



Chairperson's report

Pro Silva Ireland AGM 2026

Opening Remarks

A chairde,

As I come to the end of my third year as Chairperson of Pro Silva Ireland, I would like to thank the committee and members for their continued support over the past year. It has been another busy year for the organisation, and I greatly appreciate the time, commitment and encouragement given by so many throughout 2026.

It is remarkable that this time last year I was reflecting on the impact of Storm Éowyn and the damage it caused to Irish forestry, much of which is still being felt. Since then, we have experienced another period of extreme weather, from flooding and an exceptionally wet winter and spring, particularly in the east and south, to one of the hottest and driest summers in decades in Ireland and across continental Europe.

These events present major challenges for forestry, from establishment through to harvesting, and underline just how immediate the effects of climate change have become. They also reinforce the need for more mixed, diverse and resilient forests and management approaches across the island of Ireland. In that context, the role of Pro Silva Ireland is more important than ever.

It is equally important that we continue to deliver our CCF training and workshop programme, supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's Training, Skills and Promotion Funds. This has been another very busy year, with more than 286 units of training delivered.

Membership remains strong, and Pro Silva Ireland's wider reach continues to grow, with 862 people now subscribed to our newsletter. This gives us an increasingly effective platform to share practical knowledge, promote CCF and keep members and supporters informed and engaged with our work.

Thank you all for your ongoing dedication to Pro Silva Ireland.

Manus Crowley



Pro Silva Ireland Activities

Oct 2025 - Sept 2026

Autumn Field Day and AGM 2025

The Autumn Field Day took place at the Leavy's family's Kinwood forest, Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath, on 18th October 2025. This family-owned farm forest was a wonderful backdrop to demonstrate how CCF was delivering multiple benefits for multiple generations. We had very strong attendance with over 80 people present and participants got to see multiple aims of timber production, biodiversity protection and enhancement, water and soil protection, amenity and carbon sequestration. It also allowed participants to see the development from a standard farm plantation into a resilient multifunctional woodland under CCF management. There was also a particular focus on the social side and developing a real forest culture. On behalf of Pro Silva Ireland, I would like to thank the Leavy family and in particular Olive Leavy for organising such an engaging day. Finally, thanks to the various PSI committee members who contributed throughout the day.

Closer to Nature Workshop

Pro Silva Ireland committee members were invited to participate in two workshops (28th Nov 2025 & 12th June 2026) hosted by Áine Ní Dhubháin of UCD as part of the Closer-to-Nature Forest Management project. The workshops considered how current forest types and management practices in Ireland aligned with CTNFM principles, including natural regeneration, mixed species, structural diversity, habitat retention and continuous cover forestry. Participants also examined barriers to wider implementation, potential solutions, and the practical feasibility of applying these approaches under Irish conditions.

UCD Tree marking course

The first of our 2026 training events took place on 12–13 January at Kilteel, Co. Kildare, where Ted Wilson delivered a two-day tree marking course on behalf of Pro Silva Ireland to nine UCD forestry students. We were delighted to have the opportunity to give the students practical experience of the tree marking process and to explain how marking decisions are made in the field. Hopefully, it also encouraged a few future CCF practitioners.

Spring Field Day 2026

The Spring Field Day was held on 17th April at the Slieve Aughty Centre, Co. Galway, focusing on sustainable forestry and deer management. The day brought together over 60 people from



across forestry, conservation, research and deer management. Morning talks covered current deer research and the development of Deer Management Units, followed by an afternoon forest walk looking at deer impacts and practical control measures. There was plenty of discussion throughout the day, with a strong focus on the need for foresters, landowners, hunters, researchers and state agencies to work together to manage deer populations and protect forests. Pro Silva Ireland is very grateful to Julius Silvan and Paddy Purser for hosting and facilitating such a well-attended and informative day.

Forestry promotion projects - DAFM

As mentioned in last year's report Pro Silva Ireland was awarded funding under the DAFM Forestry Promotions Project. This funding call was launched to support innovative projects promoting afforestation, sustainable forest management and the wider benefits of forestry and timber, with particular emphasis on engaging farmers, landowners and the wider public. During 2026, Pro Silva Ireland will have delivered three projects under the DAFM Forestry Promotion Fund, with total funding of approximately €66,000.

1. Planting Forests for the Future – Building Resilience with CCF

Produced an animation and two videos promoting FT10-CCF, supported by a wider promotional campaign. Three FT10 training events were delivered, attracting 46 attendees, including 24 Forestry Inspectors.

2. Expanding the CCF Toolbox

Produced 10 practical CCF Quick Guides and a new online CCF resource centre. Two student workshops were delivered, with the guides widely distributed through PSI events, the Woodland Show and Teagasc Forestry Advisors.

3. Communicating the Benefits of CCF

Currently being completed, including a podcast series, promotional activity and a Reforestation for Resilience field event in mid-October.

Pro Silva Ireland Forestry Skills programme 2026

Building on from our previous years was the further roll out and expansion of training days and workshops under the Forestry Skills programme through the continued support of DAFM.

I am delighted to report that Pro Silva Ireland delivered a total of 14 days of training between 11th March and 17th September 2026, reaching over 240 participants. The programme again provided a wide range of practical workshops for students, foresters, contractors, ecologists and forest owners. The programme saw the development and delivery of 1 new course for participants.



- **Introduction to CCF** – Aimed at forestry students, this course provided an overview of the principles and practice of CCF, with a focus on transformation stages, ecosystem services and ecological benefits.
- **WIS-CCF Scheme Training** – Designed for foresters and forestry inspectors, this training equipped participants with the knowledge to prepare and assess transformation plans for WIS-CCF applications.
- **Spruce Tree Marking** – A two-day, hands-on course where foresters and forest owners practiced tree marking in a marteloscope, comparing CCF thinning approaches with conventional clearfell systems. We were pleased to develop a second site at Ciaran Duggan's forest at Carbury, Co. Kildare
- **Initiating CCF in Oak Plantations** – This workshop introduces the biology and silviculture of Irish oak, with practical exercises in crown thinning to support early transformation to CCF.
- **CCF Workshop for Contractors** – A one-day course for contractors and machine operators, focusing on thinning, harvesting and large-tree felling techniques that align with CCF principles.
- **Sustainable Forestry and Deer Management** – this was incorporated into our Spring field day.

We also saw the development of a new course, **CCF for Biodiversity and Water**. This workshop was held at Garryhinch Forest on 2nd September. The field-based day explored how CCF can support biodiversity, protect water and maintain productive forestry through practical assessment and management.

This year's training programme continued to be a strong part of Pro Silva Ireland's work, with good participation and interest from across the forestry sector. The courses focused on building practical understanding and confidence in the application of CCF in Irish forests.

A particular thanks is due to our trainers, facilitators and forest owners, who gave their time, knowledge and access to sites throughout the year. Their contribution is central to the success of the programme.

Funding for 2027

We have again been awarded funding (€44,000) under the Forestry Skills programme to deliver our CCF training programme in 2027. Interest in CCF training remains strong and we look forward to building on this again next year.



Pro Silva Ireland Study Tour 2026

On our most ambitious study tour to date, from 6th to 14th May, Pro Silva Ireland took a group of 18 members across the Atlantic to visit Vancouver Island and surrounds in British Columbia, Canada. A diverse group of foresters, ecologists, forest owners, students and arborists witnessed firsthand the scale and vastness that are the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

The tour took in a wide range of forestry approaches, from Eco forestry and community forests to research trials, commercial forestry and sawmilling. Highlights included visits to Wildwood, the MASS research site, Barkley Community Forest and UBC's Malcolm Knapp Research Forest. A particular highlight was the visit to the 8500ha old-growth forest on Meares Island, which was truly breathtaking.

This tour had been many years in the planning and special thanks to Karen, Olive, Faith and also to Ted Wilson for all their efforts in organising it and finally making it happen.

Pro Silva Annual Meeting 2026 - Hungary

The Pro Silva Annual Meeting took place at Visegrád in Hungary in September under the theme *Practice and Science in Partnership*. Ireland was represented by Manus, Janice and Olive, along with our Atlantic region representative, Liam Byrne. The AGM was held on the first day, with the existing board remaining in place, while the LIFE ForSkills project was also formally launched. Field visits focused on broadleaf forests, mainly oak and beech, with familiar discussions around regeneration, deer pressure, climate change and timber markets. Key messages were the need to grow quality hardwood sawlogs, the importance of oak, and the need for effective deer management.

Collaborations

Collaboration remains a key element of Pro Silvas approach and throughout the year, we collaborated with a wide range of forestry stakeholders, including DAFM, Teagasc, Coillte, Lawpro and individual partners. These collaborations provide valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange and helped broaden understanding of CCF across Ireland. Paddy Purser and other committee members continue to represent Pro Silva Ireland on the Forest Stakeholders Consultative Committee (FSCC), keeping CCF ethos central to these important discussions.

Pro Silva Europe

At European level, Pro Silva Ireland remained actively involved with Pro Silva Europe during 2026. Liam Byrne continues to serve on the board as Atlantic region representative, helping to ensure an Irish voice in wider European discussions. PSI is also participating in the LIFE ForSkills project, focused on improving skills in biodiversity-friendly forest management through training and knowledge exchange.



Pro Silva Europe has also secured significant new funding, allowing it to establish a professional executive team and strengthen its capacity. Work is continuing on the revised Pro Silva principles, while the wider network has expanded with Pro Silva Sweden joining and CCFG becoming Pro Silva Britain.

Advocacy & engagement

Pro Silva Ireland also contributed to several wider forestry and environmental initiatives during the year. Manus and Olive participated in the Land Leaders' Forum, *Fields, Forests & Rivers – Nature Restoration Plan*, on 20 January 2026, and PSI made a submission on Ireland's draft Nature Restoration Plan. Information stands were also provided at Teagasc's *Reforestation after Windblow* event on 26 March and at Ireland's Woodland Show on 29–30 August.

Organisation Structure

Pro Silva Ireland has grown considerably in recent years, with an expanding programme of training, Irish and European funded projects, and external engagement. Considering this growth, the committee has proposed that Pro Silva Ireland transition from its current association structure to a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG).

The proposed change would provide a more formal legal and governance structure, with clearer responsibilities, greater continuity and a stronger basis for managing funding, contracts and future development. Any transition would need to retain the member-led nature of Pro Silva Ireland and support the organisation's core purpose and values.

Closing Remarks

It's hard to believe that I have now completed 3 years as chairperson of Pro Silva Ireland. It is truly amazing to witness how much the organisation has grown and the sheer volume of training events, field days and activities that we are delivering year on year.

It is heartening to know that we are affecting real change in Ireland's forests, and this emboldens us to continue with our work. This is evident when we meet our European counterparts and they comment on the great efforts coming out of Ireland in the advancement of CCF/CTFN management.

Special thanks go to each member of the Pro Silva Ireland committee for all their efforts in furthering the cause and of course to Olive who works away diligently on our behalf.

The year ahead is full of promise, the forest beckons, so let us go forth and practice.

Le Meas

Manus Crowley



Pro Silva Ireland Committee:

Chair: Manus Crowley

Secretary: Julius Silvan

Padraig O'Tuama

Jonathan Spazzi

Brian Malcomson

General manager: Olive Leavy

Vice Chair: Janice Fuller

Liam Byrne

Sean Hoskins

Ciaran Duggan

Treasurer: Seán Garvey

Paddy Purser

Faith Wilson

Karen Woods