

Foreign Office staff from Edinburgh to lead Burns celebrations

Three Edinburgh born diplomats will celebrate Burns Night on a huge virtual Burns Supper organised for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) staff all over the world.

Civil servants Tamsin Heath, Matthew Preston and Piers Strudwick will lead the FCDO's celebrations online. All 17,300 staff have been invited to the massive Teams meeting.

Tamsin is Acting Consul General for Hong Kong. She said: "Here in Hong Kong there is a very large Scottish community. We would normally be having lots of Burns Suppers across the city but unfortunately not this year, but like lots of Scots here I will be having haggis and raising a glass to Robbie Burns."



Tamsin Heath

Matthew is based at the UK Embassy in Berlin, Germany. He said: "Burns Night is celebrated around the world by Scottish people and their friends."

"My favourite Robert Burns poem is To A Mouse. It's ahead of its time because it's actually quite environmental if you think about it. It's about Robert Burns the farmer upsetting a mouse in its natural habitat."



Matthew Preston

Piers is defence attaché to the UK's Embassy in Ankara, Turkey. He said: "For me the connections between Scotland and Turkey are our wonderful culture, the fact we're both steeped in history, and the splendid hospitality which we show to our friends."

"This year Burns Night is going to be different but I'm looking forward to celebrating it with my friends online with wonderful recitals of poems celebrating the great bard."



Piers Strudwick

Scots who work for the UK Government will beam in from countries including Bahrain, Chile, China, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Pakistan, Peru, Tunisia, and Turkey to the virtual Burns Supper.

Foreign Office Minister Wendy Morton said: “Scots are at the very heart of helping FCDO be a force for good around the world and staff were keen to pay tribute to Robert Burns despite Covid-19.

“Lockdown restrictions might mean that the many Burns Suppers our Embassies usually organise around the world to help showcase Scotland cannot happen this year, but that isn’t stopping us from celebrating.

“Robert Burns was very much an internationalist, so I’m sure he would have approved of the UK government bringing the COP26 climate change summit to Glasgow, and our work promoting human rights and helping the world’s poorest countries.”



Minister Wendy Morton Photo credit LAUREN HURLEY CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Other Scots who will take part include Lisa Waugh, from Glenrothes, Fife who serves as the UK's Deputy High Commissioner in Reykjavik, Iceland. Lisa said: "I originally hail from the magnificent kingdom of Fife, but I'm based at the British Embassy in Reykjavik, Iceland.

"There's a strong Scottish connection here in Iceland. Perhaps that's because 62 per cent of the Icelandic maternal genetic pool is from Scots and Irish origin.

"Because of Covid, this year's Burns celebrations will be a more muted affair, but I'll be commemorating the great man with a wee dram and a read of my favourite poem Tam O'Shanter.

"Alas, I'll not be having any haggis because it's not something that's readily available here, despite everything else Icelanders tend to eat, so I'll be having that other great Scottish favourite... mince 'n' tatties."

Fifer Neil Morrison, from Aberdour, works at the UK Embassy in Santiago, Chile. He said: "Burns Night will be a bit different from previous years. There will be no ceilidh, and we will be spending it at home, staying safe, looking after ourselves and others."