**Implementing CCF in Eastern Ireland**



**A BRIEF HISTORY OF IRISH FORESTS**

Around 12,500 years ago, when the great ice sheets and glaciers thawed, tough pioneer plant species colonised the island of Ireland. As conditions softened, true forests emerged. The eastern lowlands were dominated by elm, hazel and ash. In the west, oak and hazel woodlands were more common. At higher altitudes in the west, Scots pine and birch forests had established. Birch, alder and hazel occupied poorer soils, while alder and willow were found in the wetlands and marshy ground.

When the first human settlers arrived 9,000 years ago, around 80% of the island was covered by forest. The Mesolithic hunter-gatherers lived largely on the bounty of these woodlands and little clearance occurred. This changed with the arrival of Neolithic farmers some 5,500 years ago, when the first serious clearances for agriculture took place.

The culture around forests waxed and waned over the following centuries, and while clearance continued, there was often a reverence for trees and forests. The Gaelic Irish society that emerged from the late pre-historic era codified the protection of trees in the complex legal system of the Brehon laws, where damaging a tree was a serious and punishable offence. Some characters within the Irish Ogham alphabet, in use from the 4th to 10th centuries, are based on the names for various trees.

However, by 1600 only around 12% of Ireland’s forest cover remained. The 300 years that followed saw increased deforestation, associated with the extinction of wolves in Ireland, as well as the loss of different eagle species, other birds and the Irish wildcat. By the early 20th century, just 1% of the island’s original forests remained.

Ireland did not significantly develop its modern forest sector until the 1950s, when the now independent Republic of Ireland saw mass afforestation as a means to alleviate unemployment in rural areas and to increase timber supply self-sufficiency. A state-driven, clear-fell plantation model utilizing exotic conifers, principally Sitka spruce, but also lodgepole pine, Norway spruce, Douglas fir and larch, was adopted to achieve this.

From the late 1980s state grant-aid for private afforestation was offered and drove further forest expansion, more lately with increased focus on broadleaf and native woodland establishment. Despite many challenges, forest cover is now at 11.6%, representing the highest forest cover in 350 years.

While increase in forests and their associated economic benefits represent a considerable achievement, the industrial monoculture model has been increasingly questioned. Pro Silva Ireland was formed 23 years ago to offer an alternate forest management solution that seeks to balance the environmental, ecological and social potential of forests with the obvious economic benefits.

A snapshot of Irish forests today is provided by DAFM’s National Forest Inventory 2022. The total area of forest now covers 808,848ha, and for the first time since the formation of the Irish State, more forest is privately owned (50.9%) with the remainder mostly managed by the semistate forestry company Coillte. Sitka spruce still dominates the national landscape and represents 44.6% of the total forest area, making up the bulk of the 61.3% covered by conifers. However, broadleaf cover has increased from 21.8% in 2007 to 27% today

Pro Silva Ireland was founded in 2000 and now has over 100 members drawn from all parts of the Irish forest sector.

Our visit will be based in County Wicklow to the south west of Dublin and within easy access of Dublin airport and other means of public transport. The trip will involve visits to some of the following forest areas with CCF features:

* Conifer forests that have been undergoing transformation to CCF for 15 years;
* A forest that has received support from the new (2019) grant scheme supporting CCF;
* Areas managed by Coillte (the state owned forestry business) close to Dublin that have recently been placed under CCF management – the Dublin Mountains project. See:

<https://www.coillte.ie/coillte-dublin-mountains-makeover-to-transform-forests/>

* A TranSSfor experimental site concentrating upon examining long-term aspects of the transformation of even-aged Sitka spruce stands to CCF. See: <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/research/transformation-of-sitka-spruce-to-ccf/>

**SCHEDULE**

Wednesday September 27th – travel to hotel (individual responsibility)

Thursday September 28th – field trips;

Friday September 29th – field trips;

Saturday September 30th – half day field trips and return travel.

**TRAVEL INFORMATION**

**Please make your own way to our hotel to the south of Dublin. This is The Parkview Hotel, Main street, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow, T: 353 1 201 5600  E:****info@parkviewhotel.ie****.**

**We will be staying in the same hotel for all three nights.**

**A bus will be with the party for the whole trip.**

**ACCOMMODATION**

We will be staying at the same hotel (see above) all three nights.

We have made a provisional reservation which needs to be confirmed in late August. Single occupancy of rooms will be more expensive. Please indicate on the form if you have any preferences about who you would like to share with – otherwise we shall allocate people to share rooms by gender and using alphabetical surname order as a guide.

**BUDGET**

The indicative fee to attend is **£400** per person, sharing a room, or **£600** per person for single occupancy room.

The fee includes:-

* 3 nights’ accommodation (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday – September 27-29 inclusive)
* 3 breakfasts (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday)
* 3 course dinners on Thursday and Friday
* Packed lunches on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday
* All bus transportation from the hotel to the field visits each day
* Excursion guides
* Preparation and organization expenses

Delegates will need to make their own way to the hotel on Wednesday September 27th. Delegates arriving in time will need to purchase their own evening meals at a local restaurant on Wednesday September 27th.

The fee to confirm booking the accommodation costs are to be paid directly to CCFG in advance of the meeting.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

**Organisers / CCFG Contacts**

Bill Mason – Chair – bpmason@blueyonder.co.uk – 07941 938992

Polly Spencer-Vellacott – Administrator – administrator@ccfg.org.uk – 07967 820305

**REGISTRATION**

In order to register to attend this event, please complete the attached registration form and send it by email to the organisers, CCFG GB, Polly Spencer-Vellacott at administrator@ccfg.org.uk. **DO NOT BOOK YOUR TRAVEL AT THIS STAGE.**

**Deadline for completed registrations is Friday 18th August 2023, but places are available on a first come first served basis so to be sure of securing your place please register as soon as possible.**

**PAYMENT**

Once we have received your application form, we will send you an invoice confirming the amount you should pay, the method of payment and the date by when the amount is required.

We require all payments in advance.

**Deadline for receipt of payments is Thursday 24th August 2023.**

Refunds are at the discretion of the organisers.

* **WEATHER CONDITIONS, CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR**

Average temperatures during September will be in the low teens Celsius. Rain is possible so please come prepared for possible rain showers with waterproof clothing. Suitable footwear for walking is essential

**REGISTRATION FORM**

**CCFG Foreign Study Tour to Ireland – September 27-30 2023**

**Please complete one registration form per person attending.**

**Delegate Details**

First Name: ……………………………………………….. Surname: …………………………………………………………………..

Gender: ………………………………………………………

Tel: .......……………………………………………………. Mobile: ……………………………………………………………………..

Email: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

**Please indicate here if you are a student and hoping to receive a subsidised place** 🞏

**Accommodation Preference:** Shared accommodation🞏 Single occupancy accommodation 🞏

Please confirm the name of the person with whom you wish to share so we correctly allocate rooms. Otherwise we will allocate rooms by gender and alphabetical order of surnames. …………………………………………………………………………..

**Travel**

Please advise us of your travel arrangements. **DO NOT BOOK YOUR TRAVEL.**

🞏 Plane Departing from ……………………………………….. Time …………………………………………………..

Arriving at ……………………………………………….. Time ……………………………………………….….

Flight Number ……………………………………….... Date …………………………………………………..

🞏 Car Estimated arrival time at Hotel?……………………………………………..

🞏 Other ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………...

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**Dietary Requirements**

Please tick one only.

🞏 No special dietary requirements 🞏 Vegetarian

🞏 Pescetarian 🞏 Vegan

🞏 Other, please specify ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

**Payment**

We will invoice the delegate above with the cost of the conference fee and the accommodation.

If you require that we invoice your organization directly, please confirm the correct details below.

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**Receipt**

Do you require a receipt or letter of confirmation of your attendance on this event? We will provide this at registration.

🞏 Yes 🞏 No

**Other**

**Please be aware that we will be walking off track on uneven ground during this event. Please bring appropriate footwear suitable for these conditions. By signing this registration form you accept your own personal liability in the unlikely event that you should have an accident. You should ensure that you have suitable insurance and health cards.**

If you have any additional requirements, please advise us.

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**Please send completed application form to Polly Spencer-Vellacott, CCFG’s Administrator**

**administrator@ccfg.org.uk**

**Deadline 18th August 2023**