



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Finspångs Golfklubb

Prepared by independent verifier: Kerstin Antonsson

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023
Recertification due: 2026

“Finspångs Golfklubb, like so many other golf clubs over the past three years, has had challenges for the business regarding covid and high diesel and electricity prices. The club's sustainability development has been limited during this period. Still, with a strong commitment from the environmental council, members and green keeper, the club has nevertheless carried out an important natural value inventory, and established a flower meadow, additional fauna deposits, nesting boxes for birds and bats, and a bee bed to promote pollinators. I look forward to seeing future progress on and benefits from: (1) continuing to modernize the irrigation system to increase efficiency and reduce water consumption; (2) using the nature value inventory to develop a management plan for increasing biodiversity in areas with natural values; and (3) transitioning to renewable energy, including further investigation of installing solar panels.”

Kerstin Antonsson

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Finspångs Golfklubb 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.

Finspångs Golfklubb 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 (CIP) set for the future, Finspångs Golfklubb should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Finspångs Golfklubb 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

Carole Kerrey
Manager, Data and Reporting, GEO
Certification Ltd.



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	The Club performed a nature and habitat survey with Calluna and Östergötlands Golf Association in 2022. The inventory has been carried out in accordance with Swedish Standard 199000:2014, "Natural value inventory regarding biodiversity."

			Confirmed maps with habitats and species observations, surveys, and inventory reports.
	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	Adjacent to the facility is the "Ölstadsjöns" nature reserve. The area is also classified as a Natura 2000 (Ölstadsjön SE0230272) for birds and habitat. Nature conservation regulates what can be done on adjacent parts of the golf course. For example, water collection for salamanders must be prioritized outside the protected area. Confirmed, performed Calluna natural value inventory indicated and pointed out 31 conservation species, of which 13 were protected species of the site due to the Species Protection Regulation. Confirmed species lists of flora, birds, and fauna. Mammalian has been briefly inventoried. A bird inventory with 96 identified species was implemented in 2019. Fauna repositories are located at several places to attract insects and birds, hedgehogs, amphibians, and other animals. CIP: The numbers of protected species shall be updated in OnCourse with all other current inventoried numbers of mammals, birds, trees, etc.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Burial grounds and ancient ruins (stone circles) from the old iron age are found in the clubhouse area. The municipality carries out management.
	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 In 2018, a consultant was contracted to optimize the course. High rough is only cut twice per season to minimize managed area, increase biodiversity, and save energy. Between holes 10 and 18, different flower species have been planted to increase pollination. Habitat areas have been increased by 0,42 ha.
	N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Observed images in nature inventory and report.

	best way for wildlife and golf	Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	Observed twenty bird boxes, six bat nests, and four insect hotels. The location of each nesting box is listed on a map. Several locations have been prepared with logs and dead wood from different trees to create habitats for insects, smaller mammals, and amphibians. In connection with these sites, information boards explain what a fauna repository is and its significance. Confirmed newly created flower meadow with over 1000 flowers, and a bee bed to promote pollinators. The bee bed hosts the small scabious mining bee, a sand bee, <i>Andrena marginata</i>. Based on the inventory, the Calluna company shall present habitat management suggestions later in 2023. CIP: Habitat management and maintenance plans were discussed and must be developed to preserve natural values aligned with the species and habitats identified.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Ten protection-worthy species are identified in the Calluna nature value inventory. CIP: The coming management plan shall consider practical conservation measures for priority species.
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	Poa annua is the dominant grass species on the entire course. Confirmed application. The golf club will be involved in a restoration project (LONA) of the adjacent nature reserve. To avoid high water levels on the course and maintain good drainage, embankments, and pumping stations will be built.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Normally occurring activities include adjustment of cutting heights and patterns, aeration, dressing, clippings return, etc.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Confirmed soil samples from different greens are sent yearly for analysis and consultancy of the physical properties of the soil and

	application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation		the need for nutrients. The last analysis was made in 2022 for greens 9 and 18. The next will occur in fall 2023. A new updated fertilization program will be compiled after that. Organic fertilizers are used.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Confirmed, sharpening mowing blades several times in the season and removing surface moisture. After every operation, the machines are rinsed from grass and washed with water to prevent a possible infection from spreading. Since no use of chemical pesticides, the greenkeeper balances with mechanical management such as low nitrogen levels, dressing, and organic fertilizers.
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	Visual inspections for early signs of pests and diseases are carried out daily. Confirmed indicator places on the course are well-known and placed on a map. No chemicals are used in the last three years. See also above N2.2.
	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 .	No chemicals are used in turf management. No applications of chemicals have been made in the last three years.
N3 Pollution Prevention			
	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure	Document procedures for emergency spill responses;	Not applicable.

	N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations	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.	
		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	Confirmed storage of hazardous maintenance chemicals. Hazardous waste is placed and securely locked in a rented container, pending to be collected. Contracts are signed with the licensed company (Pre Zero) for collecting hazardous waste. Confirmed waste collecting reports. Wastewater is taken care of and purified in municipal sewage treatment plants.
		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	Fertilizers are mixed and loaded in the vehicle garage with a concrete floor and drain connected to a collecting tank. A confirmed new waste-water treatment facility for the impermeable wash pad area has been installed in 2022. The cleaned water is allowed to be discharged into the existing drain.
	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	Confirmed recent inventory of chemical products 2023 and a well-written chemical instruction. Chemical products are handled and stored in separate cabinets. Safety data sheets are printed and placed close to the chemicals. Emergency and leakage equipment are available. Safety data sheets are printed and placed close to the chemicals. CIP: First aid and personal protection equipment must be inventoried and supplemented in some workshop spaces. The fuel tank is placed in a steel container with secondary containment and fire extinguisher. The tank is regularly inspected. The next inspection will be in 2026.

			Fire extinguishers are located on the workshop's premises, and vehicles.
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)	Confirmed new waste-water treatment facility for the impermeable wash pad area has been installed. The cleaned water is allowed to be discharged into the existing drain.

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 on the playing surfaces occurs only when needed. Water from surrounding agricultural drainage, surface water, and stormwater is collected in ponds and used for irrigation. See also R1.2.1 below.
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	The irrigation system is old and has no computerized control systems. A three-step plan to invest in a more modern and resource-efficient irrigation facility is ongoing. The first step with new pumps in ponds is finished. The second step will be a digital irrigation system and the third will be new sprinklers. Stormwater is disposed of on holes 1 – 9 and led to a pond at hole 10.
	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	Water consumption is regularly checked. Low flush toilets and showerheads, and water-saving washing-machine are installed.

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	A water permission is available for the facility. Surface water is taken from the nearby lake, <i>Hultbosjön</i> . According to the permit, the withdrawal is to be measured but there is no obligation to report to the authorities.
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	Motion detectors and new LED tubes have been installed in 2023. High rough is only mowed twice per season to minimize managed area, increase biodiversity, and reduce energy consumed.
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	Confirmed internal energy audit and record keeping. The environmental council has developed and presented energy-saving proposals to the board and management. The heating in rental cottages and locker rooms has been reduced when the cottages are not rented out. Geothermal heating was installed in the clubhouse in 2019.
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	CIP: Because of the high costs of renewable energy, no renewable electricity is purchased from 2023. It is highly recommended that this be resumed in the nearest future. Installation of solar panels has been discussed.
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	Purchasing chemical products is kept low and chemical pesticides are not used anymore. Chairs and furniture are repaired. Used furniture has been purchased from the local hotel.

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	Confirmed purchasing policy. See above R3.1.1 purchased recycled furniture.
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	Confirmed internal and external waste data by weight and/or volume in different fractions. The waste is separated and recycled in a lot of fractions. Several waste bins with information are arranged in an excellent way outside the holiday village.
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	Confirmed compliance with regulations. All waste fractions are collected by one engaged and authorized receiver. (Pre Zero).

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		A holiday village with ten well-equipped cottages is located centrally in the facility. The holiday village is open all year round and is very appreciated accommodation for large and small groups, and companies during the year. There are also camping spaces available for motorhomes and caravans. A special house at the club will be furnished as a conference room that both members and others can rent.

			A hiking trail for the public has been created from the ancient remains in the club area to St. Maria's Church. The hiking trail is called the "Old Church Road". The area offers ski trails and slopes for sledding in winter. The area is rich in birds and suitable for bird watching.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		No specific volunteering or support of charities.
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'	The club's environmental council has developed very good guidelines, instructions, and control documents describing what, why, and how the sustainability work should and will be implemented. The documentation includes environmental policy and plan with proposed objectives and measures. There are clear task descriptions for the activities of the Environment Council. The steering documents have usefully been improved with whom and when they have been decided to be valid. CIP: Club management and the board could improve their commitment to the environmental council, sustainability issues, and activities to ensure long-term sustainability work. Collaboration and meetings occur with the municipality nature coordinator and local Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. There is mutual interest and cooperation to increase and disseminate information on the biodiversity of the golf club.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		The amazing Wednesday group is still active. It consists mainly of senior male members who meet every Wednesday before and after the high season. The Wednesday group assists the club with approximately 1700 volunteers working hours to maintain the facility (100 hours more than in 2019). This also generates

			social sustainability regarding physical and mental health through togetherness and meaningfulness.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The club offers different memberships depending on the category of players. The club also has cooperation agreements and green fee exchanges with other clubs in and outside Sweden.
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 club follows relevant national legislation for employment, health & safety. There are ethical and legal employment and working conditions.
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 club sends out newsletters to members and shares information about activities on Facebook. Information signs about fauna deposits, bird species, and the bee bed are on the course.
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	Finspång Golf Club has been awarded the municipality's environmental scholarship 2022 for its many years of commitment to various environmental projects and promoting biodiversity.

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