



GEO Certified® Report Golf Club Unterengstringen

Prepared by independent verifier David Bily

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

“This beautiful 9-hole golf course is managed with minimal fertilizer and chemical inputs and meanders through valuable patches of forest, wildflower meadows and biotopes with rich biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

The energy efficient clubhouse is a local culinary hotspot for the surrounding community and the club is host to one of few elite Swiss Golf training centres. I look forward to seeing further irrigation efficiency and both internal and external communication on the club’s sustainability commitments.”

*David Bily
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golf Club Unterengstringen 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.

Golf Club Unterengstringen 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 and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Golf Club Unterengstringen should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golf Club Unterengstringen 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
Director, Certification and Credibility,
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.isealalliance.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 Golf Club Unterengstringen is a 9-hole boutique golf course sitting on 37ha within the city of Zurich. It is a green oasis in this busy urban and industrial area and a welcome retreat for golfers and non-golfers alike. There is extensive woodland surrounding the golf course and many other environmental areas including wildflower meadows and wetlands which were created as an offshoot of the river Limmat when the golf course was constructed in the early 2000s. The wetland ponds which meander through the golf course site are very valuable fish habitat and surveyed by the canton of Zurich.
	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	The site is also over an area of groundwater which falls under S1, S2 and S3 water protection. There is extensive forest on the site which is owned by a cloister and managed by a forester. It is invaluable habitat area for many species of mammals, birds and insects. The club is fully aware of the restrictions and value of the nature throughout the golf course and manage these areas together with the state and a local forester.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There are no specific cultural designations on site. This former agricultural site has greatly improved the environmental value and biodiversity.
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	The greenkeeper is managing a minimum area of turfgrass to keep the golf course playable. There are extensive wildflower areas or biotopes on the edges of the golf holes plus the string of wetland ponds that wind through the site.

			The club is experimenting with developing valuable wildflower meadows using different seed mixes and management technics to find the best solution for maximizing the biodiversity value of these surfaces. The club has also collaborated with the Let's Swing for Biodiversity programme from Swiss Golf to investigate further opportunities to improve the quality of their biodiversity on the site. CIP: Please explore opportunities to convert further areas of maintained turf behind tee boxes to extensive grassland.
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 forest areas are managed by an external forester in collaboration with the cloister. Most of the vegetation on site was existing. Additional tree and shrub planting has been mostly indigenous species, with some ornamental planting near to the first tee and clubhouse area. The wetland areas are managed with minimal intervention, cutting reed grasses and other vegetation around the edges only as necessary to allow for play. Other areas are left to evolve naturally. Most of the unlined ponds are sourced from the groundwater level and fluctuate through the year, sometimes full and sometimes nearly dry. An unofficial biodiversity study has been undertaken by a couple of university students with the report pending. CIP: Please build on the results from this study by conducting a more official flora and fauna survey with a specialist. Together, these will help to identify key species and manage the habitats with these species in mind. Mowing buffers are maintained near to water bodies.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Numerous microhabitat structures have been created throughout the site including stone and brush piles of various sizes. These are very interesting habitats for small mammals, birds and insects. A number of bird boxes and habitat structures have been installed for birds - from small birds to Kingfishers and Eagles. Duck boxes are also installed on all the ponds. Another biotope was created a few years ago which is also regulated by the groundwater levels. This is particularly interesting for amphibians.

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	The greenkeeper is managing classic grass species on the golf surfaces for this area of Switzerland. The club consults with a turfgrass specialist who comes a couple of times per year to try to optimize the turf management including fertilizer and water inputs. There was discussion of trying to develop more fescue surfaces, however considering the climate and soils it is unlikely that this would be a good transition at this time.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Good cultural practices are undertaken to maintain good soil structure, including regular aerifying and topdressing and slitting of fairways. There is a very complete machine park to undertake many important mechanical practices for healthy turf. For other work the club shares machines with some other nearby golf courses. The greenkeeper experiments with different biological and bacteria products to find a good solution and healthy turf surfaces.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Careful spoon-feeding is done every few weeks to give the playing surfaces what they need and not more. Applications of iron and ammonia are used to fight disease instead of pesticide inputs. The club works together with an agronomist to try to improve quality and sustainable management. Staff are given regular training to apply fertilizers. Protective equipment is apparent in the maintenance building.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The greenkeeper uses few chemicals and when they are used, they try to apply them at the right moment before high risk of disease outbreak. This is done by monitoring the temperature and moisture conditions with the help of an online app. Weeds are treated with hand sprayers only where needed.

			Weeds on the natural crushed stone paths are burned off with gas burners. The greenkeeper regularly sharpens mower blades with their own grinder. Surface moisture is removed daily, starting with the most problematic surfaces. Some trees have been removed from the site to increase light and air flow and reduce risk of disease on golf surfaces.
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	Chemicals are only used when absolutely necessary and almost exclusively on greens. The greenkeeper uses a Syngenta application to help guide maintenance and indicate critical moments or hot spots where disease may begin.
	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 .	Only use legally registered and approved products. Staff are full qualified and trained to use fertilizers and pesticides. Appropriate protective equipment is present.
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.	Emergency spill response procedures in place around maintenance area. Spray and spread buffers are generally in place. There are a couple of difficult greens which are quite close to water edges but still maintain more than 3m from the edge of the green surface. Sensitive wetland or ecological areas are well protected with buffer zones. CCIP: Please create a map of the golf course highlighting all buffer zones.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored;	A formal wastewater agreement is in place.

		pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Any hazardous substances are stored safely. The clubhouse abides by Swiss law in the disposal of wastewater.
		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	The recently renovated wash station is over an impermeable, leak-free surface. Pesticides and fertilizers are mixed and loaded over this surface or over an impermeable surface within the machine park.
	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	Hazardous substances are stored correctly in a locked metal cabinet with leak proof drip trays. A list of these substances is kept by the greenkeeper. A new digital system is being brought in within Switzerland. Spill containment kits are present. Secondary containment under liquid products. Emergency wash area is present. Hazardous substances collected by a registered company. Liquid and dry fertilizers are stored separately.
		N3.2.2 Legal compliance in the storage and handling of fuels and gases	Tank secured to a horizontal, flat, non-combustible surface Secondary containment of fuel in the event of spills e.g. bunds and drip trays Inspection of storage tank(s) at least quarterly, if required Fire extinguisher in the immediate area	Fuel tanks are sitting on a flat, non-combustible surface. Secondary containment is present. Tank inspection is done regularly as per law. Fire extinguishers present.
	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)	Wastewater is disposed of correctly. Oil and grease separator present as part of the washing station. This material is sucked out and removed from site by a registered professional once or sometimes twice per year.

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	The club uses appropriate grasses for the climate and soils. Fescue project has been discussed but is difficult on the heavy soils. Irrigation is limited to essential playing surfaces, greens, tees and fairways, with one row of irrigation down the middle of each fairway. CCIP: Please explore possibilities to further reduce irrigation while still maintaining the quality of surface you strive for. CCIP: Please introduce measures to record and monitor real numbers of yearly water consumption for irrigation.
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 schedule is based on weather forecast and soils moisture tests using hand-held moisture reader. CIP: Please explore the feasibility of investing in an on-site weather station. The irrigation system is good but getting a bit on in age. Block system for tees; individual sprinkler control for tees. The greenkeeper is planning to change the tees to individually controlled sprinklers when the budget allows. CIP: Please explore the feasibility of conducting an irrigation audit for improved efficiency.
	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;	The club monitors water use in buildings, including keeping track of water bills.

		Categorise and track water consumption	CCIP: Please introduce further measures to encourage water conservation amongst players and staff (e.g., signs, communications).
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	Water for irrigation is from the river Limmat. A water abstraction permit is in place and no limit is placed on how much they can take from the river. However, the pump station within the golf property is taking water from one of the ponds and the level of the water within the golf course ponds is directly influenced by the level of the river, their water source. Therefore, when the river level is low, the course doesn't receive any more water and they must manage with what they have. The water level in the other ponds is influenced by the level of the ground water.
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	Many areas of the course are naturalised and playing surfaces are kept to a minimum for play. CIP: As per N1.2.1 - some areas behind tees could possibly be naturalised.
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	Two electric charging stations are provided for guests or members. The machine park includes 2 hybrid mowers and electric carts. Energy bills are monitored. Appliances are efficient and relatively new in a modern kitchen. CIP: Please explore measures to improve conservation awareness among guests and members.
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	The buildings are heated by thermal energy from the ground. Electricity from the standard grid is used for the buildings. The club is exploring solar energy possibilities for electricity at the moment.
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 club shares some machines with other clubs to avoid buying too many products. Older machines are then sold to other clubs who are looking for cheaper used machines. Half portions are available on the menu.
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 club tries to purchase as much as possible from local producers and stay within Switzerland. Many of the regular products used for greenkeeping are nevertheless not available within Switzerland and must be purchased from abroad, notably topdressing, sand and fertilizers. Seasonal and certified products are prioritized when possible and when the price is reasonable.
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	A solid recycling programme is in place from the clubhouse, restaurant and maintenance facility. Clear, simple bin signage throughout the course. The club does some of the laundry in-house to avoid outsourcing. Mostly for changing room towels.
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	Legal compliance for general and hazardous waste.

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 restaurant is open to the public and well used, especially at lunch. The clubhouse can also be rented out for private events.

C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Many tournaments are held every year, including a couple for charities involving a number of volunteers from the club.
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'	Part of the parking is rented out for use by employees of the adjacent cement factory. The clubhouse is used for meetings by various local clubs or businesses. The golf club is one of the main elite golf training centres for Swiss Golf players, as well as a major centre of training and teaching for all golfers. The club does a lot for these mostly junior players even though it is a challenge finding a compromise with members. The club organises an open day for a local vocational school. CIP: Further collaboration could be established with local organisations.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Emergency plans are in place. Safe working and playing environment.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Membership is inclusive across age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and ethnic background.
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 provides correct working conditions for employees. Protective equipment is in place for greenkeepers and restaurant staff. The club hired and supported a Ukrainian refugee.
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	Various newsletters are sent out to members and the golf club's activities or projects are occasionally mentioned in local newspapers.

			CCIP: Please establish an official sustainability working group or at least make this agenda part of regular meetings for yearly projects.
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	CIP: Please implement more regular communication or awareness raising activities on the club's sustainability commitment and actions.
C3.3 Follow a journey of continuous improvement	C3.3.1 Measures to help track, review and improve sustainability and climate action	Put measures in place to ensure that OnCourse can be updated annually	The club manager is always trying to improve the golf club with yearly actions to make the club more efficient, more beautiful and more sustainable.

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