

# sustainable japan

ESG promotional content produced by The Japan Times Cube

## Chris Russell is a news editor with an urgent message

### Roundtable

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The tipping point for Japan Times editor Chris Russell to ramp up his engagement with climate change issues came with the release of the 2018 report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). With its bleak predictions about the planet's health and analysis of the slow pace of change, Russell gained a new perspective on the problem and the way it affects politics, business and all of humanity.

"I always had an awareness about the issues surrounding climate change," Russell explained, "but that report really added some urgency." As an editor armed with an understanding of the scope and urgency of the issue, he committed himself to using his position to raise the alarm.

Now, as senior news editor of The Japan Times, Russell jointly oversees the recently added Our Planet page, among other things. He took time out of his busy schedule to sit down with Ross Rowbury and a small audience for the 37th Japan Times Roundtable to explain why Our Planet was started, why he feels a responsibility as an editor to increase awareness around sustainability issues, and what motivates him in his work.

### Media and climate

Russell began by explaining the importance of the climate change story as well as his belief that the issue's connection to Japan has not been thoroughly covered in English-language media. "I wanted to encourage more coverage of these issues in The Japan Times, and that all culminated about a year ago in the start of our new section, Our Planet, with its focus on climate change, environment laws and science more generally, as well as disaster response," he explained. He believes the section is giving more coverage to climate-related topics across different beats, from art to sports: "It's been satisfying to push that edge forward and keep developing it."

Russell believes there is no escaping the need to explain the complexity of the science behind climate change and the challenges of dealing with it. "Science is tough — there's so much jargon around this — but in terms of how it relates to journalism, it's a bit of a balancing act. It's important to present it to a reader in a way that it is going to be accessible, but of course with these issues it's not just the science," he said. "There's also the questions of politics, power, money, finance, all the social ramifications and all the other aspects around these issues, so you can't ignore that, but science is the foundational issue through it all."

Russell said that explaining the sci-



The Japan Times Senior News Editor Chris Russell YUICCO TAIYA

ence helps ensure that people are better prepared for the public discussion surrounding the issue: "If the government or a party or corporation is pursuing a certain solution or touting a solution on one of these issues, then of course you'll need to know the scientific arguments around it so there's less uncertainty about what agenda they're pushing."

### IPCC report, clear benchmarks

Russell conceded that reporting on climate can be a fraught process because today people can go on the internet and find information to argue any position

that suits them, sometimes conspiratorially pushing the experts out of the discussion, a situation he believes we saw in the recent pandemic, when nonacademic positions on the science were often the loudest. This is why he finds great value in IPCC reports, as they represent the clearest baseline in any discussion surrounding the issue. "It does make it easier to have something like the IPCC," he said. "The way that process works means it does provide that clear benchmark. They are the world's best scientists in this area, it signed off by everyone, so there's a really strong degree of confidence in what they

are saying, so having that makes it a lot easier to report on climate."

With the evidence of climate change becoming more apparent in daily life, Russell sees climate denialism now becoming "a very niche position." He added: "I think people who may have been historically skeptical about the existence of climate change now don't tend to do that. I think the issue is more around how do you respond to it, what does the transition look like, what are the costs, and how are those costs distributed across society, and I think that is where the skepticism now manifests itself."

### The 'doomer' narrative

Russell is solaced that the debate around climate change has shifted from one of not even acknowledging the problem exists to one of managing the response to it. He does believe the response is insufficient, citing the U.N. Environment Programme's finding last year that even if governments around the world were to implement all of their currently declared climate goals, the Paris climate targets would still be breached. However, he is made more optimistic by the fact that governments are at least beginning to put more ambitious plans in place.

Russell highlighted the Biden administration's recent Inflation Reduction Act as a positive example. "I don't think anyone would seriously say it's sufficient, but it's still a major piece of legislation for what it's done for EVs, renewables, energy and so on. And that is now cascading down through the rest of the world in terms of energizing competition over green technologies generally." He believes that the U.S. act and other recent legislation such as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism allows some optimism to creep in. "It offers a corrective to that 'doomer' narrative that many young people have, but there still is that base reality that we are still far off from where we need to be on this."



Russell noted that in climate reporting, the issues of politics, power and money can't be ignored, "but science is the foundational issue through it all." YUICCO TAIYA

### On the climate radar

Russell believes that a page dedicated to climate ensures there is pressure in the newsroom to always be reporting on the issue, rather than it being just a nice thing to have on occasion. "I think a dedicated page means that in the long term it will mean stories just feeding out into the newsroom more generally, and issues around the topic will become embedded."

His next project will be taking part in the Oxford Climate Journalism Network, a program run by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University that is dedicated to helping reporters and editors around the world improve their reporting on climate. "They really liked what we are doing with the Our Planet page and The Japan Times' reporting on climate generally, so they wanted to offer me a place on the program, so it's been something I've had on the radar for a little while," he said. "It'll mainly be a lot of listening and learning from experts — and a lot of late nights online."

Roundtable is a monthly series of English-language events organized by The Japan Times Cube. For more information or to assist to a Roundtable scan the QR code.



Russell helps shape the paper's business coverage and jointly oversees the Our Planet page focused on the environment and climate change. YUICCO TAIYA

## Times Gallery



Argentine President Javier Milei is greeted by House of Councilors member Akiko Santo on Dec. 10 as part of a special delegation that assisted the ceremony for his assumption of office. EMBASSY OF ARGENTINA



Bolivian Charge d'Affaires Natalia Salazar with the director-general of the Latin American and Caribbean Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yasushi Noguchi, at an event celebrating the 15th anniversary of the foundation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. EMBASSY OF BOLIVIA



Togo Charge d'Affaires D.E. Kekeli Mouvy meets Kisarazu International Friendship Association Chair Kieko Suzuki at KIFA's New Year's party in the Chiba Prefecture city on Jan. 20. EMBASSY OF TOGO



The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates hosts a reception for its 52nd Union Day on Nov. 21. Attendees included government officials and company representatives. EMBASSY OF THE UAE



Hitoshi Miki, the new chairman of the Overseas Fashion Brand Association and the president and representative director regional CEO of Richemont Japan Co. Ltd., gives his New Year's address. OFBA



Elie Maalouf, CEO of IHG Hotels & Resorts, visits from London to meet with Ichiro Takahashi, commissioner of the Japan Tourism Agency, in Tokyo on Jan. 19. IHG



Jamaican Ambassador Shorna-Kay Richards meets with Hiroshima and Nagasaki peace messengers who are passionately promoting a culture of peace in Japan and abroad. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA



Serbian Ambassador Aleksandra Kovac meets young researchers, a winner of the Nikola Tesla Award and representatives of the city of Hofu on Dec. 26, marking academic success and friendly ties. EMBASSY OF SERBIA

## Seino delivers greener logistics through open public collaboration

### ESG/SDGs

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Seino Holdings Co. Ltd. has been in the logistics business for more than 90 years. Last June, the Gifu-based company expanded its continuing efforts to be environmentally friendly when it announced a long-term vision of "Team Green Logistics" based on a concept of an open public platform.

Its subsidiary Seino Transportation Co. Ltd. is one of Japan's top commercial logistics companies and an industry leader in the pursuit of sustainability. Its efforts include a shift from trucks to rail and coastal shipping in order to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, the introduction of two trucks hooked together, the promotion of driving skills that save energy, a switch from diesel to electric in trucks and using bicycles and carts near 57 business centers across the country. Its website lets customers calculate potential carbon emissions together with freight charges. It also has started to collaborate with other freight companies to save on energy and manpower.

Since October, the company has implemented a new measure to tackle "the 2024 problem" of various challenges that may arise from a new government policy limiting overtime for truck drivers to 960 hours a year, starting in April.

Truckers' long working hours has been one of the most pressing labor issues in recent years, involving concerns over not

just their well-being but also traffic safety. But the cap may result in less income for some drivers, which may cause some to stop working and discourage young people from joining the freight industry. This could reduce delivery capacity in the logistics industry even as the e-commerce market continues to grow.

Seino Transportation decided to take a new approach that is expected to increase its transportation capacity by 67,200 tons annually. The company turned its Kita-Osaka Branch into a dedicated intermediary center to streamline deliveries from the entire country to the Kyushu region.

Because of the branch's geographical advantage of sitting right in the middle of the route connecting Tokyo and Fukuoka as well as being near Japan Freight Railway Co.'s Osaka Freight Terminal, it had been used both as a hub to connect Kyushu and the rest of Japan and as a platform for delivering goods to northern Osaka Prefecture.

The branch handed local collections and deliveries over to two neighboring branches in Toyonaka and Settsu in order to focus entirely on providing an efficient transportation system for goods going to the Kyushu region. This allowed the Kita-Osaka Branch to enhance its transportation capacity to the area to 700 tons daily.

Seino is not the only company facing the 2024 problem, of course. To help others in the industry survive, the branch is accepting requests from rival companies to transport goods to Kyushu on their behalf instead of them running their own trucks on the same route.

Seino uses both rail and road to deliver goods to a dedicated intermediary center where the goods are sorted and loaded onto trucks for delivery across the region.

By aggregating packages heading to a particular area at one spot regardless of who collected them and by filling trucks to maximum capacity, fewer vehicles and drivers are needed, reducing carbon emissions and ameliorating the labor shortage. This is in line with the company's vision to achieve Team Green Logistics using an open



Double articulated truck SEINO HOLDINGS

public platform that overcomes corporate boundaries.

The dedicated intermediary center builds on Seino Transportation's history of working with other companies to achieve greater efficiency in energy and staffing.

In 2018, it started a collaboration with three rail freight companies — Japan Freight Liner Co., Japan Freight Railway Co. and Sennin Ltd. — to make one daily round trip by rail between Sendai and Suita in Osaka Prefecture, carrying 60 truckloads of goods. This resulted in an estimated annual reduction of 13,810 tons of carbon emissions.

Then in 2021, it launched a collaboration to use rail for transporting goods between Nagoya and Fukuoka and between Tokyo and Higashi Fukuyama in Hiroshima Prefecture. The cargo is hauled to the stations by Seino Transportation trucks, loaded onto freight trains by Japan Freight Liner and transported by Japan Freight Railway. The operation of these freight trains on the two routes together cut another estimated 13,805 tons of emissions annually.

Through these new and ongoing efforts, combined with others by Seino companies to be better and greener, the group will continue to inspire the entire freight industry to cooperate with each other toward achieving sustainability.

Seino Holdings is a member of the Sustainable Japan Network, a group of companies that cooperate with this newspaper to spread information about sustainability in Japan. You can also be part of the network; scan the QR code for more details.



Team Green Logistics connects transportation data on a digital platform. SEINO HOLDINGS

## Sustainable Japan Network

