



PRO SILVA

2016 Annual meeting in Stirling, Scotland

President's report

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Welcome everyone to this Pro Silva meeting in Stirling. I wish to thank Bill Mason for inviting us to see how Close-to-Nature forestry fits within the forestry world in Scotland. This is a country with some of the best tree growing conditions in Europe but where these rapid growth rates also come with an abundance of water and wind, both factors which some might think limit silvicultural practices. It will be fascinating to see how Close-to-Nature fits within the background of a demanding forestry industry and how multiple objectives are delivered at a time when forests are both under threat and are required to deliver increasing levels environmental protection. I am very much looking forward to the visit and wish to thank you and Mandy for organising what promises to be a very interesting visit.

I would now like to thank Pro Silva Bohemica for hosting our meeting last year. We are very pleased that Milan, Antonin and Pavel are with us this time as well. Tomas Vrska regrets not being with us and being able to continue the deliberations we started in Brno last year. Our meeting coincided with the 20th anniversary of Pro Silva in the Czech Republic and showed us the important history of Close-to-Nature forestry in your country and also some of the challenges you need to overcome for the practice to be better understood and accepted by Czech foresters. We know that this is a problem in many countries but you have to overcome barriers that are enforced by legislation making your

task particularly difficult. Thank you once again for having welcomed us in the Czech Republic.

Due to personal reasons Donal O'Hare has stepped down from his post of Secretary. We are all very sad that Donal has stepped down from the Executive Board and we thank him for his efforts and his many contributions over the years. Padraig O'Tuama, also from Pro Silva Ireland, has kindly agreed step in to take on the role of Secretary. We welcome Padraig to the Board and thank him for his dynamism and useful contributions.

The severity of floods that are taking place across Europe, in the Czech Republic and Germany, in the UK and most recently in France are just but one demonstration of changing climate. The role that forests can have in reducing some of the effects in quite obvious ways and also in subtler ways is gaining in the consciousness of both the public and policy makers. The role Close-to-Nature forestry has to play here is import and we must promote this.

There is an increasing interest in Close-to-Nature forestry which is demonstrated by the number of scientific papers which are being published on the subject. This is to be welcomed as there is more exploration and understanding of the mechanisms that underpin irregularity. This greater interest is demonstrated by Forestry published by the Oxford University Press which frequently has entire editions with papers dealing with the different characteristics of irregular forest stands or forests. It was therefore a little surprising to find that OUP had published a review paper by Kevin O'Hara which openly criticises Pro Silva for appropriating, as well as misusing, the term Close-to-Nature. Kevin is very familiar with Pro Silva having spent a sabbatical year in Slovenia during which time he added our Pro Silva meeting in Greece. He also joined CCFG on a visit to Slovenia. For these reasons it is surprising that we could not have had a better discussion rather than resorting to having to publish his misgiving in a scientific journal. If we seek to rebut his opinion it would require publishing a peer reviewed paper making a counter argument in a scientific journal. Having taken advise from Jean-Philippe Schutz and Jurij Diaci, two of our members with illustrious positions in the scientific community, I have decided that the best course of action is to continue to produce evidence of how effective managing forests by Pro Silva principles is in delivering 21st century solutions that benefit local economies, protect the environment and support communities.

The Association Futaie Irrégulière (AFI) is continuing to develop and has recently established an English speaking branch. The AFI has expanded into Belgium, Luxemburg and Switzerland but the AFI is also very well established in England and in Ireland. There has long been an interest in making greater use of the AFI protocol in monitoring the biological and economic performance of Close-to-Nature managed forests, but this has been constrained due to the lack of an English version of the final output reports. For this reason, an English speaking branch of the AFI has been established in March 2016, known as the Atlantic AFI. The AAFI will be providing the same access to the AFI Close-to-Nature forestry data base but through the medium of English.

We have made considerable progress in assisting the smaller Pro Silva associations that have sometimes had to coordinate activities from a very small base and with very few resources. The reasons for such difficulties vary widely and reflect the different forestry cultures and responses Pro Silva in various countries. Pro Silva will continue to assist Pro Silva groups in the means of defining and running their own associations.

- PS Romania is now making very considerable progress. They have adopted a constitution and submitted a request to include Romania in their name to the country's president.
- PS Norway is undergoing change. They are recruiting a new chairman and committee members.
- PS Poland has still to become established and is no doubt in some difficulty.
- The request from ForEcoIndia to join Pro Silva which was made at last year's Annual meeting has not been renewed. ForEcoIndia still have an interest in Pro Silva and will continue to maintain close ties but their board has decided not to pursue their application to join our association.
- Pro Silva US is not very active. We have not received the membership fee so we need to understand how we develop our relationship with our American PS colleagues.
- There is a strong interest in Pro Silva from Canada, but just as in the USA the size of the country poses a challenge in communicating our message effectively. How we develop partnerships with associations in North America will be explored before the next meeting

The Pro Silva website has undergone a major update. Website development has been coordinated by Lucie Vítková who will report later in the meeting. The website is being developed further and it will provide Pro Silva with its main platform from which to support its membership and to spread information to interested parties.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the Continuous Cover Forestry Group (CCFG). The UK is a devolved country, Scotland has its own Parliament, Wales has its National Assembly and Northern Ireland also has an assembly. Only England has to rely entirely on Westminster to run its affairs. CCFG is also devolved except that it does not include NI. PS Ireland is the whole island of Ireland. 20 years ago CCFG welcomed Pro Silva on a visit to England and Wales so it is right that Pro Silva should now visit Scotland and to have been to all the devolved nations of CCFG. I believe that it is through a stronger union that small nations find their voice and the freedom for self-determination. I certainly hope that the UK does not make a terrible mistake in tomorrow's referendum. (*This was written before the result of the referendum*).

On this occasion Pro Silva is holding its Annual Meeting. Next year Pro Silva will hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the time of the 2017 Annual Meeting. Constitutional amendments such as adjustments to the membership fee and changes to the Board have to be submitted to and approved by the AGM. I wish to remind everyone that the entire Executive Board is due for re-election at next year's meeting. The Executive Board will continue with the work of supporting the association and will be make recommendations to the Administrators ahead of the AGM.

May I thank the Executive Board for their help and assistance since our last meeting, and all the Pro Silva associations for continuing to promote the principles of our association.

Thank you.

Phil Morgan