

FARINGDON FOLLY TRUST TREE PLANTING REPORT - WINTER 2025-26



A. Background

Over the last 2 years we have had to fell eight large deciduous trees within the Folly woodland after safety surveys had identified them as unsafe. This has left the woodland looking worryingly sparse in certain areas. In 2024 we started work to fill these gaps in the forest and took delivery of 200 small trees (whips) from the Woodland Trust. These were planted out through a Faringdon community planting day and by classes from Elms Primary School.

Sadly fewer than 10% of our saplings survived this initial planting as the Folly hill is quite a hostile environment for young plants being very exposed and built of sand. The sand is a problem as the rain drains away quickly in the summer, leaving our saplings struggling to survive. Last year's dry summer was especially challenging for the young trees.

In 2025 we decided to alter our planting strategy, changing to:

- Buying fewer, but taller, saplings that would have an immediate impact on their surroundings, providing some much needed foliage.
- Having a smaller number of larger trees means that our volunteers will be able to focus on these trees and ensure that they are watered every week over the summer months. We believe we will need to do this for the first 2 years.
- We also decided to focus on planting 'drought tolerant' tree species. Species were selected based on their proven drought tolerance, root stability, and ability to adapt to the soil and microclimate of the planting area. This selection process ensured that each tree would not only survive but flourish with minimal irrigation, reducing long-term maintenance demands. We eventually settled on a mix of silver birch, small leaf limes, oak and sweet chestnut trees.
- We also decided to commit additional funds to fencing off the saplings, to prevent accidental damage, and planted trees with mulch mats and irrigation piping to enable us to get water to the tree roots.

B. Project Delivery

In July 2025 the work to remove the last of our failing large deciduous trees was completed by a local arborist. The trees we lost included a beech tree known as the 'Fairy tree' and a sycamore that had a Giraffe sculpture sticking out of one of its cavities.

Over the autumn we turned what was left of these trees into more established woodland features, mounting a renovated Lord Berners statue on top of one of them.



In two planting sessions running from November 2025 to January 2026, a small team of 7 woodland volunteers planted out 12 trees being a mix of: 4 Silver Birch, 3 Small Leaf Lime Trees, 2 Oak trees and 3 Sweet Chestnut trees.

The trees were planted with their own micro-drip irrigation piping, mulch mats, tree supports and fencing as planned.



Whilst not yet in leaf, the newly planted trees have already had an impact on their surroundings as can be seen in the photographs below:



Silver Birch near the Story Telling Chair



Small Leaf Lime Trees replacing the 'Giraffe' tree



2 of the 3 Sweet Chestnut trees replacing 2 felled Horse Chestnut trees (arrowed)



The 2 Newly planted Oaks

The team will need to carefully monitor the health of the trees and water them over the next 2 years. The irrigation systems planted with the trees features a perforated pipe that will enable us to get water directly to the tree root balls. Woodland volunteers will still need to transport water up to the Folly and we have purchased 2 Aqua Rolls to enable us to do this.



Mona Relief Grande Aria Tree Irrigation System

C. Project Finances

in 2025, the Faringdon Folly Trust spent £6,444 on woodland ‘maintenance’. This includes what was spent on tree safety works and new tree planting.

The planting project cost £2141 to deliver; £20 over budget. The average cost per tree was £170.

Item	Cost GBP
Trees (12 in total)	£ 1,523
Stake Kits	£ 210
Fencing and Irrigation coils	£ 223
Mulch Mats	£ 20
Compost	£ 65
Aquarolls	£ 100
Total	£ 2,141
Cost per tree (all in)	£ 170.08

D. Summary

The Folly Woodland is one of the few green spaces open to Faringdon’s residents and it is a much cherished location. The very generous donation provided by the Rotary Club has gone a long way to enabling to deliver this planting project, supporting the development of the Folly woodland and helping to ensure that it will remain a special place for our community to enjoy leisure activities.

