



CHILDREN'S LAUREATE WALES.

Eloise Williams named first Children's Laureate Wales

Popular Firefly author Eloise Williams has been selected as the first Children's Laureate Wales. This new national ambassadorial post run by Literature Wales, aims to engage and inspire the children of Wales through literature, and to promote a child's right to have their stories and voices heard.

The announcement was made on Wednesday 18 September in front of 150 pupils at Jubilee Park Primary School in Newport. Eloise is currently the school's Patron of Reading and following the announcement she officially opened their new school library. In an open letter addressed to the children of Wales, Eloise emphasised how excited and honoured she was to be their Laureate; how she will do her very best to help them find the right stories for them; will push for them to see themselves well represented in literature; and most importantly, that their voices matter. You can read her letter in full on the [Literature Wales website](#).

Eloise was one of the first authors to be published by Firefly Press in 2015, after her first story for children, *Elen's Island*, was shortlisted for the Firefly Children's Book Award. The story, for 7-9 year olds, is set on a magical island off the coast of Pembrokeshire and reflects Eloise's love of the sea and the Welsh coast which echoes through her other books, *Gaslight* and *Seaglass*, both for 8-12 year olds. Eloise's fourth book, *Wilde*, will publish with Firefly Press in May 2020.

Firefly publisher Penny Thomas said: 'Eloise has a talent for creating magical setting and characters in her books, and for engaging children in stories and reading. She will make a wonderful first children's laureate and we are extremely proud to be her publisher.'

Eloise Williams worked as a touring actor and creative practitioner for over a decade before becoming a children's writer. Her novel, *Gaslight* (Firefly Press, 2017) - which was written with the support of a Literature Wales New Writer's Bursary - won the Wales Arts Review Young People's Book of the Year 2017, the YBB Book Awards 2018, and was shortlisted for the Tir na nOg Awards 2018. Her latest novel for young people, *Seaglass* (Firefly Press, 2018), was also shortlisted for the Tir na nOg Awards in 2019, and the North East Book Awards 2019.

A regular speaker at festivals and events, she uses her drama skills to engage young people in children's literature and now finds herself onstage more than she ever did as a professional actor.



Eloise said: “I’ve always loved stories. The joy of losing yourself in a good story is simply magical. Stories connect us, give us empathy and understanding, exercise our brains and imaginations, let us travel the world and experience the greatest wonders.

“Children’s literature is thriving and there couldn’t be a more exciting time to be involved in its growth in Wales. I feel passionately that there is a connection between children’s books and the hope I feel every time I walk into a classroom. I truly believe that young readers will make our futures bright and I’m honoured to be a part of that.”

Announced in May 2019 as part of Literature Wales’ new Strategic Plan (2019-22), the Children’s Laureate Wales will work alongside the Welsh-language equivalent, **Bardd Plant Cymru**, primarily working with children between the ages of 5-13. Eloise was appointed following a public call-out for writers to express their interest in the role.

Lleucu Siencyn, Chief Executive of Literature Wales, said about the announcement: “We’re delighted not only to launch this brand-new initiative, but to announce such a passionate, popular and engaging person to the role of Children’s Laureate Wales. Our vision is a Wales where literature empowers, improves and brightens lives. This role will increase the accessibility and impact of creative writing for our children and young people and make a significant contribution to their well-being.”

“Eloise will be a terrific advocate for creative reading and writing for pleasure, and for representation within children’s literature, and I look forward immensely to following her journey over the next two years.”

The Children’s Laureate Wales will visit a number of schools, clubs, festivals and events across Wales during their two-year tenure, as well as devising and delivering bespoke activity with Literature Wales’ target client groups.

To arrange a Children’s Laureate Wales school visit, or to discuss other activity, email Literature Wales on: childrenslaureate@literaturewales.org.

[ENDS]

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Literature Wales

- Literature Wales is the national company for the development of literature. Our vision is a Wales where literature empowers, improves and brightens lives.
- Literature Wales is a registered charity, (number 1146560) and works with the support of Arts Council of Wales and Welsh Government. Lleucu Siencyn is the Chief Executive.
- Literature Wales works in Welsh, English and bilingually across Wales. We have offices in Llanystumdwy and Cardiff. Our patron is Philip Pullman.
- Our mission is to inspire communities, develop writers, and celebrate Wales' literary culture by: increasing the accessibility and impact of creative writing for participants in Wales; enabling early career writers to engage with opportunities to hone and diversify their skills; and strengthening the range, reach and reputation of Wales' writers.
- Our core activities include: Wales Book of the Year; National Poet of Wales; Bardd Plant Cymru and the Children's Laureate Wales; Her 100 Cerdd; the community engagement initiative, Lit Reach | Llên Pawb; the Writers' Bursaries and Mentoring Schemes; creative writing courses at Tŷ Newydd Writing Centre; and the Writers on Tour funding scheme.

Children's Laureate Wales

- The Children's Laureate Wales is a new national ambassadorial post which aims to engage and inspire the children of Wales through literature.
- The Children's Laureate Wales is a two-year post for a Wales-based writer. Eloise Williams will be in post until summer 2021.
- The Children's Laureate Wales will work alongside the Welsh-language equivalent, **Bardd Plant Cymru**, primarily working with children between the ages of 5-13.
- The Children's Laureate Wales will:
 - encourage self-expression and develop literacy and communication skills amongst children;
 - be an ambassador and positive role model for children, championing their rights and interests;
 - raise the visibility of children's literature in Wales, nationally and internationally;
 - be a strong advocate for creative reading and writing for pleasure;
 - support the development of the next generation of young writers;
 - particularly engage Literature Wales' Target Client Characteristics, as specified in our Strategic Plan 2019-22 - children from BAME backgrounds, children from low income backgrounds, children with disabilities or illnesses (physical or mental);
 - scout, develop, support and advocate for a cohort of talented young writers at the start of their literary careers.
- Social:
Twitter: @Laureate_Wales

Eloise Williams

**MEDIA RELEASE -
UNDER STRICT EMBARGO until 9.30am on 18/09/19**



Eloise Williams is Children's Laureate Wales (2019 – 2021).

Eloise was born in Cardiff, spent her childhood in Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf and now lives in Saundersfoot, Pembrokeshire. She was educated at Coed yr Esgob Primary School and Y Pant Comprehensive School, before going on to study Drama at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Acting at Guildford School of Acting, and Creative Writing at Swansea University. She worked as a touring actor and creative practitioner for over a decade before becoming a children's writer.

Her novel, *Gaslight* (Firefly Press, 2017) - which was written with the support of a Literature Wales New Writer's Bursary - won Wales Arts Review Young People's Book of the Year 2017, the YBB Book Awards 2018, and was shortlisted for the Tir na nOg Awards 2018. Her latest novel for young people, *Seaglass* (Firefly Press, 2018), was also shortlisted for the Tir na nOg Awards in 2019, and the North East Book Awards 2019.

A regular speaker at festivals and events, Eloise uses her drama skills to engage young people in children's literature and now finds herself onstage more than she ever did as a professional actor. She is also a popular and dynamic workshop leader. In her spare time, she collects sea glass and ghost stories, sings loudly, walks on the beach with her dog Watson Jones, wild swims whenever possible and celebrates nature and wildlife in every way she can.

www.eloisewilliams.com @Eloisejwilliams

Firefly Press

Firefly Press is an independent children's and YA publisher based in Cardiff and Aberystwyth. Set up in 2013, Firefly is one of the only dedicated children's publishers in Wales and publishes quality fiction for 5-19 years olds. Firefly Press was shortlisted for IPG Best Newcomer Independent Publisher Awards 2017 and has published a number of award-listed books including *Aubrey and the Terrible Yoot* by Horatio Clare, illustrated by Jane Matthews, which won the Branford Boase Award 2016 and was longlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal 2017 and *Thimble Monkey Superstar* by Jon Blake, illustrated by Martin Chatterton, shortlisted for the Lollies 2017. *The Clockwork Crow* by Catherine Fisher was shortlisted for the Blue Peter Book Awards 2019 and won the Tir na n'Og Wales children's literature award 2019.

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