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Ógra success in Budget '06

Last December Minister Brian Cowen launched his second Budget since taking over as Minister for Finance. The Budget has been widely welcomed throughout the country, with Minister Cowen and his officials having put together a document that not even the Opposition parties could find much to fault it with.

Ógra also had a great interest in the Budget, having lobbied the Minister and his officials extensively with the issues contained in our Pre-Budget Submission. This submission was compiled by Ógra Policy Co-ordinator Emmet O'Halloran and was aimed at addressing 13 different areas of Government. In total some 32 proposals ranging from increased funding for 3rd level education, incentives for a greener environment and measures aimed at tackling under-age drinking were put forward by Ógra to Minister Cowen.

Minister Cowen generously agreed to meet with Ógra in the run up to the Budget to hear our proposals and our lobbying had the desired effect with a number of our proposals being included in the Budget. Perhaps the most significant victory was the decision by the Minister to continue the measures designed at protecting the rights of young farmers, a decision that had been in major doubt in the run up to Budget Day.

According to Emmet O'Halloran the Budget was a great success from an Ógra point of view. "We were very pleased with this year's Budget and the measures it contained. Ógra had lobbied Minister Cowen extensively in the run up to the publication of both the Book of Estimates and Budget Day itself. We were keen for the Budget to contain measures that would apply to young people and make a difference to their lives. In the end I think we managed to achieve our goal."

"I would like to thank Minister Cowen and his officials for taking the time to meet with us in the run up to the Budget. As anyone who follows this process closely will tell you, the time from September to the start of December is very pressurised for the Minister for Finance, but Minister Cowen went out of his way to listen to our views and taken on board the various arguments and proposals we put forward. He did not need to go to such trouble but he was happy to help us, to give us his time and we definitely appreciated it," Emmet concluded.



Minister for Finance Brian Cowen TD with Ógra Policy Co-ordinator Emmet O'Halloran



Minister for Agriculture & Food, Mary Coughlan TD, and Ministers of State, John Browne TD & Brendan Smith TD announcing details of the Agriculture Conference in Birr.

National Agricultural Conference

County Arms Hotel, Birr, Co. Offaly/ 12th March 2006.

The 2006 Fianna Fáil National Agricultural Conference will take place on Sunday, March 12th 2006 in the County Arms Hotel, Birr, Co. Offaly.

Registration will begin from 10.00am – 10.45am. Complimentary tea/coffee will be available for delegates on arrival.

The conference will begin at 11.00am on Sunday, March 12th and will be opened by An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD. The Minister for Agriculture & Food, Mary Coughlan TD, and Ministers of State, John Browne TD & Brendan Smith TD will also attend and participate.

This Conference will discuss the key issues surrounding the future of agriculture in Ireland. A central element of the conference will be a Question & Answer Session. The conference will host various guest speakers and public representatives.

Registration for the Conference is 10 per delegate, for further queries please contact Kathleen Hunt, Operations & Events Manager or Arlene Creen.

Email arlene@fiannafail.ie

All members are welcome to attend.

Leas Cathaoirleach's Address

Well, it's been a very busy fifteen months since our last conference in Cavan.

The outgoing National Youth Committee must be thanked for their work in laying important foundations during our "Year of the Organisation" ahead of what will be the key year in preparing for Election 2007.

Ógra Fianna Fáil continues to be the most active unit of our party and the driving force behind recruiting new blood and fresh ideas to the organisation.

It regrettably remains the case however that Ógra also continues to be one of our party's most under-utilised assets, with a lack of resources and professional support leaving us often struggling to raise our profile at a national level.

We do need to have a more savvy and professional approach in this regard and I have every confidence that the National Youth Committee's recent recommendations to the General Secretary will be acted upon.

For my own part, it must be said that it has been an honour to serve as your elected Leas-Cathaoirleach since November 2004. To have had the chance to make a contribution to both Ógra and the senior organisation, not only over this year but over the past eight since first getting involved, has been a challenging but enjoyable and rewarding experience. To get to know so many great people and make so many good friends along the way was the real bonus.

Best of luck to those running in elections and to the new committee and see you in Ennis!

Michael Shovlin



Michael Shovlin



National Youth Committee members hard at work sending out information letters about the Youth Conference

Dates for the diary

- February 28th** Deadline for Registration of College Cumainn for 2006
- March 10th** Deadline for Submission from Connacht Constituencies to host 2007 Youth Conference.
- March 12th** Fianna Fáil Agriculture Conference in County Arms Hotel, Birr, Co. Offaly.
- March 31st** Deadline for Ógra Comhairle Ceantair Registrations
- March 31st** Deadline for submissions of Returns to Standards in Public Office Commission for all Ógra Accounting Units
- April 30th** Deadline for Ógra CDC Registration Deadlines

Thanks to all those who helped put this issue of Grassroots together. Special thanks to Ógra Cathaoirleach Barry Andrews TD, Aidan O'Gorman, Maevé Donlon, Michael Shovlin, Emmet O'Halloran, Pierce O'Leary, Colman Byrne & Foresight Communications, Fianna Fáil Headquarters, the Fianna Fáil Press & Research Offices and the Ógra National Youth Committee.

If you have any suggestions for stories please drop an email to communications@ogra.ie. Grassroots is always looking for photographs from Ógra events so if you do have any Ógra related pictures please do send them to us. The Ógra website can also be used for articles, notices or photos so feel free to in send any material that you would like added.

Don't forget to keep an eye on www.ogra.ie for further information or send an email to ogra@fiannafail.ie if you would like to receive our regular Ógra E-Zine

Jimmy Healy, Grassroots Editor

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Design and layout by

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barry andrews q&a

What plans have you to further the setting up of Ógra units in the North especially in the third level colleges during your term?

Eamon Browne, Kerry North
I have no plans at present.

Would you be in favor of holding a National youth conference in the North in the next 2 years?

David McCann, Belfast
Yes. Although that is obviously a decision for the National Youth Committee and I will be happy to abide with wherever they decide.

What are your hopes for Ógra?

Pierce O'Leary, Dublin Mid West
I hope that it continues to be Ireland's no. 1 political youth organisation.

What do you think are Ógra's strengths and weaknesses?

David McCarthy, Wicklow
Ógra has been Fianna Fáil's top recruiting ground for many years and guarantees the future health of the party. I am not long enough in my position to have noted any weaknesses.

Were you involved with Ógra when you were younger?

Aimee Milne, Offaly
No, but I have seen at first hand how important it is to Fianna Fáil and how much it has achieved through the years.

Do you think it will be difficult to balance your role as Ógra Cathaoirleach with your day to day duties as a TD?

Declan O'Loughlin, Clare
No. In fact I think it will help give me a better understanding of youth issues and the areas of greatest concern to the young people in my constituency. It should help to make me a better TD.

Was it a shock when the Taoiseach offered you the position of Ógra Cathaoirleach?

Karen Bolger, Carlow
I was greatly honoured when the Taoiseach asked me to become Cathaoirleach. It wasn't a shock because a few people had suggested that I might be approached but it was still extremely satisfying to be offered such an important position within the party.

Would you like to be Taoiseach some day?

Brendan Murphy, Dublin North West
No. I'm quite happy concentrating as my work as a TD and representing my constituents in Dun Laoghaire.



Why did you become a TD?

Noirin Ni Mhaoldhomhnaigh, Tipperary South
I would like to help in shaping a confident outward-looking Ireland for the future.

Your brother is a famous comedian who has enjoyed his fair share of controversy. Do you ever worry that he will politically embarrass you?

Maura Murphy, Cork North Central
No. It's quite the reverse really.

Do you think we need more young political representatives?

John Paul Feeley, Cavan
Definitely. The more up and coming young talent we have in the party, the better. We need to promote young candidates if we are to safeguard the future of the party.

What do you do in your spare time?

Darragh McAllister, Clare
Play soccer, a bit of gardening.

Do you think there are too many political dynasties in Fianna Fáil?

Roisin Crowe, Sligo
Yes. I wish there was some way to put a stop to that kind of thing.

How do you think we'll do in the next General Election?

Niamh O'Shea, Galway West
I think we will win at least 80 seats and win an historic third term.

What would you be if you weren't a politician?

Colin Finnan, Limerick East
A school teacher.

Where did you go to school?

Deirdre Blaney, Westmeath
Carysfort National School, Willow Park and Blackrock College.

Are you looking forward to the National Youth Conference in Ennis?

Christine Hickey, Wexford
Yes, although when the Taoiseach mentioned it to me first, I thought he said it was going to be in Venice.

What advice did the former Ógra Cathaoirleach Michael Moynihan give you?

Francie McEvoy, Longford
Deputy Moynihan advised to me to work closely with the members of the National Youth Committee and to harness their enthusiasm.

ÓGRA GOES ORIENTAL



While political trips abroad often get negative coverage, some times these trips can be extremely worthwhile. One such trip was recently undertaken by a group of Ógra members who had the good fortune to be invited to visit the People's Republic of China. It was a chance to learn more about issues of concern to young people across Asia, while also sharing the Fianna Fáil policies that have lead to a vibrant, successful, forward looking Ireland.

The delegation consisted of Leas Cathaoirleach Ógra Michael Shovlin, Committee of 20 member Anthony Kelly and National Youth Officer Aidan O'Gorman. The purpose of the trip was to meet with representatives of the Communist Youth League of China and also to observe at the Asia-Europe Young Political Leaders Conference. Former Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach Cathal Lee was also a delegate at the conference, representing the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Political, economic and educational ties between Ireland and China have grown immensely in recent years. Relations have grown closer since the first official visit by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in 1998 and since then regular trade and cultural exchanges have taken place. In 2004 a Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party delegation visited China at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Since that date a number of visits have taken place between representatives of both parties.

While in China the group had many meetings with representatives of the political system there. The Chinese were keen to discuss many issues including sustained regional development, the impact of the Beijing Olympics, the role of the Youth League in promoting youth interests and the impact of increased materialism and busier lifestyles on young people's participation in civic society - to name just a few.

The group had ample opportunities to meet and talk with representatives of the CPC where concerns about human rights in China, particularly religious freedom, the political system, press freedom and the treatment of Falun Gong members were discussed. The main part of the week was attending the Inaugural Conference for Young Political Leaders in Asia and China. This brought together over 100 different delegates from 34 countries. The conference discussed methods to intensify young people's role in the partnership between Asia and Europe to establish an Asia-European Youth forum.

Many of the European delegates at the event were already well acquainted though their international political youth associations and most divided into factions representing their political orientation. Many of the European delegates had prepared fixed proposals before the conference and were intent on implementing their views in what was perceived by others as a confrontational manner, rather than working in cooperation with all delegates from Asia and Europe. This perceived lack of respect and tolerance to other cultures and different political approaches did not sit well with Ógra's approach of listening to all sides and attempting to find common areas of agreement, nor indeed with our Asian counterparts. The Irish willingness to engage with all sides was very much appreciated by many of the delegates, especially those from an Asian culture which does not view confrontation as the best way to make progress.

Many friends were made throughout the week, but it did bring home the realisation that Fianna Fáil does not play as full a role on the international stage as we could. Not being a member of any influential grouping in the European Parliament, Ógra does not have the opportunity to contribute to the policies of the European youth parties. Ógra must seek out more allies and more ways for Ógra Fianna Fáil to grow in stature on the international stage. The exchange also had a cultural element and there was an opportunity to tour the Forbidden City, go to the Great Wall of China, see Tiananmen Square, and even visit the Beijing Planning Museum. The delegation also travelled to the Tianjin Port and Binhai New District, an economic zone that really demonstrated the massive investment in infrastructure and the economic growth of China.

The close attentions of "minders" was difficult to bear at times, official photographers took snaps at every opportunity and the delegation later heard that some of the helpers at the conference were instructed not to talk about political or religious matters. Such lack of freedom was difficult to understand for those who take free speech and individual rights for granted. However the experience in China undoubtedly broadened horizons, an appreciation was gained of the differences in our culture and an appreciation for the similar issues faced in ensuring the growth and development of our nations. The Chinese people met were wonderful hosts, extremely friendly and welcoming and with a good sense of humour. It was also clearly to see that both countries and cultures have much to admire and learn from and that developing a closer relationship and greater understanding will be mutually beneficial for both.



Mr Ni Jian Deputy Director General, International Liason Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China Mm. ZHANG Xiaolan, Secretary of Secretariat, Central Committee of Communist Youth League of China with Michael Shovlin, Aidan O'Gorman and Anthony Kelly

Aidan O'Gorman

Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach

Q&A

With three different candidates contesting the election for Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach at the National Youth Conference in Ennis, Grassroots decided to put some questions to them to help get to know them better.



Name: John Paul Feeley
Age: 24
Where are you from?
 Blacklion, County Cavan.
How did you get involved with

Ógra/ Fianna Fáil?

Fianna Fáil is in my blood. I have been involved in Local Elections, Dáil Elections and European Election campaigns since a young age. While politics and Fianna Fáil are very much part of the family, I never felt forced to become involved. I've always been convinced that Fianna Fáil is the party that best represents my thinking on key issues. I really looked forward to getting involved in Ógra from a young age. When I went to college, there was none there, so I contacted head office and set one up. Cavan Ógra was just starting up around the same time so I got involved there too. Getting involved in Ógra was a natural progression because of my involvement with the party.

What are your hobbies?

GAA, reading, television, eating out in

good company and walking in scenic West Cavan!

What's your favourite TV programme?

GAA BEO TG4, The Sunday Game, The West Wing, Yes Minister.

Celebrity Big Brother – Yay or nay?

NAY. The sight of George Galloway and other failed celebs is just too much to takes.

Who'd play you in the story of your life and why?

James Nesbitt – a good Ulsterman like me.

Tell us a joke (please keep it clean!)

Q: Why did the Cavan Man put double glazing to the front of his house only and not the back or sides?

A: So the kids wouldn't hear the ice cream van pass by!

What do you see as the biggest issue facing Ógra and why?

Need to continue to be radical and focus on change. We in Ógra need to continue to highlight the plight of those on the margins of Irish society and keep the party connected to our roots, which for me is looking after the most vulnerable in our country.

What's your most embarrassing

moment?

Being photographed with Jeffrey Donaldson (DUP MP) at the Ógra Conference in Cavan.

If you were Taoiseach for a day and could enact one law what would it be?

Make Easter Rising Anniversary a public holiday. That would be the first section in a very large piece of legislation that would deal with a huge range of issues including funding for third level education, primary school education, health reform, infrastructure issues and balanced development. The boys and girls in both Houses of the Oireachtas would be sitting late that day!

Which Irish Celeb would you like to see run for the Dáil as a Fianna Fáil Candidate?

Andrea Corr or Nicky Byrne (isn't he married to the boss's daughter)

Complete the sentence – "I should be the next Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach because..."

I have the experience, determination and vision for the job.



Name: Sarah Staunton
Age: 25
Where are you from?
 I'm from Clonmel in Co. Tipperary
How did you get involved with

Ógra/ Fianna Fáil?

In a moment of weakness in college, my friend Oonagh dragged me in to a meeting to get me to go to the Youth Conference, promising it would have the best weekend of the year. Since then I have gotten involved at every level. It's a bit like the mafia, it just doesn't let you go!

What are your hobbies?

Bird-watching and train spotting!!!!!!

What's your favourite TV programme?

The Simpsons.

Celebrity Big Brother – Yay or nay?

Nay cause they're not celebrities!

Who'd play you in the story of your life and why?

I think a combination of Brenda Fricker for her strength of character, Susan Sarandon for her Social Conscience, Mel Gibson for his relentless fight for freedom and Elle McPherson for her "body parts"!!

Tell us a joke (please keep it clean!)

I read an article on the dangers of drinking last night and it scared the life out of me, so now I'm giving up reading!

What do you see as the biggest issue facing Ógra and why?

Ógra underestimates itself and is underestimated by others this means its not reaching its full potential

What's your most embarrassing moment?

My "rabbit caught in headlights" experience on Q & A, now I look before I cross

the road!

If you were Taoiseach for a day and could enact one law what would it be?

I would enact a law that would give me the full five year term so as to position Ógra in such a way that it can realise its full potential as a dynamic, relevant and powerful political vehicle.

Which Irish Celeb would you like to see run for the Dáil as a Fianna Fáil Candidate?

Pat Shortt because his cross-dressing on Kilinaskully could help up the female quota!!!

Complete the sentence – "I should be the next Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach because..."

I can facilitate Ógra being key in driving policy and establish us as a vital component in a successful general election campaign

Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach

Q&A



Name Anthony Kelly

Age 22

Where are you from?

Killarney

How did you get involved with

Ógra/ Fianna Fáil?

I joined Ógra in U.C.C. I signed up to the Donogh O'Malley Cumann on Fresher's Day 2001 and haven't looked back since.

What are your hobbies?

My favourite hobby is football. I am also a keen swimmer. I'm a bit of a mimic too and love it when I'm able to add another character to the collection. I do have to say that hobby no. 1 is Fianna Fáil!

What's your favourite TV programme?

Lost. Naked Camera and Anonymous are great. When the summer comes around, there's only one show I'll watch and that's the Sunday Game, I guess that's my favourite.

Celebrity Big Brother - Yay or nay?

Oh my God, nay. The contestants aren't celebrities so it's just a shortened version of the summer take-over of BB, and once a year is enough. I'm just waiting for Political Big Brother - picture Mary O'Rourke in the diary room and Michael D. reading poetry in the garden!

Who'd play you in the story of your life

and why?

Pat Shortt. No reference to my being vertically challenged, but the man is hilarious. I would want my life story to be good craic and he's the man for the job!

Tell us a joke (please keep it clean!)

A toasted ham and cheese sandwich walks into a pub and goes up to the counter. The barman looks at him and says "I'm sorry, we don't serve food". ... My apologies, I just don't know any clean jokes!!

What do you see as the biggest issue facing Ógra and why?

Recruitment. Every year we conduct a third level recruitment campaign, which is vital. But we have to get pro-active on constituency recruitment and I pledge to do this if elected. Setting up Ógra on an All-Ireland basis is also one of my main priorities.

What's your most embarrassing moment?

Ray D'arcy was in Cork doing his show. I was in a picture with him which was in the college newspaper. I received a lot of texts saying "isn't Ray D'arcy supposed to be quite short!!!"

If you were Taoiseach for a day and could enact one law what would it be?

I would change the legislation regarding Third Level participation in Seanad elections. It should be changed to allow a

panel of three members to be elected to the Seanad by graduates of all Third Level institutions in the country.

Which Irish Celeb would you like to see run for the Dáil as a Fianna Fáil Candidate?

Steve Staunton with Bobby Robson as his campaign manager! Would we win a seat? Only time will tell!

Complete the sentence - "I should be the next Ógra Leas Cathaoirleach because..."

I have garnered a lot of experience at National Executive level, having been a member longer than the other two candidates. Through running in the Committee of 15/20 elections, I have gained a lot of respect from many of those in the senior party and I am in touch with all levels of the organisation and as a result, I feel I would be best suited to enhance Ógra's position within the Party. I am innovative, and I am in a position to dedicate myself fully to the commitment and responsibility that is Leas-Cathaoirleach. My knowledge coming from my position as Director of Elections for the senior party in Kerry South, would be very beneficial to bring to the position of Leas Cathaoirleach before a very tough General Election. Finally, I will be a strong voice for Ógra and I will deliver to make this, Ógra's most successful term yet.

Ag tnúth leis an "6 nations"

Tá sé deacair a creidiúnt an méid dochais atá ag muintir lucht leanúna rugbaí sa tír seo i láthair na huaire. Ní raibh sé ach trí nó ceithre seachtaine ó shin nuair a bhí gach duine ag rá go raibh an fhoireann roshean agus nach raibh seans ar bith againne sa "6 nations". Ach is tamall fada í trí seachtaine i gcursaí spoirt agus tá dearmad déanta ar na cluichí i mí na Samhna nuair a theip an fhoireann go dona in aghaidh an Astráil agus an Nua-Shéalainn.

Cén fáth go bhfuil an t-athrú meoin seo tar éis taghta ar mhuintir na hÉireann. Bheul le cúpla seachtain anuas tá na cúige go léir tar éis rugbaí den scoth a imirt, go háirithe an Mumhain agus an Laighin. Bhí an taispeántas a thug an dhá fhoireann sa seachtain deireanach don ghrupaí sa chóimortas HEC dochreidthe, go háirithe nuair a smaoinneann tú ar an mbrú a bhí orthu an chead babhta eile don chóimortas sin a bhaint amach. Ní

amháin na torthaí a bhí i gceist ach an chaoi gur imir said i gcoinne an fhoireann sin, atá ar bharr an "Guinness Premiership", agus foireann nach raibh cluiche cailte acu go dtí sin. Rud eile a bhí soléir ón gcluiche ná go raibh Brian O'Driscoll agus Paul O'Connell ar ais agus ag imirt go spleodrach agus chomh maith le sin bhí said ag spreagadh na daoine timpeall orthu. Bhí an tionchar atá acu in easnamh i rith na cluichí i mí na Samhna.

Tar éis an cluiche sin bhí an-bhrú ar Eddie O'Sullivan na himreoirí ceart a roghnú. Bhí go leor caint sna títhe tábhairne ar fud na tíre, bhí daoine ag rá rudaí cosúil le "caithfidh sé David Wallace a phiocadh tar éis an taispeántas sin" nó "ní féidir leis Girvan Dempsey a fhágáil amach i ndhiadh sin". Bhí post an-deacair aige chun a phainéal a phiocadh ach nuair a ainmnigh sé an 22 bhí roinnt daoine sasta leis mar phióc sé daoine

a bhí ag imirt go maith i láthair na huaire agus ba chuma leis faoi chéard a bhí deanta acu roimhe seo. Chaill daoine cosúil le Anthony Foley, Shane Byrne, Denis Hickey agus Reggie Corrigan amach cé go raibh tar éis a lán oibre a chuir isteach ar son muintir na hÉireann sna blianta anuas, ach sin an cinneadh a bhí air a dhéanamh i dtuairim an chuid is mó don lucht leanúna.

Anois tá an chead chluiche ag druidim linn go tapaidh, ach céard a tharlóidh? An mbeidh Éireann in ann aithris a dhéanamh ar rath an Bhreathain Bheag anuraidh nó an mbeidh na Sasanaigh agus an Fhrainc ar ais ar bharr? Conas a n-éiríodh an lodail nó an h-Albain. Níl a fhios agam! Beidh na ceisteanna go léir freagraithe sa chead seacht seachtaine eile. Tá súil ag gach duine nuair a tá sé críochnaithe go mbeimid go léir ag ceiliúradh.

Piaras O'Laoire

photo gallery



1 Minister Seamus Brennan addresses the Ógra 30th Anniversary Banquet at the Ard Fheis/
2 - Some of the Dublin Central Ógra gang at the banquet / **3** The Kevin Barry Cumann Old Boys Table (aka 1916 Committee) at the Ógra Birthday Banquet / **4** Luke Martin Dun Laoghaire, joins Ógra members at the protest to preserve the status of Irish / **5** Presenting a cheque on behalf of Ógra to AWARE **6** - 60 members of Ógra recently attended the AGM in Roscommon