



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Viksjo Golfklubb

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Mårten Nilsson

Certified by GEO Foundation: November 2020
Valid until: November 2023

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“A nicely managed club combining environmental care with great course condition. The club’s location, amid built up areas, provide a recreational area also for people not playing golf, thus a positive asset for the surrounding community. Looking forward it will be interesting to see how the biodiversity projects are coming along, and if the energy efficiency measures will reduce overall consumption.”

Mårten Nilsson

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Viksjö 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.

Viksjö 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 set for the future, Viksjö Golfklubb should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Viksjö Golfklubb can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the Independent Verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



Verification and Certification

Verification

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

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

Certification

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

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

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

Credibility

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



Verifier's Report

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

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

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

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	There are detailed surveys done previously.

	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 protected species at the site. There is a number of rare species found on the course area and in the immediate vicinity of the golf club including more than 200 species of birds.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The club has a project to restore an old road, crossing the course "Häradsvägen". This project includes clearing of some spruce trees to increase accessibility to the road. On the course there is a well-preserved rune stone "Skylstahällen"
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	Meadow area southeast of club house. Areas that are not cut after hole 11 green and before hole 12 tee. Seeds of naturally occurring meadow flowers will be spread to increase availability of flowers for pollinators.
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	In general, naturally occurring species will be planted when rebuilding areas going forward. These species could be for instance Prunus spinosa, Alnus glutinosa, Sorbus aucuparia. A large flowerbed for pollinating insects like bees and butterflies is established in front of the new building for dressing rooms. A similar will be added by the entrance sign to the golf club during 2021. A project for 2021 is also to build insect hotels, by drilling holes in wood left at various places on the club area. A beekeeper is contacted and will place several beehives to the southeast of the club house, where a meadowlike area is planned. This will happen 2021. The bird fauna is looked after by maintaining birdhouses of various sizes all over the course area. During winter months birds are fed at the "bird restaurant".
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Project to remove common carp fish (Cyprino carpio) from the dams, as they have destroyed breeding possibilities for Podiceps auratus, and eradicated much of frogs and salamanders. The club will empty the dam at hole 17/18 during the winter 2020/2021. Potentially they will introduce grass carp (Ctenopharyngodon Idella) and some male pike to see if number of the common carp is reduced. During this year they tried removing carp by fishing with net, but results are not promising.
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	Greens: Agrostis stolonifera and Poa annua (70/30 %) Tees: Poa annua/Poa pratensis/Festuca rubra/Lolium perenne (40/20/20/20 %) Fairways/Semi rough: Poa annua/Poa pratensis/Festuca rubra/Lolium perenne (40/30/15/15 %) Only tees and greens are support seeded. Surfaces outside of semi rough are natural.
		N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		
		N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Fertilizer pellets are applied approximately 1/month. Liquid fertilizer is then applied on a case by case basis.
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	This is done on a regular basis.
	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	Pesticides are used minimally and only on greens. The greenkeeper rotates use over years.
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	One machine is used only for application of this.	
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.	Pesticides are only used on greens There are semi rough areas next to dams and ditches. Some fairways run next to dams.
		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	Pesticides are stored in a sealed area. During summer some fertilizer is stored under a roof, during winter it is stored in a locked area.
		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	Oil separators are installed.
	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	Absorbents are kept in case of leakage. The tank is installed according to public regulations. It is monitored by the authorities.
	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)	Oil separator for the washing area.

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	Surface water from the course and surrounding areas are collected in dams and used for irrigation. Public water supply is not used for irrigation if there is water in the dams (there is a tolerance water level of -60 cm). If no water is available through dams, only the greens will be irrigated using public water. During the dry year 2018 the use of public water rose to 13 cubic metres. A long-term plan to increase the number of dams on the course area is in place. This is ongoing cooperation with the local authorities and Stockholm City. There is also a project to rebuild the ditch to be more meandering, thus preserving more water in the course area.
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	The irrigation system is computerized with soil moisture sensors.
	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	New building with dressing room and showers have water saving taps and WCs.
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	Surface water is used for irrigation as far as possible. When drought only greens are irrigated.

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	Hybrid mowing machines are used. They have leased two new ones for the season 2020. A new machine for creating wood chips will be purchased for season 2021. Wood chips will be used on some of the roads on the course. Previously shrubs and wood have been burned.
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	A first review of energy consumption is planned for 2020/2021 together with energy company EON. The plan is also to install separate electricity meters in the clubhouse, the workshop and the new building with dressing rooms. Air Vent Heaters are installed 2018 and 2019. Radiators will be changed from direct electricity to more energy efficient oil filled radiators. This is ongoing the coming 3 years. The plan is also to change badly insulated windows in the club house over the coming 5 years.
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	Switch to green energy is done in 2020.
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 recycled according to established routines.
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	Locally produced food is served in the restaurant. The plan is to increase organic, sustainable and near grown food continuously. Meat and vegetables are bought from local producers.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to	Recycled materials are:

	opportunity	landfill, or is reused / recycled	Glass Paper Cardboard Metal Aluminium Plastics Food waste is separated, grass and clipping are spread in rough areas. The newly purchased wood chip-machine will create wood chips used for roads. CIP – look for alternative use or temporary storage locations for grass clippings. Spreading will add too much fertility to local spots and alter the biology, encouraging unwanted species.
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	SUEZ is the name of the contractor.

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		All children aged 6-12 are welcome to try on specific try-out days. The club has one of the largest youth activities in Sweden with large camps during school holidays. Para golf for youth started 2018. Currently 5 persons participate in collaboration with SGF.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support		

charity	of charities and 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'	The environmental group has meetings approximately 6 times /year and does participate in other group and committee meetings when there are common questions.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Trolleys are available for walking guests. Employees can use training equipment on the facility for free and play golf on course at no cost.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	All children in the local kommun aged 6-12 are welcome to try on specific try-out days. Representatives from various organisations are invited to visit the club.
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	All relevant rules and laws are followed both for long-term and short-term employees. Continuous professional development by offering education to various categories of employees.
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	60 newsletters are issued to members annually. Communication is also done through the club's web site, through Facebook and Instagram.
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	There is a long term and good relationship established with the environmental office at Järfälla kommun. The local ornithologist organization regularly surveys birds in the area. Local businesses are sponsors in club events. The Swedish Golf Federation has a project with paragolf at the club.

			During winter, the club's grounds are frequented by the local cross-country skiing club. Tracks are made on the course with a snow scooter that is kept in the club's machine facility. The club has mounted welcoming signs at several places around the course where small roads cross the course area. These roads are used for people that cross the area walking their dog, cycling, or running.
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Golf and Sustainability

Among all sports, golf has a particularly close relationship with the environment and communities, golf facilities can bring many benefits to people and nature - from the protection of greenspace and conservation of biodiversity; healthy recreation for all ages; local supply chains; and jobs, tourism and other forms of economic value.

Adopting a more sustainable approach is also good for golf. It's about presenting a high-quality golf course and providing a memorable experience in natural surroundings. It's about being as efficient as possible. And it's about supporting the community in a range of ways that bring increased recognition, respect and contact.

At a broader level, it's important that golf credibly demonstrates its commitment, and its social and environmental value - strengthening the sport's image and reputation for the long term.

Golf facilities that participate in OnCourse®, an international sustainability initiative assured by the non-profit GEO Foundation, are taking a comprehensive approach and striving to be leaders in the community.

Find out more at www.sustainable.golf