



Chairperson's report

Pro Silva Ireland AGM 2024

Opening Remarks

As I present my first Chairperson's Report since being elected at the AGM in October 2023, I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude for the trust and support you've shown me over the past year. I would also like to sincerely thank our previous chair, Liam Byrne, for his outstanding leadership and dedication to Pro Silva Ireland. Liam's efforts have significantly advanced our mission of promoting CCF close-to-nature forestry, and I'm grateful to be building upon the solid foundation he and our previous chairpersons helped establish.

This year has been one of growth and progress for Pro Silva Ireland, supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Promotional Fund. This funding has enabled us to extend our reach, increase the number of engagement days and workshops, and further advocate for close-to-nature practices rooted in the principles of Pro Silva.

We're also pleased to see our membership continuing to grow, a reflection of the increasing interest in CCF. Our newsletter and updated website have become key tools in keeping members informed and engaged with the latest developments and events.

Looking ahead, I am excited by the opportunities before us as we continue to promote these principles throughout Irish forestry. With the vital support and commitment of our members we can make a lasting impact on building resilience in Ireland's forests.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to Pro Silva Ireland.

Manus Crowley

Pro Silva Ireland Activities

Oct 2023-Oct 2024

Field day and AGM 2023 in Drumahair

The Autumn Field Day took place in the forest of committee member Seán Ó Conláin near Drumahair, Co. Leitrim on Saturday 7th October 2023. The day was well attended and was led by both Paddy Purser and Seán and focused on 'Late transformation to CCF in the West of Ireland'. Throughout the day, the opportunities and challenges of late-stage transformation were considered as well as discussions around wider forest policy in Ireland and the importance of local community engagement. On behalf of Pro Silva Ireland, I would like to thank all our hosts on the day.



PSI Study Tour 2023

On the 12th of October 2023, 34 Pro Silva Ireland members travelled to central Jutland, Denmark for the International Study tour. This was the largest trip to date and reflects the growing interest in CCF. The tour was hosted by Pro Silva Denmark members, president Niels Peter Dalsgaard Jensen and vice-president Jan Klinkby Østergaard. A wide range of forests were visited from the large estate of the Lego family to Salten Langsø skov forests collectively owned by 74 woodland owners and finally to Kogleskoven Forest, owned and managed by Niels Peter himself. There were many similarities with the challenges faced by Irish foresters and forest owners such as deer and stand stability but the sandy low fertility soils of Jutland, which meant much slower growth and slow cycling of generations, were unfamiliar to us. Many thanks to our hosts for giving up their time and sharing their expertise.

Webinars

Pro Silva Ireland continued with its increasingly popular webinar series. The webinars have proven to be particularly useful for CCF engagement during the dark Winter months. Starting off on 31st of January with a webinar on Deer Management and CCF in Ireland, jointly hosted by Teddy Cashman and Matt Stuart. Teddy gave an outline of the work of the Deer Management Strategy group and prospects for its implementation. Matt Stuart gave an account of effective deer management at Barronscourt Estate in Co. Tyrone.

Later in March, committee members Paddy Purser, Pdraig O'Tuama and I led another webinar titled Forest Establishment Design for CCF. This webinar looked at the benefits of planting CCF mixtures such as resilience. It was followed by an interesting panel discussion.

Both webinars had high registration numbers and a high number of views.

Spring Field Day 2024

Our Spring Field Day was held on 27th April 2024. This was a collaboration between PSI and Royal Forestry Society. We visited Seaforde Estate, Co. Down winner of the RDS 2002 Production Forestry Award. We were hosted by committee member Brian Malcomson and Forest manager and estate owner Matthew Forde who showcased a wide range of silviculture practices with a particular emphasis on Climate Resilience. Pro Silva Ireland is very grateful to the host owners and Brian for facilitating this well-attended day.

Joint Field Day - ITGA

Pro Silva Ireland collaborated with Irish Timber Growers Association (ITGA) to host an additional field day this year at Knockrath Forest, Co. Wicklow on the 24th of May 2024. Paddy Purser led the day which was attended by members of both ITGA and PSI including many foresters and forest owners. Over the day a range of stands were visited focusing on the transition to CCF. The multiple functions of recreation, water protection and timber production were discussed. Many thanks to Paddy, the Brabazon family and ITGA for organising this event.

Workshops



With support from DAFM, between May and October, PSI delivered a series of in-forest workshops targeting various stakeholders. Among the stakeholders targeted were TCD/ForES, UCD Landscape Architecture School, SETU and a further workshop planned for Coillte staff members. Additionally, there were 2 workshops open to the wider public.

New ground was broken with the development of a Workshop for Forest Establishment Design for CCF. This is particularly relevant to the afforestation planting option FT10 and the new Climate Resilient Reforestation Scheme. The workshop explains the rationale for planting a CCF mixture particularly focusing on increased forest resilience and we visit a recently planted FT10 site to examine its implementation in the field. PSI delivered 2 of these workshops with an attendance of 33 foresters and a further workshop is planned for Teagasc Forestry advisors in November 2024.

In another new venture, Sean Hoskins and I will deliver several workshops aimed at developing forestry awareness among young people. These workshops will be targeted at Scout groups and school children. Thanks to the dedicated committee members who participated in and helped facilitate these productive workshops.

Regional Field Event

Padraig O'Tuama delivered another regional open event at Caherconlish, Co. Limerick on Friday 30th August. The day demonstrated the transformation of a ca. 15ha forest to an irregular structure, under the WIS CCF scheme. The day was very well attended with 37 signed in. Thanks to Padraig with support from Paddy Purser and our host owner Liam Bresnan for helping to facilitate this event.

Training

In September, PSI, in conjunction with DAFM, ran training for foresters and forest owners with another course in tree marking. The training was again delivered by CCF silviculturist Ted Wilson at Killeel, Co. Kildare and a total of 14 attended. This form of training is vital to development of a capable CCF practitioner base and many thanks to Ted for continuing to develop and deliver these courses. We hope to further expand and develop the training infrastructure on offer as demand for CCF continues to grow.

Collaboration and engagement

Throughout the year, Pro Silva Ireland and its committee members actively collaborated with a wide range of forestry stakeholders, including DAFM, Teagasc, SelectFor, Coillte, IFO, Irish Agroforestry Forum, Hometree, ITGA and other individual stakeholders. These efforts are aimed at promoting Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) across the country and PSI participated in several events, workshops and training courses hosted by these stakeholders. Paddy Purser continues to represent PSI on the Forest Stakeholders consultative committee (FSCC).

Pro Silva Annual International Meeting 2024

In May, Pro Silva Ireland was represented by Liam Byrne, Padraig O'Tuama and I at the Annual Meeting of International Pro Silva organisations in Slovakia where the annual business of Pro Silva Europe was



tended to. There were significant changes to the PSE board notably with the election of Tomáš Vrška as president after Eckart Senitzka of Austria who had served for many years. PSI was honoured to have Padraig serve as secretary for many years who also stepped down. Thank you to Padraig for his great service. Liam Byrne was elected to the board as the Atlantic region representative. Following the meeting we visited some of Slovakia's beech and oak forests where discussions were largely focused on the challenges of building Climate resilience. Many thanks to our Slovakian colleagues for hosting the International Meeting.

PSI Study Tour 2024

Most recently, at the end of September, 34 attendees from Pro Silva Ireland travelled across to Scotland on our study tour. Once again, this was one of the largest groups to participate in our study tour, with broad representation from across the Irish forestry sector. The 4-day tour was centred around Aviemore in the Scottish Highlands. We visited a wide range of sites across the region and were hosted by numerous Scottish Forestry representatives including Forestry and Lands Scotland, Will Anderson and Caitlin Erskine of the Seafield Estate, Wildland at Glenfeshie Estate, Forest Policy Group and Ben Clinch of Darnaway Forest.

PSI attendees were particularly impressed with the landscape level restoration projects taking place across Scotland primarily due to the implementation of effective and coordinated deer control. As always, these trips stimulate more questions than answers and we were left considering how to replicate such actions at home in Ireland.

Many thanks to Ted Wilson for helping to put together the trip itinerary and liaising with the various contacts. Thanks also to our ever-hardworking administrator Olive Leavy who coordinated the trip, managed the logistics and organised the attendees.

Irish Deer Management Strategy Group

PSI continues to recognise that deer are the single greatest barrier in Ireland to the diversification of our forests and management practices. PSI continues to support the work of the Irish Deer Management Strategy Group, and we welcomed the implementation of some of the recommendations of the group such as changes to the deer hunting season and also that DAFM is now seeking a programme manager to implement the recommendations of the group for three years.

Pro Silva Ireland charitable tax exemption

A Level 1 Compliance intervention was carried out by Revenue in 2024 to confirm the continued eligibility of Pro Silva Ireland to charitable tax exemption. Following the review, the charitable tax exemption status has been continued.

New Forestry Programme

The 2024 planting season saw the first real implementation of the New Forestry Programme. PSI were delighted to see the first round of FT10 – CCF afforestation sites planted this season. We continue to support the roll out of FT10 and hope to see its adoption by more foresters and forest owners. In July



this year the Climate Resilient Reforestation Pilot Scheme was opened. PSI worked closely with DAFM on the development of this measure to provide financial assistance for those wishing to replant a site with a CCF mixture. While PSI generally welcomed the launch of the scheme there was some disappointment as deer fencing is currently not provided for under the scheme. PSI will continue to engage with DAFM to see about amending this.

Handbook

PSI, with support from DAFM, are in the final stages of writing a handbook titled, A Guide to Continuous Cover Forestry Practice in Ireland. The handbook will focus on CCF in the Irish context, and we trust it will prove very useful to foresters, forest owners and other interested parties across the island. This is a very exciting development for PSI and we are all looking forward to its publication later this year. I would like to extend enormous thanks and gratitude to Sean Hoskins for taking on the demanding task of writing the handbook and to Olive Leavy for editing.

Closing Remarks

Reflecting on my first year as Chairperson of Pro Silva Ireland, I am proud of all that we have accomplished. The study tours, workshops, field days, training days and collaborations we've undertaken have further increased awareness and understanding of CCF within the Irish forestry sector. I want to thank the Pro Silva Ireland committee for their hard work and commitment over the past year. It has been quite an active period for our organization, with significant progress made in promoting CCF across the country. This success is a testament to the dedication and passion of our committee members, who have continuously given their time, energy, and expertise to advancing CCF in Ireland. I would also like to extend a thank you to our administrator, Olive Leavy, whose hard work behind the scenes has been invaluable to the success of Pro Silva Ireland.

I look forward to the year ahead, particularly as we will be celebrating 25 years of Pro Silva Ireland transforming forests and mindsets in Ireland. I am confident that we will continue building a strong CCF foundation and structure for the next 25 years.

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Manus Crowley