

THE IRISH FORESTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS



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Irish Forestry Concerns Continue . . .

Currently the debate, discussion and negotiations around the Rural Development Draft Proposal (RDDP) remains on top of the National Forestry Agenda. The Bacon Report (Sept. 2004) has been parked up for the time being, so as to keep the focus firmly on the RDDP. The achievement of the 20,000 ha planting programme for the 2005 and 2006 planting seasons must also remain a very live issue as farmers come to grips with the Single Farm Payment Scheme (Decouplement).

In mid-January, the EU Presidency presented a non-paper without the Annex outlining afforestation grant aid and support - a non-event in reality with no significant changes in the articles or regulations.

The RDDP remains strenuously opposed by SIF, the Forest Service, IFIC, ITGA, IFA and all groups representing growers, forestry companies, contractors and the industry in general. Various delegations representing the many interest groups have gone, or will go, to meet EU Commission officials in Brussels to make and explain the Irish case. SIF, in conjunction with ITGA and FDA have sought a meeting with DGs Agriculture and Environment in the very near future. As a member of the Union of European Foresters (UEF), SIF will be involved in the presentation of a Position Paper to the EU Forest and Cork Advisory Group and to DGs Agriculture, Enterprise and the Environment.

If the current proposals go through, annual afforestation in Ireland, will undoubtedly drop to considerably less than 1,000 ha. This will mean:

- afforestation as a viable farm enterprise, will not happen - currently over 90% of all new planting is carried out by farmers;
- severe unemployment, especially in rural areas, can be expected in the forest industry;
- investment by the timber processing industry will cease;
- opportunities for carbon sequestration will be lost;
- Ireland's level of forest cover will stagnate - *Irish forest cover is 10% compared to the EU average of 35%*,
- Ireland will remain disproportionately dependant on timber imports and fossil fuels, and
- Ireland will not achieve critical mass and economies of scale in the production of timber.

As it stands, the RDDP represents a dramatic change in EU Forest Policy, with major and serious consequences for the Irish Forest Industry, as already outlined. However, at the end of the day, the RDDP is a political issue and the fighting and winning of the Irish case is the responsibility of the Government, and in particular the Department of Agriculture and Food

You are asked therefore, as SIF members, to play your part and involve yourself in the political process, by making the SIF case to your local TD, Senator, and/or MEP.

Joint Field Day to Baronscourt Estate, County Tyrone

The Society of Irish Foresters together with the Forest & Timber Association, ITGA and Pro-Silva had a very informative Field Day on Friday 15th October 2004 at the Baronscourt Estate, Newtownstewart, Co. Tyrone. The theme for the day was 'Conifers - alternative management options'

The day began with an introduction and welcome to Baronscourt Estate by Robert Scott, Agent to the Estate, and Jim Simpson, Head Forester.

The first stop was Manus Wood, a site that was restocked with Sitka spruce in 1997, and which is now grossly overstocked with natural regeneration. The main point for discussion here was the importance of light and coupe size.



Members at the field day in Baronscourt Estate, Co Tyrone

Next stop was Altar Hill Wood, where the Estate has embarked upon the conversion of coniferous woodlands,

predominately Sitka spruce planted between 1961 and 1969. The key issue raised at this stop was the variation in timber prices from north to south.

The group then departed for Larybeg Wood where there was an opportunity to see the Forest Service's well-known respacing trial. The Society last visited this experiment in 1996 on its Annual Study Tour to Northern Ireland and many participants who had seen the plots at that time, were impressed with the growth rate and the size of trees, especially in the heavily respaced plots. Noel Melanaphy from the NI Forest Service talked about the progress of the trial over the past few years.

The final stop was at Lislear Wood, another area being managed on a continuous cover basis. At this site, large Scots pine were underplanted with Tsuga. The Society gratefully acknowledges the kind co-operation and permission of The Duke of Abercorn of Barons Court and the Northern Ireland Forest Service in hosting this field day.

61st Annual Study Tour to New England 13-24 September 2004

Forty-one Society members assembled on 13th September 2004 at Dublin Airport to depart on the 61st study tour to New England; the Society's second visit to the United States of America. The flight to Boston was via Philadelphia with US Airways.



Society members at the Annual Study Tour, New England, USA

Professor Pete Hannah, Professor Emeritus, Silviculture, University of Vermont met and welcomed the group at Logan Airport, Boston. Pete was the perfect host and guide for the ten days, working tirelessly and efficiently to look after the needs of the group and the Society is deeply indebted to him.

Over ten days the group visited Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. Today, the forests of New England are located on previously abandoned farmland. The forests were harvested in the late 19th and early 20th Century and there is much evidence of earlier industrial activities in the abandoned railroads and lumberyards.

One would expect the most heavily forested area in America to be on the west coast but this is not the case. The most forested state is Maine with 90% forest cover followed by New Hampshire with 85% and Vermont with 80%. The group learned a lot about the development of the industry but the one thing that defied everyone was the conversion of board feet to

cubic metres! It appears it is like trying to add apples and pears.

Due to the weakness of the US dollar the tour worked out to be very good value at €1,570 per person. A full report of the tour will appear later in *Irish Forestry*.

— **John Mc Loughlin, Tour Convenor**

Recent Meetings Attended by The Technical Director

The following is a list of meetings attended by the Executive Director, Tony Mannion, in recent months.

- 21/10/04: SIF Council Meeting - Lucan
- 22/07/04 SIF Council Meeting - Lucan
- 27/07/04 Meeting with Peter Bacon & Associates re National Forest Strategy Review
- 28/07/04 Steering Group, IFCI
- 31/08/04 EGM/AGM IFCI
- 31/08/04 SIF Management/Finance Board Meeting
- 13-24/09/04 New England Study Tour
- 29/09/03/10/04 UEF Governing Council Meeting, Helsinki
- 26/10/04: Meeting with Peter Wilson re IFIC Structures - Office
- 02/11/04: EU Foresight 2020 Meeting - Wicklow
- 18/11/04: FS Liaison Group (RDDP) Meeting - Dublin
- 19/11/04: DCRG Meeting re Open Space/Mountain Access - Portlaoise
- 22/11/04: Meeting with Minister Brown re RDDP - Donegal
- 22/11/04: Launch of Forest Link Directory - Donegal
- 22/11/04: Coillte Social/Environmental Panel - Sligo
- 25/11/04: IFCI Steering Group Meeting - Dublin
- 26/11/04: COFORD Mammal Conference - Tullamore
- 30/11/04: SIF Meetings/Services Management Board - Carrickmacross
- 08/12/04: IFIC Council Meeting - Dublin

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005

Membership Subscriptions for 2005 are now due and your kind attention to this matter would be appreciated.

Recent Publications:

Markets for non-wood forest products:
COFORD publication

Trees, Forests and the Law in Ireland:
COFORD publication by Damien McHugh and Gerhardt Gallagher

Forestry in Ireland - A Concise History:
Niall O'Carroll

Irish Hedgerows: Networks for Nature:
Edited by David Hickie

Forest Link Directory:
Forest Link, Donegal Co. Council

Annual Forest Walks revived

The persistent rain did not deter groups of determined walkers around the country on a wet Sunday afternoon last October. The first forest walks organised by the Society commenced in 1970. The forest walks were revived in 2004 as part of the celebration of the Centenary of Irish Forestry.

Despite the inclement weather conditions, walkers gathered at Avondale Forest Park, Co Wicklow, Mountrath, Co.Laois and Ballykelly, Co. Derry to partake in informative guided walks of their local forest, led by professional foresters.

Coillte recognised for excellence in sustainability reporting

Coillte was recognised for its excellence in sustainability reporting at a ceremony in the Mansion House in Dublin on December 6th. The Award was presented to Coillte for its 2003 Social and Environmental Report by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). This is the 4th annual ACCA Ireland Environmental Reporting Awards Scheme and 2004 attracted the largest number of entrants to the competition to date.

Sustainability reporting is still in its infancy in Ireland, and Coillte is one of the few companies in the country that regularly produce a sustainability report. It is still not a legal requirement, but as public expectations increase, more and more companies are producing such reports in an effort to improve transparency. According to ACCA Ireland President Frank O' Brien, "ACCA Ireland is actively engaged in encouraging Irish-based organisations to put in place standards and reporting procedures through which to communicate their commitment to corporate social responsibility. The key challenge for organisations is to drive home the message that engaging in sustainability reporting can be a source of competitive advantage and demonstrate how business can benefit".

A full copy of Coillte's 2003 Social and Environmental Report can be downloaded from its website www.coillte.ie

Ireland's Native Woodland Conference proves to be popular event



Delegates attend the conference field trip, Union Wood, Co. Sligo

Ireland's Native Woodland Conference was officially opened on 8th September 2004 by Minister Noel Treacy T.D. at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. This unique event represented a major initiative at raising awareness and highlighting the importance of conserving and expanding Ireland's native woodland resource. Drawing an enthusiastic audience from landowners, foresters, ecologists, researchers, policy makers, students and forest stakeholders, the conference reviewed the background to native woodland development in Ireland, examined its current status and explored opportunities for its future. Over thirty papers were presented by a broad range of leading experts in the field of native woodland conservation from Ireland, the UK and Europe including, Dr Oliver Rackham, the leading British Expert on natural woodlands.

Two and a half days of presentations were characterised by a series of interesting and informative lectures, punctuated by a succession of lively discussion sessions. The final day concluded with a field trip to Union Wood in Co. Sligo, which is a site currently being managed under the Forest Service Native Woodland Scheme. The fact that 270 people attended the conference over four days serves as a clear indicator that native woodland conservation is high on the agenda of a wide range of interest groups.

SIF members are eligible for 6 continuous professional development points per day attended at this event.

The conference proceedings are due to be published in the near future and will be available on request from Cara Doyle, Woodlands of Ireland.

Contact Details:

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Dates for Your Diary, 2005

Below are some provisional dates for the 2005 diary:

DATE	EVENT & VENUE
6-12 March	National Tree Week
10 March	Augustine Henry Forestry Lecture <i>'A visit to China - in the footsteps of Augustine Henry'</i> National Botanic Gardens, Dublin
11 March	Annual Conference Joint SIF COFORD, ITGA IFIC.
16 April	Muintir na Coille Event - (Coppice Association) Edenderry, Co Offaly
23-24 April	CELT - Weekend in the Woods Beakelly
29 April	Joint SIF/ITGA Field Day JFK Park - followed by SIF AGM
20 May	Joint SIF/IFA Field Day South or Midlands
17 June	Joint SIF/ITGA Field Day North West
4 - 11 September	Heritage Week
4 September	Forest Walks
8 September	Annual Séan Mc Bride Forestry Lecture - 'The effect of Climate Change and human impact on Ireland's Native Woodland Development' Prof. Séamas Caulfield - UCD
18- 23 Sept.	Annual Study Tour Details to follow
30 September	Joint SIF/ITGA Field Day Co Tyrone

New Members

The SIF would like to welcome the following new members:

TECHNICAL	STUDENT
Hugh Cawley	Brian Clifford
Anita Cuddihy	John Farrell
Padraic Kennedy	Fergus McCafery
David Ogg	Florence Renou
Paul Ruane	Andrew Sherwood
Michael Somers	
Alan Sparling	

RDS Forestry Awards 2004

The Minister of State for Forestry in the Department of Agriculture and Food, Mr John Browne TD, presented the 2004 Royal Dublin Society Irish Forestry Awards in Farmleigh House on 10th December. To mark the centenary of State support for Forestry a special Lifetime Achievement Award was also presented. Mr. Fergal Mulloy, a Professional Forester from Dun Laoghaire received the specially commissioned RDS Trophy in recognition of his significant contribution to the development of forestry in Ireland over the past forty-seven years. Fergal is a former President of the Society of Irish Foresters and the Society congratulates him on this achievement and wishes to thank him sincerely for the valuable contribution that he has made to the both the Society and to Irish forestry.



Mr. Fergal Mulloy received the RDS Centenary Lifetime Achievement in Forestry Award at Farmleigh House.

NOTICE BOARD

Submission of CPD Points 2004

Members are requested to submit attendance sheets for eligible CPD events during 2004 at the earliest convenience.

The list of eligible events and attendance sheets are available on the Society website at: www.societyofirishforesters.ie/cpd.htm

This is the second year of the CPD Programme, and there has been a significant increase in the number of members taking part with participants expected to accumulate 90 CPD points over a rolling three-year period.

Members can view their current CPD points total on the Members Page at: www.societyofirishforesters.ie/members.htm
Please contact the office (Tel: 071 9164434) with any queries that you may have.

Articles or News Items

Members are invited to submit articles or news items for the newsletter to the Editors, Cara Doyle or Tony Mannion