

Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli's speech at a Burns Night Supper with the
First Minister of Scotland, Monday 29th January 2024

First Minister. Your Excellencies. Baroness Ford. Fellow Aldermen. Sheriffs.
Chief Commoner. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Feasgar math. Good evening.

I am *thrilled* to be able to host you for this Supper honouring Scotland's
national poet, Robert Burns...

...and celebrating the myriad historic, economic and cultural ties that connect
London and Scotland.

A man of many descents - with Italian, Irish, US, and British citizenship - many
would say I'm anything *but* Scottish...

Indeed, my Scottishlessness has been a source of some embarrassment over
the years as a Highland Bagpiper.

Fortunately for you all, I grew out of my adopted Macalpine tartan kilt.

As the Lady Mayoress says, the fewer people that see my knees the better.

Some say the true definition of a gentleman is someone who knows how to
play the bagpipes but doesn't.

To that, I quote the Scottish Bard:

*"Let them cant about decorum,
Who have characters to lose!"*

...so, I play my bagpipes anyway.

Despite poor blood roots - not even a Rowan tree - my Scottish connections are deep.

I keep returning to Scotland to sail your waters - skippering boats from Islay to the western Isles, the Orkneys, Fair Isle, and the Shetlands, right round the top at Muckle Flugga - looking for puffins as part of the “puffarazi”.

My poor woodcarving skills have produced a parody of my mascot, Perky the Perspicacious Piping Puffin, here in front of us, and also on my coat of arms.

Clearly, to quote Burns, I have a “*well-grounded affection*” for your beautiful nation...

...and I’m delighted to be able to carry on this tradition of the City of London Corporation and the Scottish Government hosting one another for Burns Night celebrations.

Scotland has been at the vanguard of the City Corporation’s work with the regions and nations of the UK over the past few years...

...and I’m pleased our relationship with the Scottish Government is moving into a new phase, with our commitment to work together now formalised through the updated Partnership Agreement the First Minister, our Policy Chairman, Chris Hayward, and I signed before this dinner.

As the agreement says, “*the financial sectors of Scotland and London have more to gain from cooperating and coordinating, than competing*”.

So many in this room have worked tirelessly to ensure we’re cooperating and coordinating in key areas. Thank you.

Your welcome to Burns' Night tonight is from the world's oldest democratic workers' and residents' cooperative - the City of London Corporation...the governing body of the Square Mile.

There have been several Scots Lord Mayors over the years...

Perhaps most notably the first, Sir James Shaw.

Shaw was a real "Dick Whittington".

Born into a farming family in Ayrshire, he moved to the US to seek his fortune...

...securing a role in commerce that would bring him to the City of London, where he rose to the level of junior partner and began moving in influential circles, eventually becoming Lord Mayor.

In a *seamless* link to tonight's events, Shaw was a relation of - you've guessed it - Rabbin Burns...

...and his respect for Rabbin was so great that, after the poet's death, Shaw helped support his widow and gained employment for his sons.

I highlight Shaw's story not only because of the Burns link, but because he came to London from the US for the same reason I did...

Because he wanted to be where the action was.

My Mayoral theme, "Connect to Prosper", celebrates the many "Knowledge Miles" of our Square Mile, the "world's coffee house".

Many of those connections flow through Scotland.

Scotland, especially Edinburgh, had an 18th century Enlightenment that changed the world.

That movement was heavily influenced by the introduction of a new watering hole for inquisitive minds: the coffee house.

The first coffee house appeared in London in 1652 and John Row opened Scotland's first in Edinburgh in 1673.

These "penny universities" were places where men of any status could meet for lively debates on business, cultural and scientific matters - playing a vital role at a time when science was becoming more focused on real-world problem-solving.

Today, London and Edinburgh are macrocosms of the 17th century coffee house.

Lively, thriving cities where all comers are welcome...and commerce and culture sit side by side.

People in Edinburgh and London are not necessarily smarter - or dumber - than people anywhere else in the world. But they *are* better connected.

Our cities are home to fantastic institutions of learning and research. And I'm pleased several Scottish universities will be joining us here in May to sign the Magna Charta Universitatum.

Good regulation...a solid foundation in the rule of law...a young, international workforce - all these things and more make our twin cities the place to come to develop ideas and *get things done*.

Around 2.3 million people across the UK work in financial and professional services - and 150,000 of those are in Scotland.

With expertise in areas like banking, insurance, asset management and fintech, Edinburgh and Glasgow are flourishing financial hubs.

Scotland and London-based FPS firms underpin the UK's prosperity and provide the wealth and tax contributions that bolster our economy and fund public services...

And supporting the sector to reach its full potential should be a priority for politicians across the political spectrum in this "mega election" year.

Indeed, I know the Policy Chairman will be engaging on just that when he visits Scotland in March.

So, that's why we should all proclaim London and Edinburgh as the world's coffee houses.

Oh, and let's not forget that one of your biggest exports - Harry Potter - came to life in an Edinburgh coffee house.

"Connect To Prosper" is about further harnessing the power of our connections...

...between academic, commercial, science, engineering and cultural institutions, with each other and with international partners...

...to tackle some of the world's most pressing problems, such as climate change.

To quote Burns, "*now's the day and now's the hour*" and the strong partnership between Scotland and the Square Mile continues to power the green revolution.

Building on the legacy of COP26, the Scottish Government's "National Strategy for Economic Transformation", the Green Investment Portfolio, and the net zero mission of the Scottish National Investment Bank are all moving this agenda forward.

Meanwhile, the Global Ethical Finance Initiative - where I've spoken at several times - is doing great work to position Scotland as a centre of excellence for responsible and sustainable finance.

The City Corporation is hosting our annual Net Zero Delivery Summit - which brings key stakeholders together to assess progress made - at the midway point between COP28 and COP29 in June, and I hope Scotland will be well-represented.

Throughout my mayoralty, we're running initiatives that we hope will encourage further problem-solving.

Our "Coffee Colloquies" are bringing thought-leaders together to discuss the day's big issues.

While our "Knowledge Miles" lecture series shines a spotlight on different areas of expertise: from quantum computing to carbon markets.

Elsewhere, the 695th Lord Mayor's Ethical AI Initiative is delivering ethics courses for AI professionals.

Of 3,000 participants from 42 countries, nearly *100 people* in Scotland have registered, and we've had fantastic support from Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Edinburgh.

Friends,

W. B. Yeats once said that "*distance adds enchantment to the bagpipes.*"

But I believe Scotland and our friends the Scots are best viewed up close...which is why we are so honoured to host you tonight.

Céad míle fáilte. A hundred thousand welcomes.

Looking forward, I hope we can embrace our shared roles as global “solution hubs” ...and continue to “Connect To Prosper” together. Thank you.