Christmas Tree Growers Council of Europe

Summer Meeting 2026

Ireland · 6–8 July 2026

REPORT

Summary

It was Ireland's turn to host this year's CTGCE Summer Meeting, and the three-day programme combined unique tourist attractions, cultural events and visits to exemplary farms, whose owners generously shared their knowledge, expertise and opinions with everybody. Their hospitality was remarkable — and all of it was enjoyed in brilliant summer weather.

A Warm Welcome to Ireland

Ireland welcomed delegates from across Europe for the 2026 CTGCE Summer Meeting, held from 6 to 8 July. The base of operations was the Mount Wolseley Hotel in Tullow, County Carlow. Over three memorable days, locals, guests and international visitors toured some of the most impressive Christmas tree farms in the southeast of the country. The evenings were spent in very congenial surroundings, reflecting over dinner on the day's events before being entertained by local musicians in the lounge. Warm hospitality was matched by glorious sunshine, making for an occasion that everybody will long remember.

For many international attendees, the Summer Meeting provided an excellent opportunity to take a holiday in Ireland, and some began to arrive on the previous weekend. Most delegates flew into Dublin on Sunday 5 July and were transferred to Tullow by coach, while others travelled by hire car and continued their holidays after the conference.

The event was generously supported by Bord Bia, the Irish food and horticulture export authority, and by Carlow Tourism, to whom we extend our sincere thanks.

Attendance

The Meeting drew 116 delegates from thirteen countries — a wonderful turnout, and proof of the strong bonds that unite growers across Europe.

Country	Delegates
Austria	22

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Belgium	1
Denmark	14
England	12
France	2
Germany	12
Hungary	1
Ireland	32
Netherlands	3
Northern Ireland	5
Norway	3
Scotland	1
Switzerland	8
Total	**116**

Monday 6 July *Ballintemple Nursery & Valley Christmas Trees*



Monday morning's Board Meeting

Following the Executive Meeting in the hotel's board room, the first event was hosted by Coillte's main nursery at Ballintemple, just a ten-minute coach journey from the hotel. The scale of operations was impressive, as Ronan Fenelon, Production Manager, explained how the annual crop of 30 million plants is initially collected from the seed orchard; stratified for simultaneous germination; planted and transplanted over three years; and finally selected for planting in Ireland and overseas. It provided the perfect springboard for what was to come over the following days.

After lunch at the hotel, we followed the River Slaney to Oliver Ryan's Valley Christmas Trees. Every square metre of this 75-hectare (180-acre) farm represented the epitome of best practice. Having shared his husbandry practices so openly, Oliver then let his machinery do the talking: as we stood among this year's crop, his staff demonstrated the efficiency and raw power of the machines used to clear old plantations and mulch everything to a depth of 30 centimetres. In less than an hour, a section of old plantation was transformed into a beautiful plot of powdery soil, ready for a new crop.

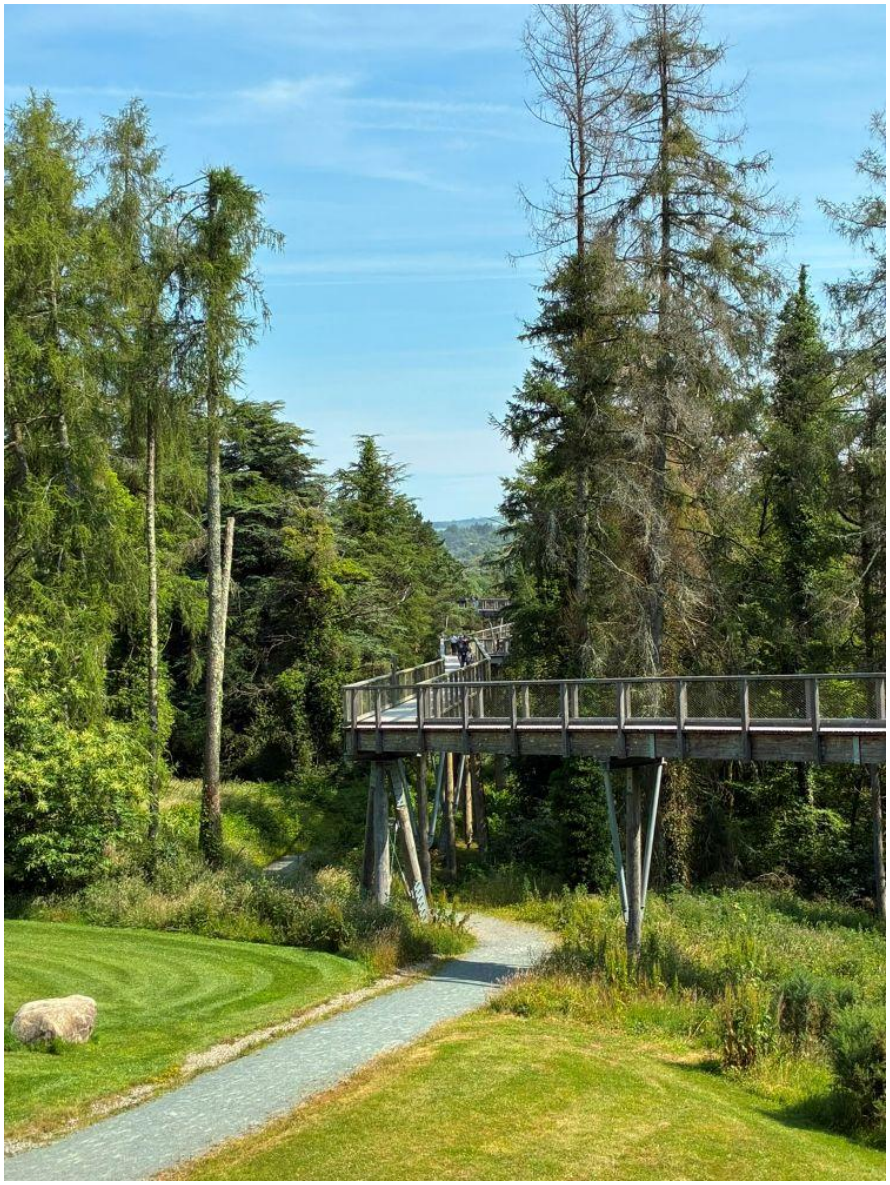


Three generations were represented among the attendance of 116.

The visit concluded with some fine hospitality provided by Oliver's family. Participants enjoyed local specialities and refreshments while examining the display of machinery used throughout the seasons, learned about innovative spraying equipment from the Professional Sprayers People, networked — and initiated new deals for Christmas.

Tuesday 7 July *Avondale, Avoca & Mountain View Christmas Tree Farm*

Tuesday opened with the spectacular Avondale Tree Top Walk. The timber boardwalk carried the group across a river valley and up through every layer of the forest, from the woodland floor to the very top of the canopy. At the summit of the tower, the more adventurous chose to make their descent by the dizzying 90-metre slide — an experience, by all accounts, not for the faint-hearted.



The Tree Top Boardwalk rises to 25 metres

After lunch, a tour of the 300-year-old Avoca Handweavers Mill allowed the digestive juices to do their work before the party moved on to Mountain View Christmas Tree Farm — appropriately named, at 150 metres above sea level. Here, Conor Browne's family produces excellent Noble and Nordmann Fir for local and export wholesale markets, alongside a thriving farm based 'Choose and Cut' retail business.

The family's main source of income, however, is wreath-making, with production exceeding 180,000 wreaths each year. Conor skilfully demonstrated his techniques for crafting exclusively Noble Fir wreaths, swags and other decorative pieces — a masterclass recorded by at least fifty phones. Many delegates remarked afterwards on the incredible amount of information he shared throughout the visit, in a spirit of openness that had by now become the hallmark of the week.



Wreath-making Masterclass

Wednesday 8 July *Kavanaghs' Real Christmas Trees & Farewell Lunch*

After an early breakfast, the coaches departed for Kavanaghs' Real Christmas Trees, overlooking Newtownmountkennedy — reputedly the longest placename in Ireland. The farm tour had to be curtailed when a film company shooting a scene nearby forced the arriving coaches onto an alternative route; yet Christy and his family still provided another truly fascinating insight into the industry.

One highlight was an exceptional stand of elegantly presented Lasiocarpa. Another was the Kavanagh family's hospitality, which included venison and salmon. The scheduled tour may have been halved, but the guests still managed to leave only the plates and dishes behind!

The Summer Meeting concluded with the Farewell Lunch, after which attendees said their goodbyes and departed for their various destinations. Some visitors were coached directly to the airport and Dublin city, while others set off by hire car to explore further farms and tourist spots.

Looking Ahead

The Irish members, meanwhile, headed home to their families and farms with a great deal to reflect upon — and with preparations to make for visits over the coming weeks from newly encountered clients. It was a fitting end to three days that showcased the very best of Irish Christmas tree growing.

We are already looking forward to Belgium in 2027.

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