

DAY 1 REPORT



Members of the Pro Silva Ireland committee with President of Pro Silva, Eckart Senitza, and Minister of State Pippa Hackett at the launch of the Pro Silva Annual Meeting, 2023 in Glenview Hotel, Co. Wicklow. Photo: ER Wilson

Wednesday 14th June: On registration, delegates were presented with a tote bag, water bottle, programme of events and a specially commissioned coaster, made in ATU Connemara from small diameter Irish Alder, all of which bear the special logo for the event. This logo melds a stylised fingerprint with a tree, to represent the meeting of minds that is the International Pro Silva Annual Meeting.



The chairman of Pro Silva Ireland, Liam Byrne, welcomed all delegates and acknowledged DAFM for their support of the event. He presented the story of Pro Silva Ireland since its formation in 2000 and its valued relationship with the wider international Pro Silva community. Then the international president of Pro Silva, Eckart Senitza, delivered his opening address, where he outlined the multiple threats to and challenges that our forests are



subjected to from the changing climate, the biodiversity crisis, increasing pests & diseases, and urban expansion. Eckart added how CCF could assist greatly in meeting these challenges, and the value of Pro Silva as a knowledge exchange hub for closer-to-nature forest management.

Following this, the meeting was officially opened by the Minister of State with responsibility of forestry, Pippa Hackett, and during her address she outlined her full support of CCF research and transformation systems in Ireland while acknowledging the challenges resulting from deer pressures. The international delegates were very impressed by the level of understanding of and support for CCF from both the Minister and representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine throughout the three days.



Chair of Pro Silva Eckart Senitza (Austria), Chair of Pro Silva Ireland Liam Byrne and Irish Minister of State Pippa Hackett. Photo: ER Wilson.

Next was the Pro Silva Annual General Meeting. Reports were presented by members of the International Pro Silva committee, and delegates were informed of current membership levels and the progress of numerous International Pro Silva projects. Mátyás Csorba, who is head of the Pro Silva Commission of the [International Forestry Students' Association](#) (IFTA), spoke of this globally organised and locally operated students' organisation and its support of CCF practice.

Pro Silva Ireland committee member Seán Ó Conláin then gave a fascinating presentation on the history of forests and peoples' relationships with forests and trees in Ireland, and proceedings for the opening session were brought to a conclusion by Liam Byrne, who gave an outline of the planned programme for the rest of the event.



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Pro Silva Ireland committee member Seán Ó Conláin sharing Ireland's forest and tree history and culture. Photo: Cathy Fitzgerald.

Most Irish readers will be familiar with the monastic settlement in Glendalough, founded by the Christian Saint, Kevin, in the 6th century. With such a legacy, the Glendalough Valley (part of the Wicklow Mountains National Park) was a fitting venue for the afternoon presentations on the theme of **History and Culture of Forestry in Ireland**. Delegates were told the story of how the wider landscape has altered significantly since the founding of the site, reflecting human demands and cultural changes. From prehistoric woodlands to monastic farms and mining, by the 1800s only small patches of remnant forest remained, part of the bigger picture of Ireland having the lowest forest cover in Europe at the start of the 20th century. Today's semi-wooded landscape is the result of modern state forestry programmes, conservation efforts and private forestry.



Pro Silva delegates enjoying the forests and dialogue at Glendalough. Photo: Cathy Fitzgerald



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Following a tour of the monastic site, the group visited a nearby recently afforested native woodland site. Here presentations were delivered on afforestation in Ireland and associated support schemes, afforestation operations, a private forest owner's experience, and state supports for transformation of plantations to CCF.

Delegates were particularly interested in Ireland's afforestation programme, which is unique in Europe. The entire afternoon programme enabled great discussion on many topics including, the importance of both conserving and expanding our native woodlands and the associated challenges. One point of agreement was that the greatest challenge is presented by rising deer populations.

The day officially concluded with dinner at the wonderful Glenmalure Lodge, followed by music and craic, allowing us to showcase Ireland's hospitality and culture, and in particular, our music, which was performed by talented Pro Silva Ireland committee members!



Pro Silva Ireland committee members entertaining the guests in Glenmalure Lodge. Photo: O Leavy