



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Österlens Golfklubb

Prepared by independent verifier Mårten Wallberg

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2026
Recertification due: 2031

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“The club has really stepped up in three ways when it comes to energy consumption; installation of solar panels, changing from non-renewable energy to renewable and reducing its total consumption of electricity. Good work! Also, as the club already allows its turf to turn brownish during dry seasons it will be well prepared for enhanced water scarcity. As always I am really looking forward to seeing the further development of the club’s sustainability work.”

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 and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, 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

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 – 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	General knowledge of the wildlife and habitats on the site	The club was founded in 1945. The courses are beautiful with an 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 over the sea. None of the courses have changed the landscape, instead they can be seen as refiners of the landscape. A follow-up survey from the ones made in 2013 and 2018 of flora and fauna conducted by an ecologist on both 18-hole courses was made in 2019, which among other species recognized the threatened species of butterfly on the course Djupadal. The follow-up-survey was made due to the extremely dry weather conditions in 2018. All the ponds on Djupadal have been dug out and vegetation taken away due to increased overgrowth. Also, the common carp (<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>) in the ponds have been taken away due to eating too much vegetation in the ponds. This is all in agreement with the official from the municipality. The common kestrels on the course (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>) are still in good shape. The surveys from 2013, which consist mostly of the terrestrial and wetland flora and fauna on both 18-hole courses are the ground for the thorough management plans for the courses, 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	Identify rare, protected or endangered species found on the golf course;	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.

		Understand legal responsibilities for landscape protection and special area designations, if applicable	
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	At Djupadal there are two bronze-age habitats, which are conserved by the club. Several old stone walls are conserved not only for cultural heritage but also for biodiversity. To enhance the appearance of the stone walls, surrounding vegetation the has been removed since 2021.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the golf course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Monitor patterns of play to identify underutilised areas of turfgrass	The club has unfortunately no longer grazing sheep on any of the holes. The reason for this is that the farmer needed his sheep on other places. The club tested with grazing horses one year but some of the horses occasionally ran away and tramped on some greens so they took the horses away from the course.
N1.3 Actively create and manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to create and manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Prioritise native species of varying size and structure when planting Prioritise native trees and shrubs when planting Prioritise native aquatic species of varying size and structure when planting Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	Since 2016 the club has thorough management plans for both courses. The club has let some dead trees lie and vegetation around some valuable trees is being removed. Sometimes occasional trees are being removed around the greens in order to let more sunlight in. The woodland edges are being taken care of in order to function as refuges for certain species. Some areas are sometimes sewn 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 still harvested during autumn or winter when no birds are breeding in them.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species	Follow local best practice to protect or attract endangered, protected or rare species found on site	Since 2021, the club has laid out sand on one of the holes on Djupadal as habitat for solitary bees. It's been successful with bees building homes in the sand. Four insect hotels, three on Djupadal and one at Lilla Vik have been put up. Both these activities enhance the biodiversity. CIP: Please complete the new management plans for the nature on both courses. Put up beehives or prepare sand dunes for solitary bees.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turfgrass and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for the climate	Creeping bent and red fescue, planted on the courses are ideal for the climate and <i>Poa annua</i> is still at the course since the old days. The club estimates that in 2026 it is 50/50 between Creeping bent/Red fescue and <i>Poa</i> . Even as the club has no direct problem with the <i>Poa</i> as it is perennial, the new course manager has reduced the irrigation and fertilizing in order to get rid of <i>Poa</i> . Members and guests have to tolerate

			that the turf turns brown sometimes. No red fescue is used on the greens though.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition	No specific international requirement, however, identify course management and agronomic activities and look for continual improvements	See below.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Test and monitor soil pH; Follow legal requirements when timing fertiliser applications Ensure staff are fully qualified to use fertilisers Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	The majority, about 70%, of the fertilizers used on the courses are organic. 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 small. This is of course great and goes well with the 2011 survey conducted by Scandinavian Turf grass 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.
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Change hole locations frequently The club 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, as the courses are doing very, very well, these criteria are 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	Identify and track pest and disease hotspots, including sensitive areas Scout the course daily for early signs and symptoms Accurately diagnose to determine the cause of weeds, pests and diseases Chemicals are only used during serious fungi attacks.
		N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use legally registered and approved products; Prefer products for the specific weed, pest or disease; Follow legal requirements; Ensure staff are fully qualified to use pesticides; Application of chemicals are all in order with the strong Swedish environmental law.

		Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	
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 ; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer areas next to water bodies and wetlands; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer zones in and around ecologically sensitive areas	A conventional wetting agent is used. The club uses practically no chemical pesticides and an absolute 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	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	All hazardous materials are safely and securely stored, and all the handling is in total compliance with the Swedish law.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Wash machinery over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Mix and load pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	The club used to mix the pesticides 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	List of hazardous substances, made available to authorised staff; Product and material data safety sheets; Well ventilated concrete or metal building; Impermeable, leak-free flooring; Sufficient storage capacity;	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 break the law.

		Spill containment kits; Secondary containment e.g., bunds or drip trays; Emergency wash area, as per local requirements (body shower and / or eye wash station); Hazardous substances safely collected by a registered company or body ; Follow any additional legal requirements	
	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	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 break the law.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage, treatment and discharge	Impermeable, leak-free surface; Treatment as per local requirements (oil, grease and / or clipping separation); Formal discharge agreement, if applicable	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 entrepreneur comes and empties the tanks. Earlier this year the new management (new club director and course manager) discovered that the club had not done water analysis during the last years. However, the club has to do that according to the water permit. The club will start making water analysis in the fall of 2026. The municipality several times a year measures the groundwater level, and it looks good. CCIP: Please undertake water analysis, as per the water permit requirements.

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	Select appropriate grass species for the climate e.g., drought and disease tolerance; Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces; Prioritise native, drought tolerant species for landscaping and planting	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 club has got to know that rainwater coming from thunderstorms consists of positive ions which release nitrogen. This makes it better for irrigation than 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. But, the groundwater level is decreasing in many parts of Sweden in 2026, including the part where Österlens GK is. CIP: Please investigate other sources of irrigation water in the future.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Schedule irrigation based on informed assessment of soil moisture and weather forecasts; Evaluate new irrigation technologies e.g., central control, precision sprinklers etc.; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Adjust sprinklers to playing surfaces only	Sector sprayers and double rowed sprayers have been installed on practically all irrigated surface on both Djupadal and the Old Course since 2022. This has decreased the water use by about 30% because the club is able to more accurately decide where the water shall be applied and what quantity. The total cost for this was about 100 000 Euro. The irrigation is conducted to keep the turf alive, not to keep it green. A soil 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	Monitor and record water consumption (bills, flow meter etc.); Encourage water conservation practices amongst players and staff	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 the Old Course is more irrigated during dry season, much because of 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	Water abstraction permit, if required; Report water consumption to environment agency, if required	As per R1.1.1 above.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in golf course maintenance	Naturalise non-playing areas to reduce mowing and other energy intensive inputs	The club has yearly visits from an energy entrepreneur who advises the club in how to save energy. The relative 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 decreases the amount of energy needed and decrease the amount of air pollution from the vehicles.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record energy consumption (bills, meters etc.)	The yearly visits from an entrepreneur revises measures in order to use energy more efficiently, for example air pumps, use of an app which automatically regulate the temperature etc. All the measures of course reduces the costs for energy.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Understand the energy mix of your electricity supplier; Explore possible greener energy providers	The club installed solar panels at the end of 2022. They produce around 62 000 kWh/year. All in all the club has reduced its use of energy with about 80 000 kWh/year during the last 4 years and now use around 500 000 kWh/year. The energy from grid is renewable since 2024. Most of the mowers are electric. Only the big fairway mowers are still petrol driven. The only reason for that is that there are none to purchase. 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 ground/pitch.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on	No specific international requirement, however, identify	The club still uses a lot of local suppliers, which of course is decreasing the transportations.

	necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	activities to reduce the demand for materials and look for continual improvements	
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	The purchasing policy is still 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. CCIP: Please create a formal sustainable purchasing policy.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Put in place a recycling separation system, according to local rules and availability; Clear, simple and visible bin signage; Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	The recycling stations are since a few years back in better shape and very proper, partly because of a new entrepreneur. The separation and fetching are now good.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Authorised waste collector for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste, if required	As per R3.3.1 above.

COMMUNITY			
C1 Health & Wellbeing			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C1.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental	Plans in place to respond to incidents and emergencies	Except for the annual sustainability plan the club since 2020 has a renewed long-term sustainability plan stretching to 2026. The club has in it goals for

	health from golf and facility activities		the sustainability work clearly announced that this work would benefit the club when it comes to good-will, joyful golf playing, quality and the economy.
C1.2 Be open and inclusive	C1.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Membership policies free from discrimination across age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnic background	The club has overall serious plans to get more non-golfers to the courses, especially at Djupadal.
C1.3 Employ fairly, safely and provide career opportunities	C1.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Adopt an equal opportunity recruitment and hiring policy; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for hiring and employment; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for worker safety	Since 2016 the course staff have received continuous education concerning the new management plans for the nature at Djupadal and Lilla Vik.
<u>C2 Outreach & Inclusion</u>			
C2.1 Diversify access and provide multifunctionality	C2.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility	No specific international requirement, however, identify multifunctional activities and look for continual improvements	Enhancement of the multifunctionality is still in the club's plans. The club still has thoughts of installing an outdoor gym to enhance the multifunctionality. CIP: Please try to follow through on the plans of a nature gym and walking trail.
C2.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C2.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to support volunteering and charity and look for continual improvements	The birdhouses made by students from the local school is still alive and kicking.
C2.3 Establish active community partnerships	C2.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	No specific international requirement, however, identify partnerships and community activities and look for continual improvements	The club has positive engagement with the local community, amongst other partners, and the local school mentioned above.

C3 Communications & Advocacy			
C3.1 Engage staff and golfers	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Involve staff and committees in sustainability efforts; Involve golfers in sustainability efforts; Post sustainability information in the clubhouse and / or on the golf course	The club is since a few years back involved in project together with the Swedish Golf Federation and Swedish WWF with the name "Make golf wilder". The project's aim is to enhance the "wild" nature on golf courses. At 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. These proposals are for the moment not a part of the club's sustainability work due to that the new management was not aware of them. The club will take a look at them again. The club has some loose cooperation with the local group of Naturskyddsföreningen (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation). Since the club started its serious sustainability work, members, board and staff have developed a thorough culture of embracing new environmental sustainable ideas. This is quite impressive and shows the enthusiasm and energy for this topic throughout the club's organisation. CIP: Please consider introducing more eco-branding.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Share at least 3 Highlights on sustainable.golf	Signs on both courses are still up talking about and showing the nature and specific species on the course. The club has since many years back continuously held field trips and nature-walks whose main focus is bird watching. Around half of the attendants are non-golfers. This is done in cooperation with BirdLife Sweden. 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.
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 sustainability-working group no longer has the status of a proper committee. The reason for this is that the club found it more efficient for the sustainability work to integrate this with the rest of the club's daily work. The board is still totally dedicated to the sustainability work at the club.

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

