

# FIXED POINT PHOTOGRAPHY AND MONITORING

It would be fascinating in the future, to be able to see how your woodland has developed over the years. Fixed point photography is a way of taking a photo from exactly the same spot each year, or every few years, so that you can see what changes happen over time. You can see which species grow the fastest at first and whether other species then start to grow faster at a later stage. You can even take a summer and a winter view to show how different the trees look in different seasons.

Obviously, this can all now be done using a digital camera and the information saved on your computer.

Some basic points to remember are :

- Ideally start the photographic record before you have planted the trees, so that you can remember what it looked at before anything was there.
- The photos should be taken from the same viewpoint/s and in the same direction every time. For a small site, a single viewpoint may be sufficient, but you may need several. Viewpoints can be recorded with a GPS if you have one and directions taken using a compass, but it is a good idea to record everything on a plan.
- The viewpoints chosen should be as permanent as possible eg a rock outcrop or a very sturdy strainer post or some other feature that you think is unlikely to change for many years to come.
- Choose your viewpoints carefully; remember that a small tree just in front of you may grow to block your view in a few years time and prevent you from replicating the whole view. Consider whether your viewpoint may be better further away from the trees, or on higher ground?
- A person in the photo can add scale.
- Record the type of camera and settings used, so that you can easily replicate the view.
- Take the photos at a similar time of year and in similar weather / light conditions if possible.
- In areas where there is tall bracken or grass in summer, it may be better to take the photos by early June, so that young trees are not hidden by other vegetation.
- Save and name your photos clearly, with their position, direction of view and date. An example of a record sheet is attached, but you can develop your own of course.
- How often you repeat the process is entirely up to you; it could be annually, or every five years.
- Apart from fixed point photography you may want to record other information - which species grow the fastest / survive the best, how much growth certain trees put on each year, bad weather damage, pest and diseases, which areas are thriving the best / worst, when trees start to produce seed, what birds / insects are colonising the area. The list is endless ....

Remember others may be interested in your records too, as it all adds to local knowledge on how to plant successful new woodlands. You could send your photographic and other records to the Orkney Biodiversity Records Centre, so that they are retained for others to see in the future.