



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Österlens Golfklubb

Prepared by independent verifier, Mårten Wallberg

Certified by GEO Foundation: July 2022

Valid until: July 2025

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“In a short period of time Österlens Golfklubb has become an all-round sustainability champion, which goes to show what can be achieved with the right commitment and organisation.

The club has, among many other things: recorded and protected its wildlife and habitats; developed an organic approach to fertilisation based on ‘compost tea’ derived from local soil biota; minimised chemical use to extreme fungal disease events; reduced water consumption through re-design of the irrigation system; switched to partial heat-pump renewable energy generation and with plans to incorporate on-site solar and ‘green’ grid electricity.

I look forward to seeing the ideas for further site multi-functionality at a club which is already doing a great deal for the local community and national implementation of sustainability as standard.”

Mårten Wallberg

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Österlens Golfklubb** 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.

Österlens 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, **Österlens Golfklubb** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Österlens 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

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



Verification and Certification

Verification

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

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

Certification

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

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

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

Credibility

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



Verifier's Report

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

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

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

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	The courses lie beautiful with overview of the Baltic Sea. The oldest of them, Lilla Vik (Little Bay), has a clear seaside feeling and some of the holes have steep hills down to the sea. The newest, Djupadal (Deep

			valley) is a heathland course and lies a little bit further away from the sea but with some magnificent views. A survey of flora and fauna conducted by the same ecologist as in 2013 on both 18-hole courses was made in 2018, which among other species recognized the threatened species of butterfly. A follow-up-survey was made in 2019 due to the extremely dry weather conditions in 2018. Certain ponds will be cleared out and vegetation taken away due to increased overgrown. Also, the common carp (<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>) in the ponds will be taken away due to their ability of eating too much vegetation. This is all in agreement with the official from the municipality. The common kestrels on the course (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>) are in good shape. The surveys from 2013, which consists mostly of the terrestrial and wetland flora and fauna on both 18-hole courses are the ground for the thorough management plans, conducted by a professional ecologist in 2015. Worth mentioning is the rare Hazel dormouse (<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>), spotted at Orelund, a site on Lilla vik, and Dwarf everlast (<i>Helichrysum arenarium</i>), a very rare flower mostly seen in the southern Skåne, spotted at the sandy heath on the 14th hole on Lilla Vik.
	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 juridical designations that exist on the courses is the key habitat / biotope protected, the oak and hazel parts, along Orelund and the water protection area, consisting of both courses and a stonewall.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	At Djupadal there are two bronze-age habitats, which are saved by the club. Several old stone walls are saved not only for the cultural heritage but also for the 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
	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
			Confirmed, informal. Since 2016 the club has thorough management plans. Some areas are sometimes sown with meadow plant seeds. The sandy spots that are saved and maintained are habitat for the sand lizard (<i>Lacerta agillis</i>). The creation of new ponds has enhanced the amount of water living animals and contains among others the rare and protected species like the Fire-bellied toad, European tree frog and Great crested newt. The ponds are harvested during autumn when no birds are breeding in them.

			Grazing sheep, between hole 4 and 5 at Lilla Vik, in order to keep some areas from overgrowing is very beneficial and also appreciated by members and guests and the club is sure that the sheep attract customers. The juniors of the club sometimes feed the sheep. The sheep comes from an organic certified farm and the farmer was very hard about the conditions for the sheep, that is, no pesticides in the grass.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Four insect hotels have been put up to enhance the biodiversity. The club has plans for solitaire bees.
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	Creeping bent and red fescue, planted on the courses are ideal for the climate and Poa annua is still at the course since the old days. The club has no problem with the Poa as it is perennial. So, the club is happy with the current mix. No red fescue is used on the greens though.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	The majority of the fertilizers used on the courses are since 2013 organic, which is brilliant. The company providing the organic fertilizers is called Ecoturf. The club procure bacteria from the local forest. The bacteria are grown in an aerated "compost tea" and then used as organic pesticides. These soil bacteria used on the greens are working very well. The small number of inorganic fertilizers is used mainly in the early spring to get the turf going after the winter. The amount of used chemical pesticides is almost down to zero and for the last two years no use at all has been carried out. This is of course great and goes well with the 2011 survey conducted by Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation (STERF) showing that around 60 per cent of golfers are willing to pay a higher fee for a chemical restricted course. The amount of fertilizers used is very similar because of the weather, which has been the same for the last three years.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The course manager doesn't like chemical pesticides because of the danger for humans, the nature, walking dogs and others. This set the criteria for how the courses are managed and obviously the courses are doing very well with these criteria being followed.

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 only used during serious fungal disease outbreaks.
	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	Confirmed. Continual improvement: - Follow the new management plans for the nature on both courses. - Install beehives or prepare sand dunes for solitary bees.
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.	For some years the club used a wetting agent based on coconut but as the result was not good enough the club stopped using it. Nowadays a more conventional wetting agent is used. The club uses practically no chemical pesticides and a majority of fertilizers used on the courses are organic. This is major step in preventing pollution on the courses. Hybrid machines are used on the greens to keep the oil spill down.
	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.
	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 club used to mix products in the field, all according to the rules from the authorities. Now with the new maintenance building at Djupadal the mixing is done there.

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	The handling of hazardous materials is done in a proper way. Worth mentioning is that the regulations for this in Sweden is quite rigorous, so the club must do it very well in order not to breaking the law.
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 wastewater from the maintenance building goes to an oil separator, further on to a grease separator and from that out to the mains sewer. An alarm tells if the amount of fat and oil is too high and if that happens the responsible contractor comes and empties the tanks. The analysis made in 2001 of the groundwater used for irrigation showed a good status for the water. The municipality has no desire to impose further testing requirements on the club. The municipality several times a year measures the water level.

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	Most of the parts of the courses have a sandy soil leading to the fact that a lot of the water coming to the soil goes straight down below the growing area. Despite this, the level of consumption is rather ordinary for a Swedish golf club. The water for irrigation is groundwater. The water is taken up by drilling and taken to the ponds. The club also must provide water to the creek

			leading down to the nearby village and this is the way of conducting this. The club is of course always very careful when pumping up water in order not to disturb the groundwater.
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	Sector sprayers and double-rowed sprayers have been installed on practically all irrigated surface on Djupadal. This is supposed to decrease the water use with about 30% because the club will be able to more accurately decide where the water shall be applied and what quantity. The total cost for this will be about €100,000. The plan is for the same system design at the Old Course during 2022. The irrigation is conducted to keep the turf alive, not to keep it green. A soil moisture meter is used around three times a week. The wetting agent is used on certain spots on certain greens. All nozzles are changed to wind adapted ones. The sector sprayers are being adjusted manually.
	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	Low-flow toilets have been installed in the clubhouse and the maintenance building. Djupadal is kept dry when no rain is falling and the irrigation done is only to keep the grass alive, but Lilla Vik is more irrigated during periods of drought, much because of the presence of the Poa. All in all, the club has noticed that the players think it more and more ok with dry turf instead of wanting green turf all year around.
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	Confirmed.
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	The new maintenance building at the Djupadal course makes it possible for the staff to do all the work on the machines on spot instead of needing to drive the vehicles to the maintenance building on the other course. Together with the air / water-heating pump this of course will decrease the amount of energy needed and decrease the amount of air pollution from the vehicles. And, of course the long-term economic benefits of these investments can be large.
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	Since 2017 the club has; installed 10 air / air pumps to reduce the amount of energy consumed; started to use an app which starts an alarm connected to heat pumps etc during sudden large changes in temperature; changed all light bulbs to LED; and set up a system to penetrate energy consumption at computers.

			All the measures conducted to save energy have saved the club around 50,000 - 60,000 SEK/year. The contractor revises the ventilation system every year to keep the amount of energy used for this steady.
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 received 5 offers to install solar panels. The plan is to realize this during the last quarter of 2022. The club is operating a purchase of renewable grid electricity in order to choose one supplier. Three suppliers are in this purchase for the moment. Most of the mowers are now electric, it's the big fairway mowers that's still petrol driven. The club will change to green tariff grid as soon as possible. Sensor lighting has been installed in places, such as the toilet in the men's changing room. A thorough energy survey was conducted during 2021. The club uses grid electric for the golf carts and one of the cars owned by the club is driven on gas, both biogas and natural. Geothermal energy is used to heat the clubhouse. The area of the "hoses" (at about 1-2-meter underground) used is about the area of a football pitch.
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 uses numerous local suppliers, which of course is decreasing the transportations.
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 purchasing policy is informal but is used during all purchases. The club is always trying to buy local and to purchase energy efficient machines for example to the restaurant.
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 recycling stations are since a few years back in better shape and very proper, partly because a new contractor. The separation and fetching are now good.

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. Continual improvement: - The club should make the purchasing policy more formal and documented, to increase transparency for stakeholders. - The club is considering installing solar panels, which should be done.
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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		Except for the annual sustainability plan the club since 2020 has a renewed long-term sustainability plan stretching to 2024. The former one stretched from 2016 to 2020. The club has in its goals for the sustainability work clearly announced that this work would benefit the club when it comes to goodwill, joyful golf playing, quality and the economy. Enhancement of the multifunctionality is in the club's plans. The club has thoughts of installing an outdoor gym to enhance the multifunctionality. The club has overall serious plans to get more non-golfers to the courses, especially at Djupadal.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The club had students from the local school make new birdhouses for the courses. Five teachers in different subjects were involved. In return the students got half a day introduction to golf at 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'	Confirmed.
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 sustainability-working group has since 2013 the status of a proper committee. This certainly strengthens the sustainability work and gives this equal status to other committees as for example the Committees for the courses and the buildings.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Confirmed.
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 course staff have received continuous education concerning the new management plans for the nature at Djupadal and Lilla Vik since 2016.
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	In 2015 the club let three students from the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics conduct a serious competitive environmental strategy proposal for the club. The study clearly points out the environmental impact, both negative and positive, and gives clear proposals of how the club can conduct its sustainability work. This is, and will be, of great help to the club. The club has close cooperation with the local group of Naturskyddsföreningen (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation). Since the club began sustainability work, members, board and staff have developed a thorough culture of embracing new environmentally sustainable ideas. This is quite impressive and shows the enthusiasm and energy for this topic throughout the club's organisation.
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	New signs on both courses have been put up during the last years talking about and showing the nature and specific species on the course. The club makes annual surveys of the members and guests among other things the sustainability work. The club has serious plans, together with the municipality, to make a nature-walking trail around and on the Djupadal course. Arranged nature field trips are open for the public and at some of the trips around half of the attendants have been non-golfers.

			The club is one of five companies together with Region Skåne trying to develop the tourism in the local region. The project is called Tourist Destination Development Project, which includes the crucial development of the outdoor activities. Continual improvement: - The club should really start a serious eco-branding. - The plans of a walking trail should be carried out. - In the annual survey the club can include a question about the grazing sheep.
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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