeting with senior representatives from Hitachi to discuss the ongoing Welsh Government support for securing Wylfa Newydd and its wider potential for the North Wales economy.

I also spoke at the Wales Week Worldwide event at the Wales dome, acknowledging the important role our diaspora play in raising the profile of Wales internationally.

On Saturday, I travelled to Oita and Kitakyushu – two cities, which have welcomed Wales with incredible affection and enthusiasm. I met the Governor of Oita to discuss areas of potential collaboration. Together with the Governor, I opened The Art of Wales Exhibition in Oita Prefectural Art Museum, an opportunity to showcase artists from Wales in a new global setting. The event included a performance by the National Dance Company of Wales.

In Kitakyushu, I saw the results of the outstanding outreach work the WRU has undertaken in the province. I met the Mayor of Kitakyushu, and the president of the chamber of commerce and industry, a business representative and sports and culture bureau officials to discuss legacy work after the Rugby World Cup. I was joined by representatives from Wales Arts International and the Urdd.

I hosted senior Japanese executives at the Wales v Australia rugby match, which was an opportunity to thank existing investors for their ongoing support for Wales and to promote the benefits of setting up an operation in Wales to prospective investors.

On Monday, I met the Sony Corporation, one of the major Japanese inward investors in Wales and the Tokio Marine & Nichido Fire Insurance Co., Ltd, which is one of Japan’s largest insurance companies.

The number of tourists from Japan to Wales has increased over the last few years from no Japanese tourists on package tours in 2015-16 to 5,369 in 2018-19. At an event jointly hosted by the Japanese Association of Travel Agents, I supported promotion of Wales as a tourist destination, highlighting our high quality food and drink offering.

I hosted a reception with the British Ambassador to Japan officially to welcome the trade mission to Japan. The event was an opportunity to promote Wales as a business destination and highlight our unique and diverse culture. Amongst some 200 attendees were representatives from the Japanese Prefectural Government, existing and potential inward investors and the Welsh diaspora.

On my final day in Japan, I met another of our key inward investors, Panasonic, and spoke at an event to promote our world-class National Museum of Wales at the Wales dome.

It is important we do all we can to raise Wales’ profile internationally, to increase opportunities for trade and export and to encourage inward investment.

This visit – at a time when the Welsh team is performing on the world sporting stage – is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that Wales is an outward looking nation, open for business and determined to maintain existing relationships and explore new avenues to strengthen the special friendship and bonds that exist between Wales and Japan.