

# Trustee/Non-Exec Profile

Fflur Jones | Managing Partner



- **Chair, Mentera**
- **Non-Executive/Trustee, Aloud**

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

My journey as a Trustee/Non-Executive Director began at Welsh National Opera (WNO). There was a rigorous interview process and I was elected as a board member to this important Welsh institution in my early thirties. The experience I gained there and what I learnt from some of Wales' senior leaders in the arts and public sector was invaluable. It enhanced my day-to-day work as a solicitor and gave me first-hand insight into how Boards should efficiently operate.

During my time there, I was invited to join Mentera's board in 2015. I eagerly accepted this invitation as it aligned with my passion for supporting rural economy here in Wales. This is very important to me as I was brought up on an upland farm near Bala, in north Wales. Since 2020, I have also been Chair of Mentera.

Upon completing my term with WNO, I was invited to join the boards of Sinfonia Cymru and Aloud in 2020 which I happily accepted, as they are two other important arts sector charities here in Wales. I have now stepped down from Sinfonia Cymru's board due to other work commitments.

## Can you describe the mission of the organisations of which you are a board member and its impact?

**Mentera** - Wales' leading independent business development company. It is a not-for-profit enterprise, and focuses on supporting the development and growth of Welsh businesses and the rural economy. <https://mentera.cymru/>

**Aloud** - develops skills and ambitions of young people in Wales to create happier, healthier, and more engaged members of society. The charity embraces the traditions of choir singing to deliver high quality musical training and provides unique musical opportunities. They promote self-belief, ignite a passion for the arts and lay the foundations for a successful future for the individuals they support. [www.aloud.cymru](http://www.aloud.cymru)

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

As the only solicitor on the board of Mentera, my legal experience (hopefully!) makes an useful contribution to the Board. Additionally, my experience as Managing Partner of Darwin Gray also assists me to serve as the Board's Chair, which requires me to provide leadership and strategic support to the Board and the organisation as a whole.

As a Trustee of Aloud, I bring a combination of legal expertise, corporate governance knowledge, and my skills and knowledge as a native Welsh speaker. Securing Welsh language representation on boards in south Wales can sometimes be challenging, so my mix of legal skills, particularly in Employment Law and Governance, coupled with my Welsh language skills is again (hopefully!) valuable.

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

One theme is the constant need to ensure **good governance practices** within the organisations that I serve.

This includes ensuring that all the organisation's documents are fit for purpose from a governance perspective, that a Code of Conduct exists for Board members, and that Board members are trained adequately in their roles and the expectations of them.

Accurately documenting discussions and decisions at Board meetings, and dealing with Conflicts of Interest, or their potential, is also an important consideration, at all times.

The second is the **importance of robust scrutiny of the financials**, especially in the current economic climate.

Finally, ensuring the development of **effective strategies**, based on sound principles, is a key focus for all Boards, regardless of the sector in which they operate.

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

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Balancing my responsibilities is challenging, but my passion for the organisations I work with drives me to continue serving on these Boards. I am inspired by the tireless work of the individuals and teams working in these organisations for and on behalf of their respective stakeholders, and my own determination to never let the team down is a key driver for me.

Since being appointed Chair of Mentera, I have also appreciated the developmental opportunity this role offers. The experience has complemented my day-to-day work and my role as Managing Partner, and has helped me grow as a leader in that role too.

## What lessons have you learned along the way?

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**Preparation is crucial.** It's vital to always ensure you are sufficiently prepared for meetings and have read the relevant papers in advance. This will enable informed and strategic discussions to be held at Board level. Doing your homework is critical.

2

**It's important to help develop a strategy for any organisation you serve.** This ensures the Board doesn't aimlessly move from one meeting to the next, simply discussing operational matters rather than focusing on strategic goals. The role of Chair is crucial in maintaining this focus.

3

**Don't shy away from the financials.** Take time to understand what each financial document says and make sure you become comfortable in scrutinising the numbers. This is where there is also significant value in having diverse representation and perspectives on the board. Varied viewpoints enable effective scrutiny of any organisation's work and its financials.

## What advice would you give your younger self?

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Just go for it! I was very fortunate to be appointed to the Welsh National Opera board at the age of 34, after having been a practicing solicitor for six years at the time. The experience was invaluable both in terms of the contribution I have subsequently been able to make at Board level, but also for my own career. Indeed, it is very important for all Boards to recognise the value of having the perspective of younger (and diverse) people on their Board.

During my time as Chair of Mentera, we have led the way on this issue, and appointed 2 Non-Executive Directors to the Board who are under the age of 30. If you are a young person therefore who is interested in joining a Board, my advice would be for you to be confident and take the leap. I promise you will not regret it, you will learn lots and your contribution to the Board will be amazing!

## What are your hopes for the future of the organisations that you currently serve? How do you see your role evolving?

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I hope to see each organisation continue to prosper, even though this means slightly different things for both. As my term as Chair of Mentera is set to conclude next year, I'm excited to witness the next chapter for the organisation given it has recently adopted a new strategy and has undergone a rebrand. The Senior Leadership team has also undergone a transformation with several key new hires, and a new direction has now been set for the company. I'm proud of the work we have done so far and the mark we are leaving on the rural economy. I hope the organisation continues to flourish during the rest of my tenure and beyond that.