

## ProSilva Ireland AGM 2016, Tuamgreany, Co Clare



### Chairman's Report by Paddy Purser

The October 2015 field day was held in Knockrath forest, Co. Wicklow. The day had a large attendance and was partly filmed as part of the EcoEye TV series, aired on RTE in February 2016 and subsequently repeated later in the year. The field day was held in mixed conifer forests along the Avonmore River. This included one of the AFI sites set up as part of the COFORD LISS project in which Pro Silva Ireland were represented. We were joined by Henrick Barwald from Germany and he provided expert input during the day. Pro Silva Ireland would like to thank David Brabazon for his generosity in feeding participants with stew at lunchtime and for hosting us in his woodlands. The day got a very positive write up from Donal Magner in the Farmer's Journal.

The new committee met in November to plan the year ahead and we welcomed Jonathan Spazzi and Kevin O'Connell as new members and Jan Alexander as a returning member.

Following the airing of the EcoEye programme and feedback from Teagasac Advisors via Kevin O'Connell it was decided to hold a repeat of the October Field Day for Forest Owner groups for our April field day. We returned to Knockrath for this but also visited Sandra Jorgensen's forest at Ballycullen, Ashford, Co. Wicklow, site of the thinning trial from the COFORD LISS project. This was considered to be of most relevance to new farm foresters as they would see the initial steps in conversion to CCF. We were joined at this day by Eckhart Senitz and his wife Angelica from Pro Silva Austria who gave expert input from the perspective of a private forest owner in Austria. We had an excellent crowd on the day from the North East and Westmeath growers groups and also some from other growers groups. Several committee members received very positive feedback from this day. As chairman I was very pleased to be sharing our experience with a wider audience of forest owners. We are also grateful to Kevin O'Connell for being the catalyst for this event.

In February 2016 we launched a survey of our members to review our membership services such as field days, website and social media. We also sought views on the future role that pro Silva Ireland might play in developing CCF in Ireland. This was organised and reported on by Cathy Fitzgerald (in the midst of her PhD studies) for which we are very grateful. The committee had a special session to discuss the results and these will be taken into account in future events. This will include more practical training workshops.

In September 2016 we were generously hosted on our foreign study tour by Pro Silva Wallonia in Belgium. This was, by common consensus amongst the group that travelled, one of the best ProSilva trips to Europe we have undertaken in that we could relate directly to the transformation work being carried out there in the context of our own forests in Ireland. Christine Sanchez and Charles deBois in particular deserve special thanks for the huge effort they put in to make it such an educational and enjoyable trip. My thanks also to Pdraig O'Tuama who was our liaison person for the trip. It was also encouraging to have 5 first time travellers, again a sign that there is growing interest in CCF in Ireland.

Padraig also has led an important development for us this year with Pro Silva Wallonia and that is securing Forest Service funding for the translation and publication in English of a practical booklet the Belgians produced recently. This project is near completion and will be a significant publication which we can provide to our members and the wider forestry community.

Another publication on CCF was launched by Teagasc at the National Ploughing Championships in September 2016. This booklet was prepared largely by committee member Jonathan Spazzi working for Teagasc with some input from other committee members. This recognition by Teagasc of CCF as a management option for forest owners is a significant breakthrough for CCF in Ireland and is a result of demand from forest owners but also Pro Silva Ireland's consistency over many years.

I attended the Pro Silva Annual meeting in Scotland in June along with Padraig O'Tuama, secretary of Pro Silva (Europe). The meeting was attended by 49 Pro Silva delegates from across Europe. There is a separate report from this meeting although it is worth recording that Pro Silva Ireland came in for special praise for their networking and exchange practices which other countries were encouraged to follow.

Tele-conferencing has been invaluable for all the organising of ProSilva Ireland events this year as members live and work so far apart. Thanks to Coillte for helping to facilitating this. Also thanks to all committee members for their support and service over the year and especially to Jim Simpson and Jan Alexander who are standing down.

Finally, on behalf of Pro Silva Ireland, I would like to congratulate our close neighbours and colleagues in the Continuous Cover Forestry Group (CCFG) in the UK on reaching their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They have been a great source of support and encouragement to us and we share many common issues and challenges.

Paddy Purser

06/10/2016