

St Lawrence Trees for Life

Interim Report November 2025

St Lawrence Trees for Life is a community engagement project founded by a small group of local nature enthusiasts in partnership with Essex Forestry Initiative.

There are many good reasons to plant forests and trees. Trees improve air quality, encourage biodiversity, as well as helping to reduce flooding. We also know that trees have a positive effect on mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. The Woodland Trust also identifies that increasing public involvement in the planning and management of green space and woodland is key to an engaged society and a key driver to success. Processes such as neighbourhood planning generate opportunities for community care for nature and help create engaged neighbourhoods.





Maldon District Council Climate Action Strategy identifies:

- 1) the planting of more trees
- 2) supporting rewilding
- 3) creating more inviting, usable spaces and parklets and
- 4) finding ways to capture carbon as strategic aims.

Background

In 2024, our village partnered with the Essex Seagrass Project to increase awareness of seagrass as an important source of carbon capture. St Lawrence has been a key focus of the Essex Seagrass' aim to increase Seagrass in the Blackwater Estuary as an important contribution in helping to slow wave action, increase marine biodiversity and reduce risk of flood In our community.



The Trees for Life project is another example of a nature-based solution to climate change. In February 2025, a team of locals plus volunteers from Essex Forestry, planted a mixed native woodland, fruit trees and fruit bushes. It is hoped that the trees and bushes will shelter the nursery school from the predominantly south westerly prevailing winds whilst providing shade from the afternoon and evening sun for those enjoying the field. They will provide an area of interest and create an exciting diversity

of wildlife which will help to pollinate the fruit trees and bushes in turn providing valuable fruit for our growing young community and will help to capture carbon in our village.

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Fruit Tree varieties planted:

- 1 Pearl - Apple dessert
- 2 Gansel Bergamot - pear dessert
- 3 Maldon Wonder - Apple dessert
- 4 Johnny mount pear - pear dessert
- 5 Flame - Apple dessert
- 6 Edith Hopwood - Apple dessert
- 7 Sturmer Pippin - Apple dessert
- 8 Discovery - Apple dessert
- 9 Darcey Spice - Apple dessert
- 10 Stanway seedling - Apple culinary
- 11 Eros - Apple dessert
- 12 Burrells red - Plum

- 13 Nolan pippin - Apple dessert
- 14 Chelmsford wonder - Apple culinary
- 15 Improved fertility - pear dessert
- 16 Excelsior - Apple culinary

Native Trees Planted:

Common Oak
Green Beech
Silver Birch
Alder
Hornbeam
Rowan
Field Maple
Hazel
Crab Apple
Elder and Dogwood

Partnership

An important part of the project is public support by the community. This project commits to engaging with people at all levels and across the age demographic.

Nursery School

Diddydots Nursery school is a key player in the project. As well as being the main provider of nursery provision in the area, they are a highly regarded educator, embracing

nature as a core principle in their terms of reference. Their commitment to the project has been key.

Communication

Trees for Life communicates through local Facebook pages, and benefits from a What's App group for volunteers.

Timeline:

- September 2024 Meeting with Essex Forestry Initiative
- Winter 2024 Planning area for planting, choice of species to plant, ordered young whips / fruit trees
- January 2025 Liaison with Parish Council regarding accessibility, hedge maintenance etc
- February 2025 Creation of an artistic impression of the planned woodland created by a young local landscape artist.
- February 2025 Planting Day
- Successful Funding bid to Essex Community Fund for financial support for the creation of Interpretation Panels, fencing / guarding for the sapling trees and for assistance with rainwater harvesting.
- May – Temporary watering system installed to help in the dry weather
- June Mulch delivery

- July Mulch delivery
- Summer fruit appears on the trees and hedges
- Installation of two Interpretation panels
- Successful Funding Bid to Optima Health for further mulch deliveries, trugs and gloves for volunteers.
- October Mulch delivery
- November free Bark chippings



As part of the commitment to community engagement, the group submitted a bid for funding to Essex Community Foundation in Spring 2025. In May, we received news that our project had been awarded £3943 to:

- Create and Install two Interpretation Panels (one for adults and one for children and those with limited mobility).
- Fencing / guarding for the trees
- Rainwater harvesting

In July 2025 we commissioned the design and installation of the Interpretation Panels sourced from forestry sustainable, locally sourced timber and in September 2025 these were duly installed.



How can you help?

- Enjoy the woodland, take comfort from nature, watch the changing seasons, spot wildlife and listen for bird song. Enjoy seeing bees and butterfly pollinate the fruit trees and bushes from thistles and wildflowers around the site.
- Help nurture the trees by watering if you are able (there are recycled milk containers and buckets to enable this)
- Join in at the next mulching day and try and identify the range of tree species.
- Volunteer with the Greening Group and meet other residents spending time in nature (gardening gloves are available to protect your hands).
- In time, with your help, the fruit trees and fruit bushes will mature into a food forest, helping us appreciate locally produced fruit that everyone can enjoy.
- Established native woodland trees will provide shade, habitat for birds and insects and remain a place for recreation or recovery.

St Lawrence Trees for Life is an inclusive place for everyone to enjoy, to help our community adapt to climate change and protect the future of the village. With your continued kindness and support, we will have a beautiful woodland for generations to enjoy that contributes to a healthy, kind and caring community.



Financial Information:

In-Kind Contributions

Tree whips

Essex Forestry Initiative

Artistic Design

Soaker Hose

Trees Bags

Soil, Sand and other organic matter

Hoses and fittings

Trugs

Gardening gloves for volunteers

Bark chippings

Over 1000 Volunteer hours so far!

Income £:

Essex Community Foundation: £3943

Maldon District Council: £384

Diddydots Nursery: £100

Optima Health: £500

Total £ income: £4,927

Spend:

Interpretation Panels: £3314

Fruit Bushes

Mulch delivery June £20

Mulch delivery July £150

Mulch delivery October £150 (due payment)

Tree guards £120.50 (due payment)

Total £ spend: £3513.50

Next Steps:

- Installation of rainwater collection guttering and butts installed to enable optimum rainwater collection.
- A Weekly Greening Group to help nurture the wood, make friends and spend time in nature.
- Partnering with local SHED Group to share skills and enable the building and installation of bee and bug hotels and hedgehog homes to attract pollinators and wildlife to the wood. Possible installation of a place to sit.

