



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Hoebridge Golf Centre

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Tony Hanson

Certified by GEO Foundation: October 2020
Valid until: October 2025

“ The management at Hoebridge Golf Centre are continuing the process of improved environmental management and sustainability with significant investment in new maintenance facilities and waste-water treatment systems, staff training and engagement and reaching out to external wildlife organisations.

Resource efficiency projects will have substantially reduced consumption of energy and potable water on site, also reducing operation costs and community engagement continues, not least providing and maintaining public access to footpaths across the course.”

Tony Hanson

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Hoebridge Golf Centre 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.

Hoebridge Golf Centre 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 set for the future, Hoebridge Golf Centre should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Hoebridge Golf Centre 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	Reviewed course and hole mapping after course walk and habitat and course walk. Tree survey updated highlighting a management programme and several trees that will require removal due to decay and resulting

			safety issues. Continued engagement with the Wildlife Trusts and local groups
	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 statutory designations on site Course walk included discussions about the site and bordering land, wildlife connections and potential collaboration.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The course has been developed on what was previously farmland. The natural landscape includes a number of mature oaks (Quercus robur) and Common Beech (Fagus sylvatica) along with other hedgerow species including Hawthorne (Crataegus monagyna) Original farm buildings are located on land and estates bordering the site.
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	Playing areas have been and continue to be reviewed to reduce the area of managed amenity grassland in site. Round times and feedback from players are the key indicators in terms of determining whether reductions are adversely affecting player experience.
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 are continuing to use the Phase 1 Habitat Plan with amendments and additions as habitat and wildlife projects are expanded. One of the additions was a pond which formed a receptor for a fairway drainage project. The result is a dryer more playable fairway and a new wetland habitat.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Habitat creation projects have included bird boxes, owl boxes, standing and fallen deadwood.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	The turfgrass species cultivated on site have been found to provide the required balance of disease resilience, playing surface quality and importantly durability
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Soil health is monitored and maintained through a range of cultural practices including spiking slitting and topdressing. Organic fertilisers are used as required to maintain turf health

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil test results were discussed during the initial review and during the course walk which highlighted grassing plans, drainage projects and woodland projects to improve light and air flow to reduce the need for chemical intervention.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Machinery is maintained in-house and a system of equipment reporting post use provides early indications of maintenance requirements.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	The Integrated Turf Management plan provides the framework to maintain turfgrass. Maps of the course indicate areas of vulnerability to pests and diseases. Visual inspections are undertaken daily by all staff during maintenance operations to pick up early indications of disease or pest pressures allowing intervention – either curative or preventative.
	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	Chemical stock levels and application records are maintained. Spray licences are currently held by 4 members of staff and spray equipment is serviced and calibrated regularly. PPE and wash facilities are available in case of incident.
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.	Emergency spill kits are strategically placed on site with hazardous materials stored in bunded cabinets and proprietary fuel tanks and dispensing equipment. The maintenance facilities were upgraded recently with the design of the closed loop water recycling pad provided by ESD. Spray buffer zones are maintained around water courses and around site boundaries. Course mapping and vulnerabilities are also used to identify spray buffer zones.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste	The club uses Greensman to collect waste. Used waste and hazardous materials are stored on bunds prior to collection.

	clubhouse operations	and wastewater discharge	Waste discharge discussed but licence not reviewed on this occasion
	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	See above
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	Hazardous material logs maintained as highlighted above Bunds and closed loop pads are used on site. Spill kits and anti-pollution infrastructure in place and updated in the last 3 years to latest best advice. ESD Wash pad installed and in use. Diesel tank is located in the maintenance shed and is internally bunded.
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)	ESD closed loop washdown pad outlined above.

RESOURCES			
R1 Water			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Irrigation use is based on need and minimised falling within the volume of the onsite reservoir

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	Visual inspection used to prevent over irrigation. Irrigation systems is serviced and maintained regularly to prevent leaks Spray heads are checked to ensure accuracy of application. Weather report and rainfall totals are used to help optimise irrigation applications.
	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	Water bills and use are regularly reviewed. Staff meetings highlight resource efficiency as part of the standard management practice. Usage is tracked by sector and compared with historic data.
	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
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	Turfgrass areas are reviewed periodically to ensure managed amenity grass is minimised reducing resource consumption and turfgrass inputs.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Energy bills are regularly reviewed and compared with previous consumption levels. LED lighting has been installed across the site with the exception of one or two back office areas. Heating and cooling are controlled to maximise efficiency CIP Complete refit of the back-office areas with LED upgrades. The driving range flood lights have been replaced with LED systems, the side illumination should also be reviewed and upgraded to LED's
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	Renewable energy options are being reviewed. CIP

		providers	Look at the driving range roof for PV panel installation potential
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Waste is reviewed regularly to identify for potential reductions to landfill.
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	Management policy is to review purchases withing the policy of the overarching management group. Local suppliers and products are sourced where possible Honey is one product produced and used on site.
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	Waste separation is undertaken on site to improve the quality and value of recycling and to reduce waste to landfill.
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	Registered waste contractors are used across all areas of operation.

COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access	C1.1.1 Social and recreational		The site provides an open an inclusive use and membership

and provide multi-functionality	activities at the facility		policy. Local community groups and individuals use the facilities for both formal and informal gatherings.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Staff are encouraged to get involved with volunteering and fund raising for local good causes and charities
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'	Management meetings always include elements of sustainability and environmental management items for discussion.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Use and membership at the course are open and inclusive.
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	Staff have an initial induction training session to outline management requirements and policies. Staff are encouraged to undertake addition training, provided internally and externally
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	Much of the awareness content is now provided by electronic means including the website and newsletters. Course management information and sustainability form regular elements with the content.
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	The management work with external bodies including local charities and wildlife organisations to provide access and to gain knowledge and advice to benefit the site and wider community.

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