



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Banchory Golf Club

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Stuart Rennie

Certified by GEO Foundation, July 2019
Valid until, July 2022

“Banchory Golf Club has transformed the facility over the past number of years to improve their environmental credentials. Wildflower meadow and maintained rough on the course is impressive, along with creating awareness of the local habitat and biodiversity through the implementation of bat boxes, bee hives and insect housing. All of the above is creating awareness and education within the community, staff and membership.”

Stuart Rennie

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Banchory Golf Club 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 developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Banchory Golf Club 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, Banchory Golf Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Banchory Golf Club can therefore claim a position as a credible 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 and club house. This dedication and leadership 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 Report

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

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitats & Biodiversity Turfgrass management Pollution prevention
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Energy Materials
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	(Course management) Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity	Management has a very sound understanding of the overall site, its habitats and vegetation types. The club are looking to have a professional survey carried out and have recently had STRI on site to provide an agronomical survey.

		surveys	
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	(Course management) Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	There are tree preservations along the riverbank adjacent to the course and in private gardens all out with the course boundary. The owner of the river section does permit the club to clear scrub allowing potential areas of heath to be re-established and where views are an asset to the course. The course manager approaches the local authority if he is seeking to remove trees out with his felling licence.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	(Course management) Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The Dooocot (pigeon coup) is a protected building on-site which pre dates the course and is maintained by the club. This is a grade C listed building.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	(Course / club management) Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Out of play areas on the course have been naturalised with carried grasslands and wildflower meadows. The course manager has also identified areas where he is managing wildflower planting and interestingly doing trials with different grasses and wildflowers beside the maintenance facility. Richard is also attempting to regenerate a heather area as a trial. There is a lot of cut grassland short rough on the course which is more than likely driven by committee and members but the course manager is pushing in the right direction and creating awareness of alternatives.
N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	(Course management) Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	A low-lying area has been identified on the course where the course manager would like to create a wetland. Insect houses, bee hives, bird boxes and bat boxes have all been introduced. There is no formal habitat management plan but the club are keen to carry out an ecological survey to map their existing situation to help develop a more resolved plan.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		The club have a species list where the members are actively involved with recording what they see on the course. Red squirrels have returned to the area and frequently seen. Priority is being given to bats where the bats feed on insects that can have impacts on the maintenance of the course.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	(Course management) Select appropriate grass species for climate	Works with what they have got which is evident with regards to the over seeding that is carried out on greens and tees. Greens are over seeded with bent and rye and fairways and tees are over seeded with rye. Greens are 40% poa which the course manager works with rather than fights.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Soil test are carried out at the start of the season and again at the end more as a precautionary measure and guidance as fertiliser is kept to a bare minimum.
	N2.1.3 Careful and	(Course management)	As above, fertiliser is kept to a bare minimum, if at all.

	responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Soil tests and nutrient analysis	
N2.2 Prioritise cultural management	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	(Course management) Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Blades are sharpened frequently but cost limits this to 10 times a year for greens, 2 x for tees and 2 x for fairways.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	(Course management) 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	Using apps and historical data and record where necessary. Records have not been seen therefore may be beneficial to upload at a later date.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	(Course management) 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	All greens staff are licenced.
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	(Course management) 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.	All greens staff are trained in the event of a spillage. Filling of sprayers is carried out in a self-contained area next to spill pods.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	(Club management) Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and waste water discharge	Spaying is kept away from the storm ditch that runs through part of the course.

	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	(Course management) 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	If ditches are being cleaned or any works happening in close proximity to drains the local authority is notified prior to commencing works.
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	(Course management) 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	All consumables are kept under lock and key in a dry concrete floor room with spillage containers.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate waste water usage and discharge licences	(Course management) Waste water discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	The maintenance facility has wash bays with collection trays. The cleaning of machinery is being reduced.

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	(Course management) Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	The course manager uses the natural weather as best possible and will only irrigate if absolutely necessary if grass is wilting.
R1.2 Maximise water	R1.2.1 Practical measures to	(Course management) Conduct	When fertilising the course manager will wait for natural rainfall to work

efficiency	use water more efficiently on the golf course	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	this in rather than use irrigation. The irrigation system is 12 years old and not that efficient and are speaking to an irrigation supplier with regards to upgrading to improve efficiency. The course manager has just ordered moisture meters and work with STRI on performance testing.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	(Club management) Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	The club keep track of water usage applied to surfaces and keep records but should upload this information once records are starting to be pulled together to allow for future comparisons. The club have switched from constant water flow urinals to timed which has reduced water usage by half. The club invested in a new maintenance facility where led lighting was installed, low energy heating and insulation panels.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	(Course / club management) Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	800 litres of water is stored on site from a mains supply. The club are not aware of any limitations on the use of water but use very little anyway.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	(Course management) Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	There are a number of out of play areas that have been turned over to maintained rough grass land reducing the requirement for constant mowing, however members are controlling this is some capacity which makes life difficult for the course manager.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	(Club management) Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	A resource audit has been carried out for the club which has identified ways to reduce the use of energy, water and waste.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	(Club management) Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	Within the above report a number of the suggested items have been implemented to help reduce overall costs. The club have been reducing their budget each year over the past 4 years due to improved management and maintenance throughout the facility.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on	(Club management) Undertake a review of materials consumed	There is a water tap on course to promote re filling of water bottles. The club have a contract with a recycling company who remove all sorted

	necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives		waste which is monitored. The course manager has a container uplift washed and used consumables and insists that filters etc used by mechanics in their maintenance policies are taken away and properly disposed of by the chosen company, this has a major bearing on the choice of company.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	(Club management) 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	The club suggest that they do have a policy which should be uploaded to the on course system.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	(Club management) Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Yes as above regarding contract with recycling company which is monitored.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	(Club management) Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste;	Yes as above regarding fertiliser bags and container removal by 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		Local school kids help with planting of wildflower meadows and attend golf camps. Encourage members and non-members to use the facilities. Recently started working with 59 Club to help the club be more customer related.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support		Support local charities through golf days and competitions.

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	(Club management) Create a 'sustainability working group'	Mainly golf at the facility although recently seen wildlife and conservation walks happen.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Membership involvement with keeping track of species spotted on the course keeps the mind active whilst out playing on the course.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	(Club management) Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The course is mixed with the majority of members being men and ladies with a small proportion of juniors.
C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	(Club management) Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	The club are an equal opportunity employer who have a specific and ring-fenced budget for staff training and development.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	(Club management) Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	This is something that could be implemented on the web site to create more awareness of all the good that the club and course manager are already doing. The club are in the process of implementing this.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	(Club management) Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	There is an element of awareness within the club but they could do more to promote this.

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