



GEO Certified® Report The Wisley

Prepared by independent verifier, Tony Hanson (CIWFM, PIEMA, AMICE)

Certified by GEO Foundation: May 2022
Valid until: May 2027

“Having visited The Wisley on a number of occasions I am pleased to see their continuing commitment to sustainability. Course management, facilities management, and catering departments all have sustainability at their core with an ongoing desire to improve efficiency, take on new ideas and technology, and engage with staff and members to explain the reasons for their actions.

Enhanced heating management controls, LED lighting, water management and ongoing investigations to seek more environmentally secure sources of water and energy were all discussed on-site. The knowledge of the staff is exceptional and their enjoyment in finding solutions is clear.”

Tony Hanson

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **The Wisley** 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.

The Wisley 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, **The Wisley** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **The Wisley** 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.isealalliance.org



Verifier's Report

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

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

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

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Confirmed aerial images/mapping of the site. Confirmed and discussed surveys and management plans – ecology and specific woodland management plans. Reviewed plan implementations during course walk

	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	Although there are no statutory designations on site, the location and sensitivities of the surrounding area require the club work with a range of stakeholders relating to the natural environment.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	None on-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	Play area mapping is undertaken through a combination of observation and wear patterns
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 working with ecologists and arboricultural specialists to update plans and site management. Habitats on-site include static and flowing water, woodland, rough unimproved grassland with extensive areas of gorse, and has an emphasis on encouraging native species.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		As part of the woodland management thinning has been required to improve diversity. This has provided an opportunity to create log and brash piles to create additional habitat.
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 turf management programme is designed to maintain a combination of <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> and <i>Poa annua</i> – with around 80% <i>Agrostis</i> on greens and falling to a more even mix on tees. Fairways transition to <i>Festuca rubra</i> and <i>Poa annua</i> and predominantly <i>Lolium perenne</i> in areas of maintained rough. This combination across the course provides the desired playability, and resilience to drought and disease.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Course management includes a range of measures to improve soil condition and structure including slitting, hollow-tining and verti-cutting to reduce compaction and maintain porosity.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil testing is undertaken regularly to determine the need for inputs or other intervention.

	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Equipment maintenance is undertaken internally allowing both proactive and reactive action to maintain equipment efficiency. Manual measures undertaken include moisture removal and hand-weeding.
	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	Pests and diseases are monitored, and scouting occurs as part of work on the course. Pests and diseases have been identified and mapped over many years and under a range of climatic conditions, providing greater accuracy in prediction and preventative measure.
		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	Stock record maintenance discussed. Discussed and confirmed spray applicator licences, equipment management, and health and safety/PPE. Buffer zones are maintained around water courses. Mixes are precise.
	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.	Discussed and confirmed emergency responses. Course mapping observed and reviewed. Buffer zones observed and discussed during the course walk. CIP Formalise the Pollution Incident Response Plan in line with the EA's PPG-21
		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	Fuel and chemical storage sites and bunding observed. Waste contractors licence observed, along with transfer documentation. Discussed relationship with waste contractor and the help and advice being offered to help minimise waste to landfill. Discharge licences discussed.
		N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface;	Observed contained wash-down area. Mixing of course inputs undertaken on contained pad.

	maintenance facility operations	Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	
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	Observed fuel storage area, dispensing equipment with auto shut off, and secondary containment. Petrol is stored in a proprietary fuel storage cabinet. Discussed first aid equipment and locations. Spill kits are in place. Tanks are inspected annually by external consultant.
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)	Confirmed discharge licence. Observed wash bay and discharge. Discussed water plans including possible additional tank storage – potential treated effluent reuse.

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	The club uses a combination of experience, infrastructure and technology to ensure irrigation efficiency.
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;	Soil moisture monitoring sensors offer detailed real time soil moisture levels. Sensors provide multiple readings on greens allowing partial irrigation runs to target small areas. Irrigation infrastructure and controls allow the control of the system to maximise the benefits of the detailed data.

		Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	Weather and evapotranspiration rates are taken in to consideration when scheduling irrigation.
	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 use is recorded and monitored for both irrigation and potable consumption. Records are kept by use. Staff are encouraged to save water and energy.
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	Abstraction licence reviewed.
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 areas of close management have been reduced providing reductions in staff hours, fuel and wear and tear. There appears to have been a corresponding increase in prey species leading to increasing sightings of apex predators like kestrels (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>).
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 reviewed regularly, and meter readings reviewed. The course maintenance fleet has been reviewed, with a trial of electric vehicles – evaluation is ongoing.
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	A review of renewable energy opportunities is underway, primarily focussed on alternatives for clubhouse heating. The driving range offers potential for solar PV panels which is being considered. CIP Review the opportunities for renewable energy on the driving range and clubhouse roof areas. Investigate the potential for solar thermal panels on the clubhouse roof to pre heat water entering the existing boilers and reducing the consumption gas. Review green energy tariffs for both gas and electricity.
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	Discussions are ongoing with the waste contractor to find opportunities to reduce waste coming to site, to seek recycling maximising the value of waste.
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	Confirmed clubhouse use of Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance products. Locally sourced and seasonal produce features on menus.
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	Reviewed waste records. Viewed waste separation bins on site.
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 waste contractors licence that deal with clubhouse and maintenance areas waste.

COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		There are footpaths on and around the site.

C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Staff volunteering for local charities is encouraged. Charity golf days help raise funds for good causes.
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'	Discussed meetings and the new 10-year sustainability strategy for the club. The senior management and heads of department provide input to the meetings and strategy created.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		There is awareness and highlighting of the benefits provided to mental and physical health.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The club has an open and inclusive policy.
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	Employees undertake an induction on joining, providing information of sustainability policies.
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	Information on sustainability is provided via the website, e newsletters and electronic notice boards.
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 club has close relationships with a range of stakeholders, but it does not engage in extensive public relations campaigns

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