

## Political Parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly - Sinn Féin

### KEY:

CR: Caitríona Ruane

CR: My name is Caitríona Ruane. I am a member of Sinn Féin, and I'm elected for South Down.

*What does your Party stand for?*

We're a party that believes in a United Ireland. We support the Good Friday Agreement and the Institutions that are established as part of that: Stormont, the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council and also the Human Rights and Equality.

*How has your Party changed in the last 20 years?*

We've developed our policy, we've developed the Equality Agenda, we have a lot more women involved in our party and, I always think, a healthy balance in terms of gender helps any party. Sinn Féin has also played a major role in terms of the Peace Process, and I'm delighted to see that we're helping develop the new Institutions.

*Do you think the Assembly and Executive are effective?*

I think these Institutions are working and I think we're in a much better place because of the Institutions. Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't areas that could be improved, of course there are areas that could be improved and I'd like to see improvements.

*What challenges face your Party moving forward?*

I think the challenges that face our Party are the challenges that are facing every party. One, we need to ensure that we don't jeopardise in any way our Peace Process. We also have economic challenges, for my Party, it's a big challenge that we have a government in power in England that we don't believe have the best... Have the interests of the North at heart. We need resources to continue to support change that is badly needed here.

*Corporation Tax*

Well, our party want to see devolution of fiscal powers to the North. Part of that is Corporation Tax varying powers. We would like to see an all-Ireland rate in relation to Corporation Tax, but we also have to see what conditions that it comes with, and what implications it would have for the Block Grant.

### *Voting at 16*

Sinn Féin believe that our sixteen year olds should have votes, we argued for that. Scotland is getting it. You can see the impact that young people, and the dynamism that young people brought to the Scottish Referendum debate. You can see the dynamism that young people brought to the debate on equal marriage, for LGBT communities in the South of Ireland, and what we need to do is engage our young people actively as young citizens.

### *Academic Selection*

Well, I speak as a former Education Minister here, and I speak as the Minister who got rid of the 11+. For me it was one of the best things that I did. I am deeply disappointed that some schools are operating private tests, and it's important for people to know that they're operating that without support from the Department of Education. What we need to be doing is opening up pathways rather than closing them down.

### *Student Fees*

Well, Sinn Féin don't support student fees being increased, and we fought in the budget for that not to happen. In England and Wales, fees have trebled and that's very disappointing because it discriminates against working class young people. Scotland have free fees and we welcome that. And what we want to do is ensure that young people get access to a university education and that there shouldn't be blocks in their way. Sinn Féin also fought for the EMA, the Education Maintenance Allowance, and there were proposals that that be cut and we fought to keep them.