

The Tree Council of Ireland while supportive of the native woodland schemes, is of the view that the current schemes are too restrictive.

For various reasons, the post-ice age geological events have resulted in a very poor tree species inheritance, where many species ideally suited to Irish conditions failed to establish here before the land-bridge to Britain and the continent closed.

This resulted in a situation where the biodiversity of Ireland was, and is, relatively poor compared to Britain and Northern Europe.

The loss of the elm and the ongoing loss of ash exacerbates this situation.

In the face of climate change and the biodiversity crisis, limiting planting schemes to the official native species of tree makes no sense from either a biodiversity or carbon capture viewpoint.

We support the concept of naturalized species. While there is room for native woodlands, these should not be at the expense of more diverse species, including long-established broadleaf trees such as beech, sycamore, lime, chestnut, maple and plane trees.

Several of these are very important for bees and other pollinators to a degree that many native trees cannot match.

As one of our member organisations, the Irish Federation of Beekeeping Associations has put it

“Bees are important sentinels of environmental health as they are highly sensitive to biological changes in our landscape. Bees are important pollinators that significantly affect yields in food production. As we plant more trees for commercial timber and carbon sequestration, judicious choices of species can result in benefits for biodiversity and bees. The Chestnut, Lime, Maple and Plane trees are of significant commercial value in addition to

being remarkable sources of pollen and nectar for bees. Proper maintenance of hedgerows helps address climate change issues while adding greatly to the flora that support bees and honey production. Integrated Constructed Wetlands can play an important role in wastewater purification and a haven for biodiversity resulting in a good source of nectar and pollen for bees. Reanimating of wild areas in strategic locations can help manage water during periods of floods and droughts. Micro-forests and buffer nature corridors protecting water courses are ideal locations for planting a diverse range of bee loving trees and shrubs, herbs and flowers.”

The Tree Council fully supports this view.