

An illustration of three young people with backpacks looking up at stars. The person in the center has dark curly hair and wears yellow-rimmed glasses and a yellow shirt. The person on the left has long teal hair and wears a pink shirt. The person on the right has short orange hair and wears a blue shirt. They are all smiling and looking upwards. The background is light blue with three large stars: a pink one on the left, a light blue one in the center, and a yellow one on the right. The text 'YFG' is in the top right corner.

**YFG**

# SECURING YOUNG FUTURES

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2026



**YFG**



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# TOP 5 PRIORITIES FOR BUDGET 2026

## **REDUCE STUDENT CONTRIBUTION FEE TO €1,500**

YFG calls on the Government to honour their commitment in the Programme for Government to "continue to reduce fees over the lifetime of the Government", beginning this year by continuing with progress made in previous budgets and beginning this reduction with Budget 2026, and abolishing the contribution fee entirely by 2030.

## **INTRODUCE A YOUTH TAX BAND**

YFG calls on Fine Gael in Government to examine the feasibility of a reduced Youth Tax Band, as implemented by our Portuguese sister party, Partido Social Democrata. In line with our Portuguese counterparts, the tax band could be introduced on a phased basis over time, with a 100% tax exemption in the first year of full-time employment, with the exemption reducing progressively over 5 years.

## **INCREASED DEFENCE BUDGET**

YFG calls for the Government to commit to going beyond Level of Ambition 3 and for the State's Defence Budget to be tripled to €4.05 billion by 2030 — a responsible and necessary investment in the security of our State in an uncertain geopolitical and security environment. This funding would deliver urgent capital upgrades, including modern radar systems, air and naval assets, cyber infrastructure, and fit-for-purpose bases, securing defence capacity for the future.

## **INTRODUCE A FARM SUCCESSION SCHEME**

YFG calls for the introduction of a dedicated Farm Succession Scheme, with enhanced financial assistance, to streamline the process of succession planning and ensure that the majority of farms in Ireland have a succession plan in place.

## **DIRECT SUPPORT FOR STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

YFG calls on the Government to provide ring-fenced funding to Higher and Further education institutions to allow them to build their accommodation with the support and oversight of the Land Development Authority, for students, on their land, ensuring that a certain proportion of this accommodation is set aside for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.



# FOREWORD



*Dear Minister,*

I am honoured to present Young Fine Gael's Pre-Budget Submission to you ahead of Budget 2026.

While we recognise, appreciate and welcome many of the measures that this Government has committed to in Securing Ireland's Future, we present this submission to you on behalf of Young Fine Gael, with our say on how the Government must act to secure young futures.

We have seen since the election of this Government how much uncertainty there has been in our economy, our society, and internationally. This submission's motivation and goal is to set forth our vision on how we best protect, safeguard, and secure the futures of young people in Ireland.

The proposals we submit to you seek to protect and secure young people's access to education, to healthcare, to housing, some of the defining challenges of our society, that young people are disproportionately feeling the effects of, and are beginning to feel like a forgotten generation, locked out of feeling secure in the future.

Minister, we look forward to discussing our priorities with you and to see their inclusion as part of Budget 2026 and beyond, and continuing to put our ideas and vision forward within the Fine Gael family.

Is mise le meas,

**Jamie Malone**  
**Young Fine Gael President**



*Dear Minister,*

It is with great pride that we present Young Fine Gael's Pre-Budget Submission 2026 - Securing Young Futures. This document represents what our organisation believes is a

blueprint for ensuring Ireland's young people can thrive in an increasingly challenging economic landscape.

The five key priorities set out in this document reflect this reality. **The reduction of Student contribution fees to €1,500** acknowledges that education must remain accessible. Our proposal for **a Youth Tax Band** recognises that young people entering the workforce face unique financial pressures. The call to **triple our Defence Budget** demonstrates that YFG understands Ireland must take responsibility for its own security in an uncertain world. **The farm succession scheme** addresses the urgent need for generational renewal in agriculture, while **direct support for student accommodation** tackles the crisis that prevents too many young people from accessing a third-level education.

What sets this submission apart is our commitment to balanced fiscal responsibility. We have included substantial revenue-raising measures - from our proposed disposable vape levy to reforms of vacant home tax - that demonstrate YFG's understanding that progressive policy requires sustainable and responsible funding.

Thank you, Minister, for your consideration of this document. I also thank my Pre-Budget Committee, National Executive colleagues, and the membership of Young Fine Gael for their invaluable contributions to these proposals.

Le meas,

**Caolán Maguire**  
**Director of Policy and Vice President**  
**Young Fine Gael**

## Acknowledgements

The Young Fine Gael National Executive would like to commend the work of the Pre-Budget Submission Committee, which has been working to compile this document over the last number of months. We would also like to thank the Branches, Regional Councils, Networks, Policy Fora, and, of course, the members who contributed proposals for the document throughout the drafting process.

**Young Fine Gael Pre-Budget Submission Committee Members** - Bartłomiej Osowski, Béibhinn Byrne, Bill Crawley, Conor Dunne, Craig Hogan, Hannah Doyle, Louis Greenan, Louis Pemble.

# SECURING OUR PUBLIC FINANCES

## Revenue Raising Measures

### €3 BATTERY LEVY ON DISPOSABLE VAPES

Young Fine Gael welcomes the introduction of excise duty being levied on e-cigarette/vape liquids and the proposed ban on disposable vapes, but while we await the implementation of this legislation that we should be placing additional levies on the sale of disposable/ single-use vape products. We're calling for the introduction of a €3 battery levy on all disposable vape products, which, with the excise duty on the e-liquid, would bring the average price of a disposable vape to €12.

### INTRODUCTION OF A CHEWING GUM LEVY TO FUND CLEANER STREETS

YFG proposes a ten-cent levy on chewing gum products, with all revenue ring-fenced for Local Authorities, to fund litter removal and public realm maintenance. With Local Authorities facing increasing demands for waste management and public realm maintenance, this could serve as an additional source of revenue for our Local Authorities.

### INCREASE THE BETTING LEVY TO FUND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Ireland's current betting duty of 2% which is below the European average, fails to reflect the growing social cost of problem gambling, particularly among young people. YFG proposes increasing the levy to 5% and the introduction of a dedicated levy on online gambling platforms, with all online bets being charged a 5% levy on the wager that is placed. All revenue raised should be ring-fenced for gambling addiction services and public mental health supports, ensuring that those most affected receive direct help.

### INCREASE VACANT HOME TAX

YFG calls for the introduction of a higher rate of Vacant Home Tax, applicable to all residential properties which have been vacant for three consecutive years, at 10x the rate of LPT. We want to directly tackle homes that have been vacant for the long term by disincentivising

withholding of vacant properties from the market. In the 2022 census, 48,000 houses had been vacant since 2016, making up 2% of the entire housing stock.

### INCREASE PLANNING OBJECTION AND APPEAL FEES

To reduce frivolous objections and speed up the delivery of vital housing and infrastructure, YFG proposes an increase in planning objection fees from €20 to €200 for local authorities, and appeals to An Coimisiún Pleanála from €220 to €400. Appropriate waivers should be introduced for low-income individuals and local community groups to protect meaningful public participation. The objective of this is to prevent and deter serial, bad-faith objections to vital housing delivery.

### LAUNCH A PUBLIC TRANSPORT CLIMATE BOND

YFG proposes the creation of a Public Transport Climate Bond, a voluntary, tax-advantaged investment open to the public, with all proceeds ring-fenced for low-emission transport projects. These funds should be ringfenced for bus networks, rail electrification, EV charging infrastructure, and national cycling routes. This financing tool would allow citizens to directly support Ireland's green transition while generating sustainable revenue for the State.

### REBALANCE NGO FUNDING BY 10%

YFG calls on the Government to reduce overall NGO funding by 10% and redirect resources towards priority areas such as youth housing, education, and defence. This rebalancing would ensure taxpayer funds are targeted at frontline services and deliver maximum impact.

### PRIVATISE COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF RTÉ

YFG calls on the Government to privatise the commercial aspects of RTÉ, such as 2FM, and relocate the national broadcaster from Donnybrook, rezoning the land for development of housing by the Land Development Agency.





# SECURING INCOMES AND JOBS

## Taxation, Employment, and Innovation

### REDUCE USC TO SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS

Reduce the 11% USC rate on self-employed income over €100,000 to match the 8% rate paid by PAYE workers. Equalising the USC rate would support a fairer tax system, encourage innovation, and reward the risk-taking that drives job creation and economic growth in our economy.

### INTRODUCE A YOUNG PERSONS' TAX CREDIT

YFG proposes a €1,000 Young Persons' Tax Credit for workers under 30 — easing financial pressure, improving cash flow, and rewarding work at a crucial stage of life, for a generation that is feeling the burden of an increased cost of living.

### YOUTH TAX BAND — KEY PRIORITY

In the longer term, we call on Fine Gael in Government to examine the feasibility of a reduced Youth Tax Band, as implemented by our Portuguese sister party, Partido Social Democrata. In line with our Portuguese counterparts, the tax band could be introduced on a phased basis over time, with a 100% tax exemption in the first year of full-time employment, with the exemption reducing progressively over 5 years.

### ABOLISH SUB-RATES OF THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

YFG proposes the abolition of sub-rates of the National Minimum Wage, ensuring that all workers receive the same pay for equal work, eliminating age-based wage discrimination.

### REINTRODUCE 9% VAT RATE FOR HOSPITALITY

YFG calls on the Government to reintroduce the 9% VAT rate for hospitality in Budget 2026, recognising the cost pressures that businesses in this sector have faced over recent years, and the contribution of hospitality to our economy and society.

### INTRODUCE A MIDDLE-INCOME TAX BRACKET

YFG proposes the creation of a third tax bracket of 30% for income earned between the standard rate cut-off point and a new threshold of €60,000 for the highest rate of 40%. This measure would support struggling middle-income earners, who have been faced with consistent increases in the cost of living over the past number of years, and find that there is a steep increase in the tax burden they face once they earn over €44,000.

### STREAMLINE BUSINESS CREATION THROUGH DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

Create a centralised, user-friendly online platform to fully digitalise the process of starting and registering a business in Ireland, combining registration, tax setup, licensing, and social insurance in one place. Inspired by successful models in Estonia and Poland, where entrepreneurs can open a business in minutes, this reform would eliminate fragmented systems and help to reduce red tape for start-ups to encourage innovation and job creation.

### INTRODUCE END-OF-YEAR BUDGET FLEXIBILITY FOR PUBLIC BODIES

Ireland's current "use it or lose it" budgeting model discourages efficiency by incentivising year-end spending sprees to avoid losing future allocations. YFG proposes a revised framework that would allow Departments and public bodies to carry forward unspent balances into the following year, with a proportional downward adjustment to the next year's estimate, to maintain the Exchequer balance.

# SECURING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

## INCREASED TECHNOLOGY GRANTS

Increase technology grants for schools to guarantee adequate resourcing for the rollout of the reformed Leaving Certificate beginning in September 2025. Ensuring that all students have access to the necessary technology is essential for the successful implementation of revised Leaving Certificate curricula.

## INTRODUCE SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

Assign dedicated social workers to schools on a regional or cluster basis, ensuring students and families can access timely, professional support. Teachers are increasingly expected to navigate complex social and emotional issues that extend far beyond education. By embedding social workers into the school system, we can ease pressure on staff, improve outcomes for vulnerable students, and strengthen overall school wellbeing.

## TAX RELIEF FOR TEACHERS ENGAGED BY THE SEC

Introduce tax relief measures for teachers engaged by the State Examinations Commission in the delivery of state examinations.

## DERELICTION FUNDING

Ring-fenced dereliction funding for Local Authorities to combat dereliction, financed by the tourist tax previously alluded to.

## CENTRALISED TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Introduce a centralised teacher recruitment system to provide schools with greater flexibility and choice in staffing.

## FUNDING SUPPORT FOR STUDENT COUNCILS

Introduce an annual grant scheme to help student councils strengthen student voice and participation in secondary schools. These grants would allow councils to

run their own projects, such as wellbeing programmes or school engagement events, giving students a real democratic voice in their school environment.

## SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS & SUMMER PROVISION

YFG calls for the rates of pay for Special Needs Assistants working on Summer Provision or similar programs to be equalised. Currently, SNAs receive approximately one-third of the amount that a teacher earns for carrying out identical work. We believe that addressing this issue would increase the uptake of SNAs around the country on the programme.

## TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO SUPPORT KEY TRANSITIONARY YEAR

Provide a Special Needs Assistant or teaching assistant for every Junior Infant classroom and First-Year class to ensure adequate support for students during key transition stages.

## TAX CREDIT TO INCENTIVISE TEACHERS IN HIGH VACANCY AREAS

YFG calls for the introduction of tax credits for teachers in areas of high vacancy, to incentivise and support teacher recruitment in areas of high need and address the issues of high costs of living that many of these high vacancy areas face.

## CENTRALISED TEACHER RECRUITMENT SYSTEM

YFG calls for the establishment of a centralised Teacher Recruitment agency under the remit of the Department of Education to provide schools with greater choice and flexibility in staffing, and to provide teachers with clearer career pathways.





# SECURING STUDENT FUTURES

## Higher and Further Education

### **REDUCE STUDENT CONTRIBUTION FEE TO €1500 – KEY PRIORITY**

Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to honour their commitment in the Programme for Government to “continue to reduce fees over the lifetime of the Government”, beginning this year by continuing with progress made in previous budgets and beginning this reduction with Budget 2026. Fees should be continuously reduced over the next 5 budgets to eliminate fees and ensure that we continue to promote and invest in education for young people.

### **EXPAND SUSI THRESHOLDS**

In the meantime, SUSI eligibility thresholds should be expanded to better support students in struggling middle-income families, specifically those in the €55,000–€75,000 household income bracket who currently fall just outside the existing criteria for fee coverage, but still face significant financial pressure. These students often rely on part-time work or carry family debt to stay in education, yet receive limited or no state support.

### **SUSI FOR PART-TIME POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

Extend SUSI to support part-time postgraduate students, recognising the realities of those balancing study with work, caring duties, or financial constraints. The current model excludes thousands of potential postgraduates simply because they cannot study full-time, blocking access to critical upskilling and holding back national productivity.

### **INCREASE SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN STEM**

Increase targeted funding for initiatives that boost women’s participation and success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) — including scholarships, early-stage outreach, and professional mentorship programmes. Women continue to remain underrepresented in Ireland’s high-growth innovation sectors, particularly at senior and postgraduate levels.

### **END OVERSEAS FEE PENALTIES FOR IRISH-BORN STUDENTS**

Remove higher education residency rules to exempt Irish-citizen students from international tuition fees upon returning from temporary stays outside the EU. YFG calls for an exemption for students who completed part of their education in Ireland and hold Irish citizenship or were born on the island.

### **INCREASE SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT STUDENT APPLICANTS**

YFG calls for distance from the institution for independent applicants to SUSI to be disregarded. Currently, independent students who are not supported by their families are faced with the same income and distance thresholds for their applications as those who are supported by their families in their education journey, failing to recognise that their costs are higher than those who are supported by families.

### **INCREASED PHD STIPENDS**

YFG calls for an increase in the PhD stipend paid to publicly funded PhD candidates through the Irish Research Council and Science Foundation Ireland, to reflect the rising cost of living and ensure research remains a viable pathway for young people. PhD researchers are the backbone of Ireland’s innovation and knowledge economy, yet many struggle on inadequate stipends.

### **INCREASE BASE APPRENTICESHIP RATES TO THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE**

Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to ensure that no apprentice is paid below the minimum wage at any stage during their training. While we acknowledge that apprentices are in training, they are learning while working, and we believe that work should pay, and pay equally for all. This measure would further support the Government’s objectives to incentivise young people to apply for apprenticeships.

# SECURING HEALTH OUTCOMES

## EXPAND INITIAL SPECIALIST TRAINING (IST)

YFG calls for additional HSE funding for IST Places. Hundreds of Irish-trained doctors leave annually due to limited specialist pathways, despite nearly 1,000 consultant posts remaining vacant. Boosting IST capacity, particularly in psychiatry and emergency medicine, would cut reliance on locums, strengthen hospital staffing and ensure that our investment in medical education delivers long-term returns.

## REFORM GRADUATE ENTRY MEDICINE

YFG proposes a three-part reform package: a State-backed loan scheme, a €9,000 annual tuition cap, and expanding SUSI to cover eligible applicants. Ireland's Graduate Entry Medicine (GEM) pathway is financially inaccessible, with students facing over €80,000 in fees and no access to loans or effective State support.

## IMPROVE ACCESS TO GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE

YFG calls for the allocation of targeted funding to increase the recruitment of additional specialist clinicians and establish a pilot regional service for gender-affirming care. This investment will help address critical capacity shortages, reduce waiting lists, which can and provide timely patient-centred treatment while the new national Model of Care is implemented.

## INTRODUCE A NATIONAL SCOLIOSIS SCREENING PROGRAMME

YFG proposes the establishment of a National Scoliosis Screening Programme in schools, delivered by public health professionals with clear referral pathways for follow-up care. Early detection of spinal issues can reduce the need for complex surgeries, ease long-term pressure on orthopaedic services, and protect the physical and mental well-being of children.

## REMOVE VAT ON SUN PROTECTION PRODUCTS

YFG calls for the removal of VAT on sun protection products, including sunscreen and related items, recognising their role in preventing skin cancer and UV-related health conditions. Removing VAT would encourage wider use, reduce long-term healthcare costs, and align Ireland's tax system with its public health goals.

## ADVANCE EARLY DIAGNOSIS FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS

YFG Calls for targeted investment in specialist training, diagnostic infrastructure, public awareness and dedicated research funding to reduce the length of time women are waiting for a diagnosis. Endometriosis affects thousands of women and people across Ireland, yet average diagnosis times still stretch across several years, leading to prolonged suffering and higher long-term healthcare costs. Early detection is shown to not only improve outcomes but also quality of life.

## IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE WITH POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS)

YFG calls for increased funding for specialist training, public education, and integrated care pathways to improve early diagnosis and treatment. Without action, too many face preventable complications — including infertility, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. PCOS affects up to one in ten women, yet remains underdiagnosed, misunderstood, and poorly managed across Ireland's health system.

## LAUNCH A NATIONAL QUIT VAPING CAMPAIGN

Allocate additional funding to Quit.ie for the development of resources to support and help people to quit vaping.



# SECURING ACCESS TO HOUSING

## Housing and Local Government

### 30% OF ALL NEW PUBLIC HOUSING TO BE ONE-BED HOMES

YFG calls for a national target that ensures at least 30% of all new public housing developments, including cost-rental, social housing, and affordable purchase schemes, are one-bed homes. Ireland's housing policy continues to overlook single-person households — including young workers and students — who are consistently locked out of both affordable and social housing due to a shortage in the availability of one-bedroom units, often resorting to unsuitable house shares and keeping homes from family use.

### CUT THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX TO 15% FOR THE SALE OF A VACANT PROPERTY FOR FIRST-TIME BUYERS

Young Fine Gael believes that every available means of freeing up housing supply should be used to combat the housing crisis. Under this scheme, a first-time buyer would be eligible to receive a letter from Revenue stating that they are a qualifying first-time buyer and furnish this to the vendor. The vendor could then sell the property to them and pay 15% CGT. This would apply to the sale of vacant properties, holiday homes, or holiday rentals (such as AirBnBs)

### FIRST-TIME RENTER DEPOSIT GRANT FOR UNDER-30S

Introduce a means-tested rental deposit grant of up to €1,500 for under-30s entering the private rental market, paid directly to landlords via the Department of Housing. This measure removes one of the biggest financial barriers facing young people trying to leave home and begin independent adult life.

### INCREASE PLANNING OBJECTION AND APPEAL FEES

To reduce frivolous objections and speed up the delivery of vital housing and infrastructure, YFG proposes an increase in planning objection fees from €20 to €200 for local authorities, and appeals to An Coimisiún

Pleanála from €220 to €400. Appropriate waivers should be introduced for low-income individuals and local community groups to protect meaningful public participation. The objective of this is to prevent and deter serial, bad-faith objections to vital housing delivery.

### EXTEND HELP TO BUY TO VACANT AND DERELICT HOMES

First-time buyers should be further supported in their efforts to buy homes by extending the Help To Buy Scheme to vacant and derelict homes. This measure would further support Government measures to tackle dereliction and vacancy by further supporting homebuyers to purchase and renovate viable properties that have been kept off the market.

### DIRECT INVESTMENT IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION – KEY PRIORITY

Provide ring-fenced funding to Higher and Further education institutions to allow them to build their own accommodation with the support and oversight of the Land Development Authority, for students, on their own land, ensuring that a certain proportion of this accommodation is set aside for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### PILOT SCHEME FOR RESERVED SEATS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to examine running a pilot scheme in a Local Authority to reserve seats for young people under 30 to increase youth participation in, and engagement with, electoral politics. This could be achieved with an additional County-level electoral area for each Local Authority, with an additional 10% of seats added to each Local Authority, reserved for candidates under 30 to encourage greater young candidate participation in electoral politics. It is an alternative to candidate quotas to ensure more meaningful and direct engagement of youth.

# SECURING OUR CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

## Transport, Climate and Environment

### Transport

#### **EXPAND 24-HOUR WEEKEND BUS SERVICES OUTSIDE OF DUBLIN**

24-hour bus services should be expanded to connect our cities with nearby towns, supporting late-night work, safer nightlife, and low-emission travel. This initiative would reduce car dependency, improve regional mobility, and support local economies by making transport more inclusive and reliable outside major urban centres.

#### **24-HOUR DART AND LUAS SERVICES**

YFG believes our Capital city and its nighttime economy, and shift workers should be connected 24/7. Our DART and Luas infrastructure should be utilised throughout the night to help people get to and from late-night/shift work, and also to support nightlife in our capital city by making it easier to get home from a night out.

#### **EXTEND THE YOUNG ADULT LEAP CARD TO UNDER-30S**

YFG calls on the Government to extend the maximum age for the Young Adult Leap Card from 25 to 30, to facilitate more people using public transport, and to

support young people who are only starting out on their careers. The Young Person Leap Card should be extended to cover young people up to the age of 30.

#### **INCREASED RURAL IRELAND ROADS FUNDING**

YFG recognises that, despite the success of the Rural Local Link Network project, there is still a distinct rural/ urban divide when it comes to access to public transport, meaning that, in order to ensure a future for young people in our rural communities, a proper roads network is vital, as cars are the most common method of transport. YFG Calls for increased budgetary spending on roads, especially in rural communities, and investment in all projects in the National Development Plan.

#### **RECRUIT ADDITIONAL DRIVING TESTERS**

YFG calls on the Government to invest in the training of additional driving testers to reduce waiting times for driving tests. While we recognise that the RSA has made some progress in recent months on this issue, this is a recurring issue that is hampering young people from getting on the road and needs investment to prevent future recurrence of this issue.

### Climate & Environment

#### **EXPAND IRELAND'S EV CHARGER INTERCONNECTIVITY**

YFG calls on the Government to allocate additional funding in Budget 2026 for the rapid expansion and modernisation of Ireland's electric vehicle (EV) charging network. While EV adoption continues to rise, charging infrastructure remains unevenly distributed and insufficient in many rural and regional areas — creating a barrier to broader uptake and undermining climate targets.

#### **STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY**

YFG calls for increased capital investment in offshore wind energy, green hydrogen development and interconnectors. Budget 2026 should position renewable energy as a natural economic strategy - one that reduces long-term energy costs, supports high-value employment, and enhances Ireland's role as a net contributor to European energy security.



# SECURING FARMING FUTURES FOR YOUTH

## **DEDICATED FARM RETIREMENT SCHEME**

YFG calls on the Government to introduce a dedicated Farm Retirement Scheme, to support both ageing farmers without the necessary contributions to qualify for the state pension, to plan to retire comfortably and with dignity, as well as to ensure the succession of the farm and the livelihood of that successor.

## **RECRUIT MORE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS**

YFG calls for increased staffing in the Department of Agriculture to ensure the timely processing of agri-environmental scheme applications and payments. Long delays in assessments are creating unnecessary stress for farmers and undermining trust in vital sustainability measures. Recruiting more agri-environmental scientists is a targeted, practical investment that would streamline programme delivery, strengthen climate action in the agriculture sector, and give farmers the certainty they need to plan for the future.

## **SUPPORTING THE LAND MOBILITY SERVICE**

YFG calls on the Government to provide dedicated, annual financial support for the Land Mobility Service.

## **FARM SUCCESSION SCHEME – KEY PRIORITY**

YFG calls for the introduction of a dedicated Farm Succession Scheme, with enhanced financial assistance, to streamline the process of succession planning and ensure that the majority of farms in Ireland have a succession plan in place.

# SECURING COMMUNITIES

## DEPLOY DIGITAL TOOLS FOR SAFER STREETS

Young Fine Gael calls for the development of a national, app-based street safety reporting platform to allow citizens to flag incidents, report unsafe areas, and contribute to real-time public safety mapping. This would empower the public, provide vital data to Gardai and local authorities, and support smarter, more targeted resource allocation.

## PUT FAMILIES FIRST IN YOUTH SAFETY REFORM

Launch a national consultation process that centres around families raising teenagers in crisis, victims of youth violence, gathering lived experience to inform new prevention, safety, and justice policies. This process would give voice to those most affected, shape the next phase of youth justice reform, and ensure State action is grounded in real stories and urgent needs.

## LAUNCH A COMMUNITY PEACEFRONT PROGRAMME

Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to establish early intervention teams from An Garda Síochána and supported by social workers, embedded in schools and neighbourhoods to tackle youth violence before it

escalates. These multidisciplinary teams, including youth workers, social care practitioners, and therapists, would identify at-risk young people and provide mentoring, trauma-informed support, and family engagement. Focused in communities experiencing rising youth gang activity, this programme shifts the State's response from reactive justice to proactive community engagement.

## PROVINCIAL GARDA TRAINING COLLEGES

YFG calls on the Government to establish additional provincial Garda training colleges to support the Government's objective to recruit additional Gardai, making Garda recruitment more accessible across the country.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS IN EVERY COUNTY

YFG calls on the Minister for Justice to increase funding for domestic violence services and ensure that every county in Ireland has at least one fully resourced, 24/7 refuge. The current postcode lottery for access to emergency accommodation fails too many vulnerable victims, leaving survivors of abuse without safe, local options for refuge.





# SECURING OUR LANGUAGE, CULTURE & SPORT

## TOURIST TAX

Young Fine Gael regrets the reluctance of the Government to work with the four Dublin Local Authorities to implement a city tax on tourist accommodation. City taxes on tourist accommodation in hotels are commonplace across many other European countries; it is a rare example of cross-party, cross-Local Authority cooperation that Young Fine Gael supports and believes should be implemented as part of Budget 26, to leave at the discretion of Local Authorities.

## GUARANTEE GAELTACHT ACCESS FOR ALL DEIS STUDENTS

Expand the DEIS Gaeltacht Scholarship Scheme to fully cover the cost of a Gaeltacht summer course for every student in a DEIS-designated school. While the scheme has grown from 50 places in 2019 to over 800 in 2025 — at a cost of €900,000 — it still only covers around 85% of fees and reaches a limited share of eligible students. A full expansion would guarantee equal access to Irish-language immersion for young people from disadvantaged communities.

## A CULTURE PASS FOR EVERY 18-YEAR-OLD

YFG proposes a €150 Culture Pass for every young person in Ireland on their 18th birthday — a digital

voucher to spend on books, theatre, concerts, galleries, and cultural events. Inspired by successful models in France and Italy, the pass would introduce a new generation to the richness of Irish cultural life while supporting the creative economy with targeted youth-driven spending.

## STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SWIMMING INFRASTRUCTURE

Increase funding to the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) and raise the grant support rate for public swimming pool projects to 75%, reducing the financial burden on local authorities. Swimming pools are disproportionately costly to develop and maintain, often representing a significant share of a council's annual budget, limiting new projects and upgrades.

## LAUNCH A NATIONAL YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL

Establish an annual, state-supported National Festival of Youth Music and Culture to showcase Irish creative talent under 30, blending traditional and contemporary forms across music, performance, and the arts. Funded through a combination of Department of Culture, Communications and Sport support, ticket sales, and private sponsorship, this festival could elevate emerging artists and embed culture into the national calendar.

## LEATHANAIGH AN SCÉIM GAELTACHTA - REINTRODUCE THE TEACHING THROUGH IRISH GRANT

Leathanaigh an scéim Gaeltachta do scolaraí atá ag freastal ar scoileanna DEIS chun chinntiú go bhfuil an costas don chursa clúdaithe ina iomlán do gach dalta. Cé gur mhéadaigh líon na spásanna atá ar fáil faoin scéim, ó 50 spásanna in 2019 go dtí breis agus 800 spásanna in 2025 - a chosnaíonn 900,000 - Ní chlúdaítear ach 85% do na táillí atá a n-íoc acu agus ní fhaigheann gach scoláire deis teacht uirthi ach an oiread. Chinnteodh leathnú iomlán sa scéim seo go mbeadh cothrom na féinne ann do dhaltai ó chúlaí faoi mhíbhuntáiste ó thaobh chúrsaí tumoideachas agus tabharfaí deis dóibh ár gcultúr agus ár dteanga náisiúnta a fhorbairt.

Reintroduce the Teaching Through Irish grant for teachers who were newly qualified from 2012 onwards. The absence of this scheme and the absence of many suitable Irish language resources sees many newly qualified teachers in Gaeltacht schools and Gaelcholáistí having to devote numerous extra hours a week to creating resources which they are not remunerated for, whilst also dealing with longer commutes to and from work owing to a shortage of housing supply in many Gaeltacht areas. This scheme would also help alleviate the shortage of teachers fluent in Irish teaching in Gaeltacht schools.

# SECURING OUR DEFENCE CAPABILITIES

## **TRIPLE IRELAND'S DEFENCE BUDGET BY 2030 – KEY PRIORITY**

YFG calls for the Government to commit to going beyond Level of Ambition 3 and for the State's Defence Budget to be tripled to €4.05 billion by 2030 — a responsible and necessary investment in the security of our State. This funding would deliver urgent capital upgrades, including modern radar systems, air and naval assets, cyber infrastructure, and fit-for-purpose bases.

## **LAUNCH A NATIONAL DEFENCE RECRUITMENT AND SKILLS DRIVE**

YFG calls for a national recruitment and skills development programme to rebuild the strength and resilience of the Defence Forces. This must include enhanced pay and conditions, modern training facilities, and accredited pathways into service in areas such as cyber security, aviation, and engineering.

## **INVESTMENT IN DEFENCE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Ireland must urgently invest in radar, sonar, and air defence systems to assert meaningful control over our skies and territorial waters. This includes deploying military-grade surveillance infrastructure and initiating a phased acquisition of fighter aircraft — beginning with an initial procurement to establish capability and signal sovereign intent.

## **ESTABLISH A STANDALONE IRISH INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

Ireland must establish an integrated, standalone national intelligence agency — unifying domestic, military, and foreign intelligence under one modern, accountable structure. Staffed independently, underpinned by clear legal mandate, and aligned with European intelligence-sharing frameworks, this agency would strengthen our ability to detect threats, prevent attacks, and safeguard national sovereignty in a time of hybrid warfare, cyber aggression, and disinformation.

## **LAUNCH A €50 MILLION DEFENCE INNOVATION FUND**

YFG calls for the establishment of a €50 million Defence Innovation Fund to support Irish SMEs developing dual-use technologies — including AI, cybersecurity, radar systems, and infrastructure protection. Backed by an enhanced 20% R&D tax credit and streamlined, EU-aligned procurement processes, this initiative would also create a national Defence Tech Hub in partnership with third-level institutions.









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