



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Golfklúbbur Akureyrar

Prepared by independent verifier Matthew Schiffer

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

“Golfklubbur Akureyrar is a municipal golf course managed by Steindor Ragnarsson. The club is managed and maintained very sustainably, using nearly zero pesticides or herbicides and irrigating very sparingly. As a municipal golf course, the public is encouraged to use the land for outdoor activities year-round (not just during the golf season). In accordance with an agreement made in 2011, the club has been working continuously to naturalize and reduce intensively maintained areas, including around open water.

The club has an opportunity to survey the flora and fauna found on site to better track biodiversity and identify and protect key species (and reduce non-native species). The club can also do a better job of understanding power and water usage (split between maintenance and clubhouse operations) to help gain even greater efficiencies year over year.

Overall, the club has many good examples of sustainability and accessibility practices found on golf courses throughout Iceland.”

*Matthew Schiffer
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfklúbbur Akureyrar 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.

Golfklúbbur Akureyrar 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, La Reserva Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfklúbbur Akureyrar 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, 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



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	A report was prepared in January 2011 to help define an agreement between the municipality of Akureyri and Golfkub Akureyri. The municipality was changing zoning to add an additional 13 hectares of undeveloped and open land to the golf course and also helping to finance

			some improvements on the golf course in an effort to enhance nature and increase public access to the land. In the report, it was stated that the course is on rocky marshland and wetland that has largely been drained. There is diverse vegetation that is primarily birch, poplar, and woody species. Birdlife is exceptionally diverse and rich, with ideal habitats being islets, ponds, rivers, peatlands, and woodland. At the time of the report, it was the intention of the municipality to restore some of the wetlands to enhance the floral and faunal biodiversity on site and also to build paths to increase public access and use of the site. The club had no additional or more current information to share. The total area of bunkers was not reported on OnCourse and a specific area was not known at the time of the interview. Review of an aerial shows 42 total bunkers that are generally on the small side, ranging from roughly 25 m2 up to roughly 125 m2. CCIP: Please measure and continue to track the total area of bunkers on the golf course.
	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	There are no rare or endangered species or protected landscapes that have been identified.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There are no archaeological, historical, or cultural designations that have been identified.
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	On OnCourse, the club reported that for 62.78 hectares of overall land area, 38.4 is maintained, 23.38 is habitat/natural, and 1.0 is other. The club has made efforts to increase the natural area by reducing the amount of maintenance around bodies of water, leaving more unmaintained area between fairways, and no longer fly mowing the steep banks on tees. There is no data reported on OnCourse, but they estimate a 20-30% increase in unmaintained or less intensively maintained area in recent years.
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 club actively manages its trees, trying to keep the site open so that there's enough air flow around the greens to keep them from icing over. When trees, tree limbs, and brush are taken down they are generally left to compost naturally in the rough (though they are sometimes composted in a designated dump site on the property).

			CIP: Please develop an inventory of the native plant species found on site, so that priority species and habitats can be located and prioritized.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		On OnCourse the club reported 18 different bird species found on site, but they did not specify what species or whether any of the species are priority species. They did share that the Arctic Tern lays eggs in rocky areas on site and those areas are flagged every year to keep the golfers away. Migratory ducks and geese use the open water and are not bothered. CIP: Please develop an inventory of the animal species found on site, so that habitats can be better created and protected. Knowing what's currently found will also make tracking of biodiversity trends easier in the future.
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	On OnCourse, the club reported the following turf species in different combinations and concentrations on greens, tees, fairways, and rough: Chewings Fescue, Slender Creeping Red Fescue, Perennial Ryegrass, Annual Bluegrass, and Kentucky Bluegrass. These are all appropriate cool season varieties. The club overseeds at the start of summer using a fescue & bentgrass mix to increase density and wear tolerance.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		The club monitors soil moisture and compaction closely.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	The club uses as little fertilizer as possible, mostly nitrogen, but also some potassium and phosphorus as reported on OnCourse. Usage is based on judgment of turf condition and weather, i.e. how well the grass survived the winter. There are generally 2-4 weeks between fertilizer applications – it's typically sprayed with some granular and some bio stimulants and seaweed also applied. CIP: Please use a more methodical approach to better optimize fertilization frequency and rates (e.g. semi-regular soil testing and nutrient analysis).

	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The club aerates using pencil tines based on the amount of play and by judging compaction. They will also use hollow core aeration and pull plugs when compaction is too much (every few years). The club brushes dew before cutting. The club manages disease pressures by withholding water and fertilizer to starve the weeds, which are less well suited to dry conditions. The blades for their robotic mowers are replaced every 3-weeks.
	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	Confirmed that pesticides are rarely used, maybe once every 5 years. The grass types are well suited to the climate and irrigation and fertilization is intentionally kept low to reduce disease and pest pressure. No growth regulators, biostimulants, or biopesticides reported. Some wetting agents used.
		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 .	Three members of the staff are trained and licensed to spray, and the chemicals are kept in a locked shed. Safety equipment is provided. Sprayers are calibrated and tested over the winter. Excess product gets diluted and sprayed on the short 6-hole course.
	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.	The buffers around open water are left natural.
		N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required	Oil and chemicals are stored safely on secondary containment pallets in the maintenance facility, which also has a spill containment kit in case of spills.

	minimised from clubhouse operations	standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	The oil separator is pumped annually by a disposal company. The club has an agreement with a hazardous disposal company.
	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	There is an impermeable asphalt area at the maintenance facility for loading chemicals and for mixing. Equipment is washed over an impermeable surface and all water is collected. An agreement is in place where a company comes to collect the wastewater when the tank is full.
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	A list of hazardous materials is available to authorised staff. All hazardous materials are stored securely and safely and over impermeable flooring in the maintenance facility. Petrol and diesel tanks are over an impervious surface with a drain and oil separator. The tanks are rented from the fuel company and are checked once per year, when they are filled. There is an emergency wash area and fire extinguisher in the maintenance facility.
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)	When machinery is washed, grass clippings are separated and collected for composting. All of the water from washing is collected and pumped out periodically.

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	Water is abundant, running onto the course from the surrounding hills, some of which is collected into an irrigation reservoir. Only greens and tees are irrigated and the irrigation system is used infrequently (typically every 3 rd day during the golf season, from May 1 through August 31).

			Grass species include Slender Creeping Red Fescue, Chewings Fescue, Perennial Ryegrass, and Annual Meadowgrass on the greens, Kentucky Bluegrass, Perennial Ryegrass, and Annual Meadowgrass on the tees, fairways, and maintained rough. These are all cool season grasses appropriate for the climate of northern Iceland. Water use is not currently measured specifically by use. CCIP: Please separately monitor and continue to track the volume of water used for irrigation on the golf course and also in the maintenance facility and clubhouse operations.
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 maintenance staff use moisture meters, rain gauge readings, and take cores to determine irrigation needs and have the philosophy to water the grass as little as possible. The sprinkler heads are sized and aligned to throw as little water as possible into the rough.
	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 club is unable to isolate the water and power used in the maintenance building versus the clubhouse. Both buildings are older (clubhouse built in the 1980's, maintenance building built in the 1990's), but the buildings have been slowly modernized and made more energy efficient (e.g. changing to LED bulbs, adding insulation). A new building was built and opened in December 2024 for indoor play and a new pro shop, and it has underfloor heating for greater energy efficiency.
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	There is no requirement for a water abstraction permit.
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	Naturalization and maintained turf reduction has been a priority in recent years, leading to an approximately 20-30% turf reduction.

			The club has been transitioning to electric, robotic mowers, recently adding two units for use in the roughs. They report 15 total robotic units, with three hybrid ride mowers for cutting tees, approaches, and greens.
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	Utility bills and energy use are reviewed and monitored, though not tracked separately between the maintenance facility and clubhouse.
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	Hydroelectric and geothermally generated electricity is 100% renewable and abundant and cheap in Iceland. On-site solar power (or other renewable) generation would not make any sense financially given the cheap cost of power in Iceland.
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	Paper and plastic are separated for recycling, in addition to oil, filters, and batteries. Waste oil from the kitchen is collected by a waste contractor. The club is trying to recycle more (e.g. plastic, paper, aluminium cans, and wooden pallets) so that less material goes to the landfill. The club still sells single use plastic bottles but also has a bottle fill-up station in an effort to reduce plastic use. CIP: Please explore additional ways to reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill and increase recycling/composting.
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	On OnCourse the club estimated that 25 of 60 total suppliers are located within 100 miles of the golf course.
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	The club keeps records of total waste and recycled waste, by material. Food waste from the restaurant is taken to an on-site composting pit.

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	An authorised waste and recycling contractor is used.
--	---	--	---

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		There is a pedestrian path passing through the centre of the golf course with informational signage discussing history and nature. There is also a ring around the golf course that is used during the winter as a cross-country ski course. The new indoor practice facility is accessible to the public year-round, as is the clubhouse/restaurant.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The club reported on OnCourse an estimated 3,200 hours of volunteer work by staff and 6,000 raised for charity.
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 golf course is municipally owned and very open to pedestrians and new golfers. There is a weekly golf school in the summer to foster junior participation (ages 6 to 14). There is a women's golf committee to advocate and organize events for the female membership.
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 emphasises and promotes healthy outdoor activity for physical and mental health.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	All members and visitors are welcomed. There are 21 electric buggies available for rent by mobility challenged golfers.

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	There are currently 8 full-time staff members, plus 20 additional seasonal employees. All interested employees are welcomed.
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	There is an annual membership meeting to discuss issues at the club. Other communications throughout the year are through email, website, and in person. There is an annual clean-up day before opening in the spring that is well attended by the membership.
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	Informational signage along the pedestrian path on the course gives additional information about the history of the area and nature found on-site.

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