

DEVELOPING CAREERS

Glennon Brothers hosted a tour of the Irish forestry and timber industries for finalists of the TTJ Awards' Career Development Award. **Stephen Powney** joined the trip

Irish sawmilling and timber products

group Glennon Brothers has been a longtime, stalwart supporter of the *TTJ Awards*.

It sponsors the Career Development Award, a judged category that rewards achievements and ambition for both Under-25 and Over-25 timber industry personnel. This award recognises training, qualifications and skills development of individual employees in the timber industry.

Glennon Brothers goes to great lengths to back career development in its own firm and takes the Career Development Award very seriously.

For many years, it has organised an Ireland timber industry trip to educate the finalists about the Irish wood sector. It has always been a rewarding time and the focus of many interesting discussions about timber industry development and career paths in the sector.

After a Covid-era break, this illustrious two-day trip was restarted in the autumn of 2023, and open to finalists from the past few *TTJ Awards*.

Those available to go on the trip this year were: Emma Palmer at James Latham; Samantha Bedford, Huws Gray; Matthew Claxton, The Timber Group; Louis White, Nicks Timber; and Jo Darlington, also of James Latham. Louis White was the 2023 winner of the Under-25 category.

The October 17-19 itinerary saw the group fly into Cork and visit forest harvesting operations, tour the Glennon Brothers' Fermoy sawmill and see production at the MEDITE MDF mill at Clonmel.

Some of the most torrential rain southern Ireland had seen for a few years hit during the visit, but that didn't dampen the spirits of the finalists.

For Glennon Brothers, it was also celebrating its 110th anniversary in 2023 and it was a good opportunity to remind everyone of the growth trajectory of the business.

The group now has a total production capacity of around 870,000m³ and an annual turnover of €360m.

A series of investments and acquisitions means the group now operates on multiple sites in Ireland and the UK, spanning manufacturing operations in Humbie, Troon and Invergordon in Scotland, plus Longford, Fermoy and Enniskillen in Ireland.

This includes Balcas Timber, Windymains Timber, Alexanders Timber Design and DTE Manufacturing.

Cumulative capital investment has extended to over £140m since 1998, the latest being new dropsorting technology. Kilning, a combined heat and power plant and extra timber treatment facilities are potential future investments.

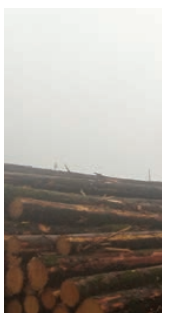
The MEDITE factory tour was the first experience for some of the finalists of seeing wood-based panels production.

The Clonmel facility features an annual capacity of 450,000m³ produced on a 42m continuous press, while the Waterford SMARTPLY OSB mill has a capacity of 380,000m³. Some 350 people are employed across the two mills.

Top row (from left to right):
The 2023 Career Development Award trip to Ireland (from left): Stephen Powney (TTJ), Matthew Claxton (The Timber Group), Pat Glennon, Jo Darlington (James Latham), Emma Palmer (Lathams), Samantha Bedford (Huws Gray), Louis White (Nicks Timber), Kym Tuckwell (Balcas) and Paul Treacy (Glennon Brothers)

Forest harvesting operations
Pat Glennon explains machining operations in the Fermoy mill

Bottom row (from left to right):
The MEDITE factory tour
The group at the Castlemartyr Resort
At the MEDITE factory



Products made at MEDITE include fire-retardant panels, moisture-resistant boards, no-added formaldehyde products, breathable panels for use in eco buildings, lightweight boards and the modified MEDITE Tricoya Extreme for demanding applications.

One of the next planned investments at Clonmel will be a new boiler to help further reduce emissions and boost efficiency.

For some of the finalists, the trip was their first visit to the Republic of Ireland.

Glennon Brothers treated them to a sumptuous stay at the luxury five-star Castlemartyr Resort in Cork for a dinner and overnight stay.

At the dinner reception, Glennon Brothers joint managing director Mike Glennon gave an address to thank the finalists for travelling to Ireland, update them on the Irish forestry industry and highlight the importance of career development.

The finalists, he explained, represented the future of the timber industry.

“The purpose of this trip is to formally acknowledge the importance of career development in our industry,” he said.

“Championing career development is very close to our hearts, and we really believe in the importance of attracting and retaining the right talent to grow our industry.

“I would like to congratulate the finalists, and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here.”

Mr Glennon explained that a series of strategic acquisitions and robust organic growth had seen the Glennon Brothers business expand from a turnover of €8m in the 1990s to over €360m million today.

Although an Irish company, Mr Glennon explained, the business now employed more people in the UK than Ireland and also produced more in the UK than Ireland.

Mr Glennon explained the development of the Irish forestry sector and its significant contribution to the Irish economy:

- The sector employs circa 12,000 people, and the value of the sector to the Irish economy is estimated at €2.3bn
- Forest product exports were worth over €570m in 2021
- Exports of wood-based panel products amounted to approximately €340m
- Sawn softwood exports amounted to €150m
- The Irish sawmilling industry has invested more than €250m to create a modern, efficient, and customer focused industry
- Each year, Irish forests sequester 3.6m tonnes of CO₂ – that’s the equivalent to 80% of CO₂ emitted by cars on Irish roads every year.

The Irish timber industry, he added, was uniquely exposed to the UK. Over half, of the Irish sawmills output is exported and 95% of those exports go to the UK. Some 90% of panel products produced in Ireland are exported, with two-thirds going to the UK.

“The UK is the biggest importer of wood in Europe and our logical market, for exports,” said Mr Glennon.

Irish timber processors export to the UK on a just-in-time basis, with orders frequently being delivered within 72 hours.”

The Irish economy has also rebounded over the past few years, with its 2022 GDP up 9.4%, making Ireland one of the fastest growing economies in the EU.

“I would like to highlight the importance of the Career Development Awards, which are hugely important in helping to strengthen the sector with talented people,” added Mr Glennon.

He cited previous finalist Luke Roberts attending the trip five years ago. Today he is managing director at Donaldson Timber Engineering.

Mr Glennon wished all the finalists success in their careers and hoped they would now have a better understanding of the Irish forest products sector.

TTJ will be running profiles of recent Career Development Award winners in the coming months in the lead-up to the 2024 TTJ Awards.

The 2024 TTJ Awards will be held at lunchtime on September 20 at the London Bankside Hotel, London. Entries for the judged awards, including the Career Development Award, will be opened in March. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

For details about tickets and sponsorship

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