



Crooked House GE2016 South Kildare Youth Forum | Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> February  
6.00pm – 7.30pm  
1, Main Street, Newbridge (above Johnson's pub – beside the bridge)

## Questions for candidates

The following 5 themes are the most significant ones for young people, drawn from conversations and communications with a range of young people in the county over the last two weeks.

### **On Public Transport**

While public transport is certainly necessary for many workers in urban areas, it is mostly young people and the elderly who are most dependent on it for general mobility. We simply don't have cars. Can you help us understand why successive governments have prioritised spending on roads, motorways, car-friendly public spaces, and almost neglected public transport? Is there any other capital city in Europe without a comprehensive metro? Does it take a radical imagination to envisage a country where every town is served by cheap, regular rail and bus (like it was 90 years ago)?

### **On Education**

Given that we spend most of our time in (or trying to access) education, this issue is central to us. Yet our voices are rarely consulted regarding the systems we find ourselves in. We have a lot to say about education.

Why does it seem impossible to reform the second level education system? Does it take a radical imagination to envisage alternatives such as:

- Three years of second-level followed by two years of work placement, or travel programmes, or entrepreneurship?
- A complete separation of the Leaving Cert from the points race
- a drastic change to curriculum and abolition of 'subjects' as is happening in Finland
- integration of the arts, culture, and 'making' activities to the same level that sport is integrated (why does every school have a football field and none a theatre?)

### **On Mental Health**

Anxiety and depression (brought about mostly by immersion in a stress-focused school system) are both common and increasing in our lives. Most of us endure. Most of us survive. Some of us don't.

Helping us with this problem requires a change in the education system, and provision of arts, sport and non-formal learning opportunities, freely available and *engaging* to everyone (ie not just school musicals, or only GAA etc).

There is good work being done by Pieta House and others. But we need to prevent these problems arising as much as we need to address them when they are in crisis. So can you listen to us as we plead with you to provide long-term support for arts, sports and youth clubs?

### **On the Arts**

The arts, especially theatre, is vital to us. We need a place where we are creators (not consumers). We need you to sustain this for us.

*(There will be more on this topic on the night)*

### **On Politics**

We are learning, and encouraged every day, to collaborate and to share and to work as a team. This is drilled into us to the point that we are weary of the mantra.

Yet all around us, adults are fiercely doing the very opposite.

Why can't you all collaborate, and work towards a decent democracy, rather than bicker, point-score, and attack each other?

This might surprise you, but from our point-of-view there is little (only cosmetic) difference between most of your policies – at least nothing that you couldn't work together on to reach compromise on. All that separates you is tradition. If adults want us to collaborate so badly, you have got to show us the way.