

# GEO Certified® Independent Verification Report



**Golf Facility: The Alwoodley Golf Club**  
**Prepared by: Tony Hanson**  
**Date: March 2019**

## Executive Summary

This report follows a meeting at The Alwoodley Golf Club on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019 with Matthew Brighton (Acting Course Manager), James Hutchinson (Sustainability Manager BIGGA) and Christine Wood (Assistant Secretary) as part of the club's initial GEO Certification application.

The Alwoodley Golf Club is located to the North of Leeds on a site known as Wigton Moor, bordered by Wigton Lane, and to the East of the A61 Harrogate Road with an access road dividing the course in to two sections. The site's located on a "Midgely Grit" resulting from a geological landscape dominated by river systems and associated fluvial deposits from around 300 million years ago. The result is a sandstone bedrock with varying gradations of particles from fine grains to coarser grits, with variations across the site.

The club dates back to the early 1900's when it was designed and developed to create a member's club taking advantage of the natural character and topography of the site.

The 18-hole course is predominantly heathland in nature, with areas of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and smaller areas of self-set deciduous woodland. The site also contains a larger area of naturalised woodland known as Wigton Moor Whin, left largely unmanaged and measuring over 30 acres in area.

There is a member's committee system and a management structure to advise, liaise and implement the strategic aims of the membership. The quality of the facilities has understandably resulted in the club hosting numerous local and national amateur and professional events.

## Nature

It became immediately apparent that the club has a very clear understanding and appreciation of the habitat and ecology of their site.

The land is not subject to any statutory designation however, it is highlighted as being a nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ), community forest area and a habitat for grassland assemblage farmland birds including curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and lapwing (*Vanellina*).

The habitat management programme implemented by the club has been established with a broad consultation process with BIGGA, the Forestry Commission and The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The management plan has been designed to help

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encourage heathland species by reducing competition from pioneer woodland species like silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and thinning woodland stands to increase light and airflow. The woodland thinning work has been monitored and reviewed by the Forestry Commission to determine the benefits to the habitat, and their assessment is very positive. In addition to the habitat enhancement, the woodland thinning has also led to improved airflow to greens, improving sward health and directly resulting in reduced pesticide inputs.

The woodland management programme also provides standing deadwood and log and brush piles providing additional habitats for a range of insects and perches for raptors.

This multifaceted approach appears typical at the club, with projects providing multiple benefits.

The club continually reviews the size and shape of maintained turf grass to enhance the aesthetic nature of the course and manage the resources required to maintain it. The optimal set up takes in to account the ability of the membership and possible variations for specific amateur or professional events regularly hosted by the club.

The club cultivates and encourages a combination of red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) on the greens, with the addition of annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*) on the tees and fairways. This combination provides the club with a sward providing the balance of surface quality and required resource inputs.

The club has a programme of cultural practices including scarifying, coring, tining and topdressing to reduce the physical factors that increase the risk of pest and disease. In addition, the club routinely conducts visual inspections and refer to historic reference maps highlighting areas prone to specific problems.

The need and use of both pesticides and fertilisers is closely assessed based on prevailing conditions, forecast, and the potential risks. Applications are targeted and specific and purposed as a preventative or curative based on decades of on-site course management and documentation.

The club is keenly aware of the potential impacts of the operation affecting the wider environment. To help reduce these risks the club operates spray buffer zones and reviews weather conditions to minimise spray drift.

Storage, mixing and application of chemicals and fertilisers is closely monitored and undertaken by qualified members of the course management team, and risk management includes bunding and the use of an isolated drainage pad. Washdown water is retained and treated by a proprietary oil / water separator.

The club utilises licensed waste contractors to remove and dispose of hazardous waste, from both the clubhouse and maintenance operations, which is stored on bunded areas until collection. Grass clippings are stored

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discretely on course and composted and reused on the course or other locations around the site.



The club has also developed an incident response plan detailing the information required in the event of a spill or more significant event.

### Resources

The clubhouse and maintenance buildings are connected to mains potable water supply with mains sewage connected at the clubhouse and septic tanks at the maintenance building and half way hut.

The irrigation supply is from a borehole located on site initially documented in 1962 and recently re-bored. The initial borehole record also provides a record of strata types, depths and widths. The irrigation system is maintained and checked for leaks and efficiency of application and distribution as part of the regular maintenance schedule.

The clubhouse has undertaken some upgrades to the facilities in the men's changing rooms, including upgraded taps and showers to help reduce water consumption. Similar upgrades are planned for the women's when capital expenditure budget allows.

The club also engages with stakeholders to encourage a responsible approach to water use across all areas of the operation.

The club uses mains gas for heating and grid electricity for lighting and cooling across the site, and the vehicles fleet used on course use a range of liquid and electric energy.

The club has already started to implement a programme to upgrade the light bulbs and tubes across the facility, and this will continue with targeted advice being provided by the club's electrical contractor.

The heating boiler is modern and the scope for additional energy reductions will be limited, however the club is about to investigate the possible use of additional boiler controls to see if increased efficiency is possible.

The clubhouse is full of character, and although impressive and expansive, it provides challenges in terms to the heating required to maintain comfort. During the cooler months the club zones the building, encouraging members to reduce the areas they use to prevent heating low occupancy areas all through the winter. The building has also been reconfigured on the ground floor to combine rooms to make a larger bar / social area to help focus use within the building.

The club has not undertaken any formal energy audits, but they continue to work with their heating and electrical contractors to improve efficiency where possible.

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Where possible the Club work with suppliers to reduce delivery mileage and packing through consolidated deliveries and reducing packaging.



Supplier location forms part of the purchasing decision with service providers and catering suppliers forming the bulk of local suppliers. Operations suppliers covering other supply areas or national suppliers providing essential services and equipment may be more distant.

The club has not undertaken any formal waste audits, however they do implement the waste hierarchy, working with stakeholders to improve reuse and recycling rates, and consequently reducing waste to landfill.

Hazardous materials are securely stored on-site until removed by a licenced waste contractor for safe disposal, with records and documents maintained.

### Community

The club works closely with staff and other stakeholders to encourage a culture of engagement and collaboration to improve operations. This includes opportunities for training and career progression as well as suggestions to improve operational process.

Talks and electronic information helps to keep stakeholders advised of operation, maintenance and future plans.

The club also provide coaching, tournaments and various events to engage and raise funds for local charities and good causes.

### Conclusion

I, Tony Hanson, independent accredited verifier, recommend The Alwoodley Golf Club to be awarded the GEO Certified® ecolabel because they have clearly demonstrated a commitment to reduce their environmental impacts and enhance the natural environment.

The work undertaken with the Forestry Commission and Wildlife Trusts highlight the ability for golf facilities to protect and conserve the natural environment. The heathland restoration through woodland thinning providing the return of habitat, improved ecological diversity and reduced inputs on adjacent greens through improved airflow and light.

The age and size of the clubhouse presents issues that will be appreciated by many golf clubs of similar age. Zoning a large building allows a significant reduction on heating loads, and lighting solutions offered by LED replacement bulbs offer energy reductions without loss of ambiance or character.

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