In memory of Wendy Hawkins, Director, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs 2002-2015

It is with great sadness that we announce the peaceful passing of Wendy Hawkins, on Saturday 30th August 2025, with her children, Nia and Owen, and her brother, Glyn, at her side.

Wendy was the force behind the early days of Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs. As the first Director, Wendy joined the organisation in January 2002, she developed the newly formed organisation and helped it grow.

During the first 6 years, Wendy led the organisation to apply successfully for European grants, numerous Welsh Government grants, a myriad of trusts, and the original Cwlwm project.

Wendy said the most fulfilling part of her role was the achievement she felt when a grant was accepted. *"That's when you measure the success of what you're doing, and you realise that you really can make a difference."*

Her roots were very firmly based in community development and how childcare is very important for the child themselves, for parents and carers, the family and for the community. She had a vision; keeping Wales working and encouraging parents/carers to return to work or training whilst their children are happily involved in freely chosen play in a safe, secure environment.

Her previous career was National Executive Officer of Wales PPA (now known as Early Years Wales), who she joined as a volunteer when her daughter and son joined the local playgroup. They grew up and left the playgroup, moving on to school and she stayed involved at local, branch, county and national level, finally representing Wales, as a volunteer, on the National Executive Committee of Wales PPA as it was then, before becoming National Executive Officer 10 years later.

Wendy retired from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs in December 2015 handing over the reins to today's Chief Executive Officer, Jane O'Toole, with whom she had worked shoulder to shoulder since the very beginning in 2002. Unfortunately, Wendy experienced a stroke, just a few days into retirement leaving her with severe weakness in her left side, meaning she was unable to fully appreciate time and planned activities with her children and young grandchildren, of whom she talked fondly and was immensely proud.

Our thoughts are with the family at this very sad time.

Jane remembers:
"I worked with Wendy since the inception of the organisation both of us starting in January 2002. Wendy was a great teacher and guide, supporting me to learn Third Sector governance, together we developed the newly formed organisation, its policies and procedures and helped it grow.

Wendy was firm but knowledgeable, she had many memorable quotes:

"I do the words you do the figures"

Whenever the town of Ystalyfera is mentioned, be it in conversation or a meeting, she always sang it to the tune of *Guantanamera by Company Segundo*. (You will have to google it and you will never hear Ystalyfera the same again.)

Another memorable thing about Wendy was she always made you realise if your pronunciation was not as it should be, I think she had a particularly well enunciated teacher. I always say twenty properly now (with the emphasis on the last *ty*!)

There is so much to remember about Wendy and to be grateful to her for but, for me, most of all she was a great support to my career development, and I will never forgive her for persuading me to apply for her position when she retired! Joking aside, without her I would not have the confidence to do what I do today, continuing in her work of leading this great organisation which will be 24 years old on the 1st October this year. Whilst we are a different organisation today, with different principles, strong values and goals, all of this is based on the great work Wendy did in her time as Director.

Wendy's final newsletter article signed off

"To you the Out of School Childcare Clubs I wish the most luck! You are doing a wonderful job but no one really thanks you. You keep Wales working and you give the children a wonderful time, Learning through Play! That is what my working life has been about as a teacher, a volunteer and as a member of staff in the 2 children's' organisations I have been lucky enough to work within... with fabulous people... making Wales a better place for children! Thank you everyone! "

Wendy spent a big portion of her life improving the lives of those who lived in in Wales. We would like to thank Wendy for all that she did for children their families and the communities across Wales. Rest in Peace xxxx

Love from your family at Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs.

Reflecting on Wendy, Jane asked the team for words that described her; here is how we will remember her.

Staff tributes and memories

"Wendy was an incredibly bright and positive force with a great sense of humour and an ability to engage in interesting conversation with anyone and everyone she encountered. She had the ability to remain calm, keep everything in perspective, and focus on the big picture. These positive traits made a difference to children and families, as well as employees in her working life and also beyond the workplace and into her retirement, despite the challenges she faced at that time."

"It is with deep sadness to hear of the passing of Wendy Hawkins, she was a remarkable lady, a real character. She was so very supportive of me in my various roles in early years, childcare and playwork throughout Wales. An amazing lady, I have so many happy memories, from her days in Wales PPA to then becoming CEO at Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, without Wendy's hard work, commitment and her talents influencing policy, the world of childcare and play in Wales would be very different. My thoughts are with Wendy's family at this time."

"Wendy championed the Out of School Childcare sector in Wales and was instrumental in making Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs the organisation it is today. Her vision to see quality and affordable Out of School Childcare Clubs in communities across Wales is the reason we have such a wonderful, diverse and ever-growing community of clubs, that she would be very proud of. Wendy paved the way for us all here at Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, to achieve our vision of a Wales where children play, and communities prosper."

Er cof am Wendy Hawkins, Cyfarwyddwr Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs 2002-2015

Clybiau Plant Cymru KIDS' CLUBS

Gyda thristwch mawr yr ydym yn cyhoeddi marwolaeth dawel Wendy Hawkins, Dydd Sadwrn 30ain Awst 2025, gyda'i phlant Nia ac Owen a'i brawd Glyn wrth ei hochr.

Wendy oedd y grym oedd tu ôl i ddyddiau cynnar Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs. Fel y Cyfarwyddwr cyntaf, ymunodd Wendy â'r sefydliad ym mis Ionawr 2002, ac aeth hi ati i ddatblygu'r sefydliad newydd a'i helpu i dyfu.

Yn ystod y 6 blynedd gyntaf, arweiniodd Wendy y sefydliad i wneud ceisiadau llwyddiannus ar gyfer grantiau Ewropeaidd, grantiau Llywodraeth Cymru, grantiau ymddiriedolaethau niferol, a'r prosiect gwreiddiol Cwlwm.

Dywedodd Wendy mai'r rhan fwyaf boddhaol o'i rôl oedd yr ymdeimlad o gyflawniad a theimlodd pan dderbyniwyd grant. *"Dyna pryd rydych chi'n mesur llwyddiant yr hyn rydych chi'n ei wneud, ac yn sylweddoli y gallwch chi wneud gwahaniaeth gwirioneddol."*

Roedd ei gwreiddiau wedi'u plannu'n ddwfn mewn datblygu cymunedol a sut mae gofal plant yn bwysig iawn i'r plentyn ei hun, rhieni/gofalwyr, y teulu a'r gymuned. Roedd ganddi weledigaeth; cadw Cymru i weithio ac annog rhieni/gofalwyr i ddychwelyd i'r gwaith neu hyfforddiant tra bod eu plant yn hapus yn cymryd rhan mewn chwarae a ddewisir yn rhydd mewn amgylchedd diogel.

Ei rôl flaenorol oedd Swyddog Gweithredol Cenedlaethol PPA Cymru (a elwir bellach yn Blynyddoedd Cynnar Cymru), ymunodd â nhw fel gwirfoddolwr pan ymunodd ei merch a'i mab â'r grŵp chwarae lleol. Fe wnaethon nhw dyfu i fyny a gadael y grŵp chwarae, gan symud ymlaen i'r ysgol a pharhaodd hi'n ymwneud â'r gymuned leol, y gangen, y sir, ac yn olaf yn cynrychioli Cymru, fel gwirfoddolwr—ar Bwyllgor Gweithredol Cenedlaethol PPA fel yr oedd bryd hynny, cyn dod yn Swyddog Gweithredol Cenedlaethol 10 mlynedd yn ddiweddarach.

Ymddeolodd Wendy ym mis Rhagfyr 2015 gan roi'r awenau i'r Prif Swyddog Gweithredol presennol, Jane O'Toole, a bu'n gweithio ochr yn ochr â hi yn ystod y blynyddoedd cyntaf hynny, ers 2002. Yn anffodus, cafodd Wendy strôc, ychydig ddyddiau ar ôl ymddeol, a adawodd hi gyda gwendid difrifol yn ei hochr chwith, a olygai nad oedd yn gallu mwynhau amser yn llawn a chynllunio gweithgareddau gyda'i phlant a'i hwyrion ifanc, y siaradodd yn annwyl amdanynt ac yr oedd yn hynod falch ohonynt.

Mae ein meddyliau gyda'r teulu yn ystod yr amser trist iawn hwn.

Mae Jane yn cofio:
"Roeddwn i wedi gweithio gyda Wendy ers i'r sefydliad cychwyn, gyda'r ddwy ohonom ni'n dechrau ym mis Ionawr 2002. Roedd Wendy yn athrawes ac yn ganllaw gwych, gan fy nghefnogi i ddysgu llywodraethu'r Trydydd Sector; gyda'n gilydd fe wnaethon ni ddatblygu'r sefydliad newydd ei ffurfio, ei bolisïau a'i weithdrefnau a'i helpu i dyfu.

Roedd Wendy yn gadarn ond yn wybodus, roedd ganddi lawer o ddyfyniadau cofiadwy, megis: *"wna'i ysgrifennu'r geiriau, cewch chi wneud y ffigurau"*

Pryd bynnag y sonnir am dref Ystalyfera, boed mewn sgwrs neu gyfarfod, byddai hi bob amser yn dechrau canu'r diwn Guantanamera gan Company Segundo. (Bydd rhaid i chi chwilio ar Goggle-a byddwch chi byth yn clywed Ystalyfera yr un peth eto).

Peth cofiadwy arall am Wendy oedd ei bod hi bob amser yn gwneud i chi sylweddoli os nad oedd eich ynganiad fel y dylai fod, rwy'n credu oedd ganddi athrawes oedd yn geirio'n eglur iawn. Rwy'n dewud 'twen**ty**' yn gywir nawr (gan roi pwyslais ar y '*tŷ'!*)

Gan gofio hynny i gyd am Wendy yn bennaf oll, roedd hi'n gefnogaeth wych i ddatblygiad fy ngyrfa, ac ni fyddaf byth yn maddau iddi am fy mherswadio i wneud cais am ei swydd pan ymddeolodd! Ond o ddifri, hebddi hi, ni fyddai gennyf yr hyder i wneud yr hyn rwy'n ei wneud heddiw, gan barhau yn ei gwaith o arwain y sefydliad gwych hwn a fydd yn 24 oed ar 1 Hydref eleni. Er ein bod yn sefydliad gwahanol heddiw, gydag egwyddorion gwahanol, gwerthoedd a nodau cryf, mae hyn i gyd yn seiliedig ar y gwaith gwych a wnaeth Wendy yn ei hamser fel Cyfarwyddwr.

Meddai Wendy yn ei llythyr olaf yn Y Bont:

"I chi, Clybiau Gofal Plant All-Ysgol, rwy'n dymuno'r gorau i chi! Rydych chi'n gwneud gwaith gwych ond mewn gwirionedd does neb yn diolch i chi. Rydych chi'n cadw Cymru i weithio ac yn rhoi amser gwych i'r plant, Dysgu trwy Chwarae! Dyna beth mae fy mywyd gwaith wedi bod amdano fel athro, gwirfoddolwr ac fel aelod o staff yn y 2 sefydliad plant rydw i wedi bod yn ddigon ffodus i weithio ynddynt... gyda phobl wych ... yn gwneud Cymru'n lle gwell ar gyfer blant! Diolch i chi gyd!"

Treuliodd Wendy rhan fawr o'i bywyd yn gwella bywydau'r rhai oedd yn byw yng Nghymru. Hoffem ddiolch i Wendy am bopeth a wnaeth i blant, eu teuluoedd a'r cymunedau ledled Cymru. Heddwch i'w lwch xxxx

Cariad gan eich teulu yn Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs.

Wrth fyfyrio ar Wendy, gofynnodd Jane i'r tîm feddwl am eiriau i'w disgrifio; dyma sut y byddwn ni'n ei chofio.

Teyrngedau ac atgofion staff

"Roedd Wendy yn rym hynod ddisglair a chadarnhaol gyda synnwyr digrifwch gwych a'r gallu i gymryd rhan mewn sgwrs ddiddorol gydag unrhyw un a phawb y daeth ar eu traws. Roedd ganddi'r gallu i aros yn dawel, cadw popeth mewn persbectif, a chanolbwyntio ar y darlun mawr. Gwnaeth y nodweddion cadarnhaol hyn wahaniaeth i blant a theuluoedd, yn ogystal â gweithwyr yn ei bywyd gwaith a hefyd y tu hwnt i'r gweithle ac i mewn i'w hymddeoliad, er gwaethaf yr heriau a wynebodd ar y pryd."

"Rwy'n clywed am farwolaeth Wendy Hawkins gyda thristwch dwfn, roedd hi'n fenyw nodedig, yn gymeriad go iawn. Roedd hi mor gefnogol i mi yn fy rolau amryw ym maes y blynyddoedd cynnar, gofal plant a gwaith chwarae ledled Cymru. Rodd hi'n fenyw anhygoel, mae gen i gynifer o atgofion hapus, o'i dyddiau yn Wales PPA i ddod yn Gyfarwyddwr Clybiau Plant Cymru. Heb waith caled Wendy, ei hymroddiad a'i thalentau yn dylanwadu ar bolisi, byddai byd gofal plant a chwarae yng Nghymru yn wahanol iawn. Mae fy meddyliau gyda theulu Wendy ar hyn o bryd."

"Roedd Wendy yn hyrwyddo'r sector Gofal Plant All-Ysgol yng Nghymru ac roedd yn allweddol wrth wneud Clybiau Plant Cymru'r sefydliad ydyw heddiw. Ei gweledigaeth i weld Clybiau Gofal Plant All-Ysgol fel gwasanaeth o ansawdd a fforddiadwy mewn cymunedau ledled Cymru yw'r rheswm pam fod gennym gymuned mor wych, amrywiol a chlybiau cynyddol, y byddai hi'n falch iawn ohoni. Gwnaeth Wendy baratoi'r ffordd i ni i gyd yma yng Nghlybiau Plant Cymru, i gyflawni ein gweledigaeth o Gymru lle mae plant yn chwarae, ac mae cymunedau'n ffynnu."