

# Trustee Profile

Siôn Fôn | Senior Associate



- **Board Member, Theatr Cymru**
- **Vice Chair, Grŵp Cynefin**
- **Board Member, Golwg Cyf**

## Describe your journey and what motivated you to take on these roles?

My journey to becoming a trustee began with a strong desire to give back to the community. As a solicitor, I saw an opportunity to use my skills in a meaningful way, while also gaining insight into the world of business. Although the role of a trustee does take up a significant amount of time, it's incredibly rewarding and many people benefit from our efforts.

I started my non-executive journey in Cardiff with Menter Caerdydd who organise the Tafwyl festivals. This experience provided an invaluable insight into how organisations are run and governed. The experience I gained there then provided an opportunity to work with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru (now Theatr Cymru) - the national Welsh language theatre company. I wanted to use my legal background and skills to give back to the world of theatre, which has always been a sector close to my heart. I've also since become a Board Member and Trustee with the national Welsh language magazine Golwg and also the registered social housing association Grŵp Cynefin. While the sectors differ, the role of a trustee is similar for all - offering guidance, oversight and acting as a critical friend to the organisation.

## Can you describe the mission of your charity and its impact?

All three organisations are different, yet each have the same mission; to help people and support the Welsh language.

**Theatr Cymru** - the theatre fosters creativity, allowing people to tell their stories and shines a light on matters that directly impact real people and the communities they live in. We tell stories about Wales and the people of Wales that would otherwise go untold. Unlike private companies, we focus on measuring the good that we give back to communities, as opposed to the money we make. We want to support future generations by keeping stories and Welsh theatre alive. [Theatr Cymru](#)

**Golwg** - Welsh magazine 'Golwg', 'Golwg 360', focuses on relaying news online and opinions about Welsh public affairs. 'Lingo' is a magazine which supports those who are new to the Welsh language. I believe Gowg has made a huge difference in the community, giving Welsh people the opportunity to read news and articles in their first language and I'm very proud to be a part of it. [Golwg](#)

**Grŵp Cynefin** - Grŵp Cynefin recognise that housing is essential for everyone, offering a range of options such as emergency shelters, housing for older people and for younger people, and community housing. The positive impact they have brought to the housing market in Wales is undeniable. Growing up - Tai Eryri - now a part of Grŵp Cynefin - was vital in my community, supporting many of my close school friends' families. [Grŵp Cynefin](#)

## What's your primary role and what skills or experiences do you bring to it?

Despite all three organisations being different, I see many similarities between my roles, including board meeting preparation, assessing risks, discussing finance, managing assets and human resources. I'm there to discuss the good things the organisations do but also focus on the areas that can be improved. I would describe my role as a critical friend, a supporting hand but ultimately, I'm there to question the decisions made and ensure everything is thoroughly considered before acting.

It is crucial to not be afraid of speaking up and disagreeing with other trustees or the leadership team. I feel my experiences and skills as a Solicitor has greatly benefited me in my roles. I have learned over my years as a solicitor how to properly scrutinise documents and consider high risk decisions, enabling me to look closely at information in a short amount of time. Being a solicitor has also helped to develop confidence in speaking my mind and presenting alternative arguments

I think that having a solicitor on the board has brought some comfort to other members, and just as others on the board can rely on me for assistance with legal issues, I know I can lean on other members such as accountants, surveyors and human resource professionals should I need help with areas which they specialise in.

## Are there any notable themes specifically which cause more issues than others?

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One theme is **funding** - something all public or third sector organisations and companies want, and deserve, but this is sometimes difficult. We try to budget and ensure the best possible financial decisions for the good of the organisation as a whole. It's frustrating, but also understandable, that these organisations are unable to spend money on everything they want to and a difficult part of what we trustees are asked to do is work to plan the best way to spend these limited finances.

## How do you balance your trustee responsibilities with your professional and personal life?

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The main thing which helps me balance my responsibilities is that I go to these meetings as a member of the public rather than a solicitor.

It's important to maintain a balance, my job as a solicitor must be given priority but I also need to give the appropriate amount of focus to each organisation. The organisations understand this and try to arrange meetings outside of working hours so that all members can attend.

## What lessons have you learned along the way?

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**1** **Listening is more important than talking.** Having the ability to listen and understand people is vital as it lets me focus on asking the right questions without wasting anyone's time. I've learned that asking one question of substance is better than asking ten less valuable questions which may have already been answered.

**2** **How businesses, organisations and charities work.** Being a board member has hugely benefited me as a person. I'm now more confident in my ability to manage people and assets or dealing with a business crisis.

## What advice would you give your younger self?

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The first thing is to listen to the people around you. That it's important to take on the advice of specialists and that it's ok to ask questions, even about little things which may otherwise be overlooked. Asking these questions is a crucial part of the role, they want you to question procedures, as that is what ensures the organisation can improve and, as a result, better the community as well.

## What are your hopes for the future of your charity? How do you see your role evolving?

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I hope all organisations, not just the ones I'm involved with, get more support and recognition for the hard work they do for the community. With that, I hope for better funding and pay for third sector organisations and their workers.

In the coming years I hope I can continue to use my experience as a board member to help organisations. I hope I can continue to learn, enhance my existing skills and develop new skills so that I will know what to do should a similar issue arise. I have been able to act as vice chairman in a board meeting, and have chaired interview panels which has enhanced my presentations skills.