



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Visby Golfklubb

Prepared by independent verifier Mårten Nilsson

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2030

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“With curiosity and a mindset of continuous learning, greenkeeper Petter Lindblad with staff continues to put Visby GK in the front seat of sustainable golf. Here, underutilised areas are developed into functioning habitats for threatened species; new technology is applied to improve sheep pasture on the course grounds; and mowing robots reduce the need for pesticides.”

Mårten Nilsson
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Visby 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.

Visby 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, Visby Golfklubb should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Visby 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 course is located on a small peninsula on the west coast of Gotland. The soil is mainly sandy with areas of gravel and more coarse soil type. The habitat between the course areas is mainly dominated by older pine forest. Surveys are done on habitats to the north and to the south of the course and along the coast to the west. The club will perform a landscape and biodiversity survey for the remainder of the area going forward. There is also an older survey regarding the flora in the area. CCIP: Please conduct a landscape and biodiversity survey, as there are probably several protected/rare species to discover. As this was mentioned at the previous verification, this is something to prioritise in the near term.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Identify rare, protected or endangered species found on the golf course; Understand legal responsibilities for landscape protection and special area designations, if applicable	Satisfactory. On the course area, there are Natura 2000 habitats that follow certain legal requirements that the club in general is aware of. The club has an ongoing agreement with regional environmental authorities, i.e. Länsstyrelsen Gotland.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	Satisfactory. The club is aware of the cultural heritage site that is located on their premises. CIP: A long-term goal, if possible to achieve, is to put the wooden ship "Koggen" that has been excavated and then reburied on display in the clubhouse or vicinity. This is at the moment not possible to do, but there is full awareness of cultural heritage sites on the course area.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the golf course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the	Monitor patterns of play to identify underutilised areas of turfgrass	Satisfactory.

	required area of managed turfgrass		Underused areas are identified and if there is no need to mow the area, it can be left out as long as playing field is not interfered.
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	Highlight: In collaboration with Länsstyrelsen Gotland some new areas have been identified where seeds of local wildflowers have been planted aiming to improve conditions for pollinators and ground nesting bees and other Hymenoptera species. Other initiatives are the sand beds that are put in place in underutilised areas. It is one of the best examples I have seen on a golf facility!
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	See N1.3
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	Satisfactory.
	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	Aeration of greens is done once a month, hollow core 2 times a year, top dressing of greens every 2 weeks. Aeration and topdressing of fairways and tees once a year.
	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	Applicators are tested and staff is trained and qualified to spread fertiliser. A program is developed by their agronomist keeping fertilising to a minimum to avoid unnecessary growth.

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	Satisfactory. A previous goal was to reach 0 use of pesticides on greens. This has since proven to not be possible as some use is required to keep away fungi on greens. A new routine to minimise the need for pesticides include that mowing robots move over the green area all year round. The mechanical disturbance caused by the robots reduces the need for pesticides as the pest do not have undisturbed conditions to develop. This is not possible to do every winter as snow cover varies from year to year (for instance the winter 2025/2026 was severe with snow cover for 6-8 weeks, which is unusual).
	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
	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; Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	Satisfactory.
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	Satisfactory. Storage is with required edge zones for spill material.
		N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Satisfactory.
		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	Satisfactory. Concrete area is used for washing of machines.
	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; 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 ;	Satisfactory.

		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	Satisfactory.
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	Satisfactory.

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	Satisfactory. Trees that are planted on the course area always comes from the trees on the course. They are trees adapted to the conditions in the area.
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;	Satisfactory.

		Evaluate new irrigation technologies e.g., central control, precision sprinklers etc.; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Adjust sprinklers to playing surfaces only	The club is continuously making improvements to reduce water consumption. For example, double-row irrigation instead of single-row on 18 of the 27 holes, which reduces consumption by 30%. The remaining 9 holes will also be equipped with double-row irrigation in the coming years. All water is taken from their own ponds. Closed cycle. All drainage flows to the ponds.
	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	Satisfactory. Signs are in place in locker rooms encouraging reduced water consumption. This is an issue all over Gotland.
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	Satisfactory. The club has a permit from regional authorities to source water from nearby Paån, a river reaching the ocean just south of the golf course area. The permit is between november-march. Irrigation is from their own dams.
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	Satisfactory. Mowing robots are installed all over the course area, reducing energy consumption.
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.)	Satisfactory. Earth heating is installed, reducing overall energy consumption. CIP: As part of the environmental plan, please install electricity meters in all buildings to better monitor electricity use and eventually be able to reduce consumption.
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 has an overall ambition to reduce electricity use which involves several initiatives. Solar panels are considered going forward. The electricity from provider Gotland Energi is 100% fossile free.

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	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to reduce the demand for materials and look for continual improvements	Satisfactory. There are recycling bins around the clubhouse. There is no particular goals set in terms of increasing recycled waste or similar. Recycling is everyday practice.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	The restaurant favour locally produced food as much as it can. The restaurant is part in a local Gotland organisation called "Sustainable place" that favours local products. CIP: Please improve the use of responsible / local products over time.
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.	Satisfactory. According to law and general practice.
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	Satisfactory. According to law and general practice.

COMMUNITY			
<u>C1 Health & Wellbeing</u>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes

C1.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C1.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities	Plans in place to respond to incidents and emergencies	Satisfactory. Regular rehearsing of how to behave if emergencies happen.
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	Visby GC is a very inclusive golf club. Anyone can visit the club and not just golf players. The club is free from discrimination at all points.
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	Satisfactory. Gender neutrality policy is in place. Staff are under kollektivavtal, regulating work environment and more.
<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	CIP: As per N1.1.3 above. The club want to develop a display of the viking ship "Koggen" in the premises, hence attracting non golfers. CIP: Bird watchers and recreational fishermen regularly visit the area. Please improve signs and paths to make these groups more welcome.
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	CIP: Please improve efforts to support volunteering and charity.
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 invited schools to come and try out golf on a regular basis. The share of juniors is the highest in Sweden and golf is increasingly popular among young people.
<u>C3 Communications & Advocacy</u>			

	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	CIP: Please continue to ensure that sustainability is returning and recurring subject on the annual meeting. Encourage committees to develop ideas and practices to improve sustainability. Social media activities are ongoing. CIP: Please ensure that sustainability features prominently in any communications being released.
	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	1. Over a period of time, experiments with virtual fencing technology have been performed on the golf course with sheep wearing a GPS-necklace. The experiment is a collaboration with Visby GK and university of agriculture, SLU. Hence sheep are placed in particular areas without having to build real fences. This experiment has worked really well and will be permanent on the course premises from 2026. 2. The ongoing collaboration with local authorities Länsstyrelsen Gotland to improve habitats for ground nesting bees and other species of Hymenoptera is a very good example of how to make use of underutilised areas and improve habitats for threatened species. 3. Programable mowing robots is a success as the need for pesticides is reduced and work environment has improved for staff working with course maintenance.
	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	This we have discussed and Petter has promised that he will improve.

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