GEO Certified® Report
The Alwoodley Golf Club

Prepared by independent verifier: Tony Hanson

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2024
Recertification due: 2027

“The Alwoodley Golf Club has undertaken some great sustainability projects, including Heather restoration, sympathetic woodland management increasing biodiversity and improving course condition, and implementing renewable energy projects.

I am happy to recommend awarding GEO Certification and look forward to seeing their progress over the coming years.”

Tony Hanson
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that The Alwoodley Golf Club 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.

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

For the certification period stated above, The Alwoodley Golf Club 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.isealalliance.org**

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	Confirmed and discussed area images and mapping for the site.

			Confirmed and discussed the work the club are doing with a number of wildlife charities and experts to inform their management of local habitat. Observed habitat during the course walk, and discussed future plans for further enhancement of the heather habitats.
	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	Discussed the site and advised that there are no statutory designations of protections on site.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	No historic or architectural protections advised.
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 Club monitor areas in place through wear patterns and observation and feel that they have reached an optimum area in play based on the capabilities of their membership, providing the balance of a testing course and minimising turf under close management.
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	Habitat management plans are informed through the work that the club do with local wildlife charities. The club is undergoing a program of heather restoration having gone through a process of trials to find the most effective method to re-populate areas and to underline the heathland nature of the course from its first establishment. Wood management includes the thinning and removal of some of the species which have self seeded, encouraging biodiversity and improving air and light to some of the greens where succession had encroached and created issues from an agronomic perspective.
N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		Outlined 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	The club feel that they have reached a balance with their sward composition, providing a combination of drought and disease tolerance along with the playing characteristics preferred. Turf management and soil condition is managed to favour finer grasses.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Turf management Is based on good soil structure and the club undertake regular hollow coring, tining, and slitting to improve and increase turf root depth, and to manage organic matter levels.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil testing is undertaken to determine the nutrient levels and to inform the application of fertilisers which is backed up by the knowledge of the course manager.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Course equipment is cleaned and maintained to prevent cross contamination and also to make sure that cutting is efficient and clean reducing risks of disease.
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	The Club monitors for pests and diseases during routine maintenance and uses weather data and existing mapping and knowledge of the course to determine the risk of pests and diseases. Where prevailing conditions would indicate that there is a high likelihood of disease the course management team can adjust the height of cut and therefore the pressure being placed on turf to provide additional resilience without the need of chemical application.
	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 .	The club only use legal products and during the site visit we discussed spray licencing and ongoing training for staff. We observed and discussed the spraying equipment and PPE. Chemical mixes are accurate and very small amounts of excess chemical is left. These are used up on practice areas.

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.	Discussed pollution incident response plans and observed spill kits and physical containment. Spray buffer zones are adhered to around sensitive areas or near water courses and ponds. **CCIP: Please complete a revision of the pollution incident response plan in line with pollution prevention guidelines 21.** **CCIP: Please create a backup stock of spill granules or absorbent pads to prevent potential situations where a spill might require 100% of the stock to be used and leave a shortfall during the reordering process.**
	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	Hazardous materials are stored in bunded containers and the diesel tank, located within the maintenance building, is a proprietary 2500 litre tank with internal bunding. Confirmed and discussed the licensed waste contractor and observed the contract. No wastewater licence is required.
	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	Observed and discussed the washdown pad and the rainwater harvesting system that feeds the washdown water. The washdown pad is also used for mixing of products providing a catalan treatment process to prevent fugitive escape.
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;	The club maintain a register of hazardous materials adjusting stock levels post use. Observed and confirmed that the fuel storage tanks have secondary containment compliant with regulations. Observed health and safety information along with first aid kits and equipment that are accessible, with first aid kit contents being monitored to ensure they do not go out of date.

			Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	Discussed spill containment kits as outlined above along with fire extinguishers. Fuel storage tanks are easily accessible and therefore easy to monitor condition and to observe any potential leaks.
	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)	The club do not require a wastewater discharge licence. Observed the washdown Bay and treatment process as outlined above.

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 have recently upgraded their irrigation system including valve in head and a computerised Toro control system with weather compensation.
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	Confirmed and discussed soil moisture management and assessing the need for irrigation. The new irrigation system integrates multiple features to improve efficiency including valve in head sprinklers, and computer controlled remote application control allowing targeted applications. Weather patterns and rainfall totals are taken into consideration when irrigating the course.
	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;	Water bills are reviewed and recorded to monitor consumption and identify any anomalies.

			Categorise and track water consumption	The Club encourage stakeholders to use water efficiently and minimise consumption across the site. Water use is categorised by meter to help identify areas of use.
	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	Abstraction volumes are recorded, and readings submitted to the Environment Agency.
	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	Areas in play were discussed during the course walk, highlighting the ongoing process of reviewing the course and playability. The Club feel they have a course layout that suits the membership, with little opportunity to reduce close mown amenity grass further.
	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	Energy bills are reviewed and recorded to identify unexpected consumption. Meters are recorded separately to allow consumption to be tracked by areas of operation.
	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 Club has undertaken a solar project with panels located on the maintenance buildings. Further projects are being considered for the clubhouse buildings.
	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	Waste is separated to reduce contamination and improve recycling value and rates. Single use cups and cutlery have been eliminated, and reuseable water bottles are available from the Pro Shop.

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 and discussed the use of a formal environmental and sustainable purchasing policy to underpin decisions across all operational areas. Fresh produce and services are predominantly sourced from local suppliers. Many retail items come from further away.
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	Discussed and confirmed record keeping allowing the management to take data driven decisions. Waste separation was observed and discussed along with stakeholder engagement.
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	The Club work with licensed waste contractors to ensure correct disposal.

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**		In addition to golf, the facility also offers opportunities for walking and birdwatching on and around the course.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	**C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes**		Staff and members are encouraged to volunteer for local charities and good causes. Events are regularly held to raise funds, along with tee times on the course that are auctioned or form raffle prizes.

	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'	Confirmed and discussed sustainability management as a core element of management and member committee's agenda.
	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 Club are keenly aware of the mental and physical health benefits offered by the facility across a range of activities.
	C2.2 Be open and inclusive	**C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies**	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	There is an open and inclusive member, visitor and employment policy.
	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	Discussed employee induction and training opportunities. Health and Safety, and risk assessments were discussed during the visit.
	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 use a range of media to inform and engage stakeholders with the work being undertaken on sustainability. Web content and eNewsletters are key methods to engage, with analysis of the communication to show page impressions, read times etc.
	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	There is an active outreach programme, working with local schools and offering internships and apprenticeships. The Club is also engaged with local wildlife groups, and businesses.

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

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