



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Allan Robertson House

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Stuart Rennie

Certified by GEO Foundation: February 2021
Valid until: February 2026

“The Allan Robertson House equipment testing facility extends The R&A’s championing of environmental and social initiatives and offers a world class example of sustainable design. As a GEO Certified® Development for its construction process and opening in 2018, it is no surprise to see these principles maintained and strengthened for the facility’s day-to-day management.”

Stuart Rennie

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Allan Robertson House has successfully achieved GEO Certified® status for its outstanding work to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

GEO Certified® is the most respected certification for golf, based on a credibly and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Allan Robertson House has:

1. Met the required certification criteria for sustainable golf operations
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd. (autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation)

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved all mandatory criteria; and with specific Continual Improvement Points set for the future, Allan Robertson House should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Allan Robertson House can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the Independent Verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



Verification and Certification

Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at www.sustainable.golf

Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at www.isealliance.org



Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• Partnerships & Outreach • Golfing & Employment • Advocacy & Communications

Included below are the observations made by the Independent Verifier against each item in the Standard.

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	During the planning process all relevant surveys and mapping was carried out. Regular habitat and tree surveys are undertaken. The R&A representatives at Allan Robertson House have a resolved understanding of the site and its surroundings.

			The facility was certified under GEO's Development programme in 2018, the first in the UK to achieve this recognition.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	This was established during the planning / EIA process and through construction to completion. External ecological consultancy has been provided to The R&A by STRI.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	A core path has been protected and is used by staff. The site forms part of the Cambo Estate with the adjoining Fife Coastal Path, which is very popular among visitors and walkers.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Maintained turf is minimised for the purposes of equipment testing only.
N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	The creation of a new pond with a sustainable drainage system has allowed for protected plants to be relocated. The woodland is aided by resident pigs minimising ivy regrowth. The building incorporates a sedum (green) roof. Trees were planted during construction and retained trees are regularly surveyed.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		As N1.3.1 above
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	Turfgrass playability requirements are not an extensive consideration. Kingsbarns Golf Links neighbours the site and manages all turf areas and landscapes. Kingsbarns is a GEO Certified® facility operating to the highest standards. The R&A also has an in-house agronomy department which supervises and advises major golf tournaments, including The Open Championship.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		As N2.1.1 above

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Turfgrass playability requirements are not an extensive consideration. Kingsbarns Golf Links neighbours the site and manages all turf areas and landscapes. Kingsbarns is GEO Certified® facility operating to the highest standards. The R&A also has an in-house agronomy department which supervises and advises major golf tournaments, including The Open Championship.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	As N2.1.3 above
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	Turfgrass playability requirements are not an extensive consideration. Kingsbarns Golf Links neighbours the site and manages all turf areas and landscapes. Kingsbarns is GEO Certified® facility operating to the highest standards. The R&A also has an in-house agronomy department which supervises and advises major golf tournaments, including The Open Championship.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf	As N2.3.1 above
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations	Document procedures for emergency spill responses; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	Not directly applicable to Allan Robertson House operations. However, best practice management is in evidence throughout the facility and all these actions are undertaken.

	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Wastewater is mains potable. Water from the carpark drains to the pond for filtration prior to being re-used for irrigation. Cleaning materials and products associated with equipment maintenance are stored safely and securely.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	As N3.1.1 above
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff; Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building; Sufficient storage capacity; Impermeable flooring; Spill containment kits present; Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	Not directly applicable to Allan Robertson House operations. However, best practice management is in evidence throughout the facility and all these actions are undertaken.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Rainfall is collected from the driving range area, car park and sedum roof and re-used for irrigation. Sensors are used to inform irrigation requirements of the sedum roof in extreme dry conditions.

RESOURCES

R1 Water

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Irrigation requirement is minimal and not considered for aesthetic or playing requirements.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Conduct regular irrigation performance checks; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Ensure effective application of water to target areas; Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	Irrigation is informed and controlled by Kingsbarns course management team using highly efficient systems.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	The modern building was designed to a high standard with all relevant water saving measures in place.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	The site captures rainfall and drains to the pond, which is then used for irrigation.

R2 Energy

R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Not directly applicable to Allan Robertson House operations. However, best practice management is in evidence throughout the facility and all these actions are undertaken.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Audits are carried out regularly and admin very well organised.

R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	On-site micro-renewables (wind turbine, solar panels etc) were not permitted in construction due to planning constraints for the site. An electric car charging port has been installed at the facility. As a continual improvement it could be interesting to explore the possibility of switching to a 'green electricity' / certified renewable utility plan.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	Undertake a review of materials consumed	The R&A has an overarching management policy to reduce materials throughout the organisation and recommends best practices to all departments.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from recycled, recyclable and certified materials	The R&A has an overarching management policy to purchase and contract with ethical / environmental considerations at the forefront.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Local authority takes care of all waste and recycling and provides guidance to the organisation.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	As R3.3.1 above

COMMUNITY

C1 Outreach

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		The building was designed to engage groups of visitors for educational purposes. The R&A staff are open to use all facilities where and when possible.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The R&A provides many opportunities for volunteering across suitable departments, including tournament staging and greenkeeping, as well as scholarships for people entering the golf industry as a career. The R&A supports numerous charities and initiatives within golf, aside from the direct support for member golf associations and industry bodies. Where staff undertake their own charitable work The R&A will match any funds raised. In 2020 The R&A signed an agreement with RSPB to address wildlife conservation and the management of natural habitats on golf courses throughout the UK.
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Create a 'sustainability working group'	Positive relationships exist with the landowner and there are talks ongoing about creating further public access via the road. Community group events are held at The R&A golf museum in St Andrews for an elderly/dementia group.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Not directly applicable to Allan Robertson House operations, however, The R&A works with organisations to study and promote the health benefits of golf, and provide opportunities for disability golf.

C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Not directly applicable to Allan Robertson House. The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews is the associated golf club of The R&A and promotes inclusivity and diversity within its membership.
C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	The R&A has an overarching management policy to provide the best working conditions and career development opportunities.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	The R&A website contains a wealth of information and guidance relating to sustainability. The GEO Development Certification in 2018 can be found extensively online.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	Allan Robertson House is widely highlighted at organised events and seminars.

Golf and Sustainability

Among all sports, golf has a particularly close relationship with the environment and communities, golf facilities can bring many benefits to people and nature - from the protection of greenspace and conservation of biodiversity; healthy recreation for all ages; local supply chains; and jobs, tourism and other forms of economic value.

Adopting a more sustainable approach is also good for golf. It's about presenting a high-quality golf course and providing a memorable experience in natural surroundings. It's about being as efficient as possible. And it's about supporting the community in a range of ways that bring increased recognition, respect and contact.

At a broader level, it's important that golf credibly demonstrates its commitment, and its social and environmental value – strengthening the sport's image and reputation for the long term.

Golf facilities that participate in OnCourse®, an international sustainability initiative assured by the non-profit GEO Foundation, are taking a comprehensive approach and striving to be leaders in the community.

Find out more at www.sustainable.golf