



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society

Prepared by independent verifier, Stuart Rennie

Certified by GEO Foundation: November 2021
Valid until: November 2024

GEO Certified[®]

The logo features a green circular icon with a white golf ball inside, followed by the text 'GEO Foundation' in bold green. Below it, the tagline 'Sustainability in and through golf' is written in a smaller green font.

**GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

Over the years Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society has changed dramatically as a club and in its management of the landscape. Large areas of rough grassland that were once mowed are now home to wildflowers providing for pollinator species, natural colour and texture. New wetland habitats introduced as part of a renovation project have created abundant spaces for wildlife and sustainable drainage solutions. The club maintains a strong relationship with the local community and schools alike as well as Edinburgh Zoo where cut foliage is sent to help feed the animals.

Stuart Rennie

GEO accredited independent verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society** 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.

Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society 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, **Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society** 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	<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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Bruntsfield Links have a good understanding of the nature and landscape value of their site and have been modernising management practices to enhance and protect it. There are an abundance of species such as bats,

			badgers, wildfowl, birds and amphibians on site which are not currently surveyed. Some surveys were carried out in 2017. CIP Update biodiversity surveys
	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	Ancient woodlands are recorded on site which are managed and maintained accordingly in liaison with the Woodlands trust/Scottish Woodlands.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There is a pond known as the carriage pond at the 5 th and an old well at the 9 th . The pond was where Mary Queen of Scots is rumoured to have had her carriage wheels cleaned and the well was used to collect water for Irish navvies who were managing the potatoes that were once planted 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	Between 2017 and 2019 Bruntsfield undertook a major renovation project, this project included re-bunkering with some newly designed holes. Areas of cut material and new holes allowed for the introduction of low-lying wetland areas and ponds which have increased biodiversity and created habitat. This has also allowed for sustainable drainage patterns to be created.
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	During my University days in Edinburgh I played Bruntsfield in annual matches, the course at that time was practically cut wall to wall. It was fantastic to see that huge areas of managed rough grassland have been left to grow, creating habitat areas with evidence of wildflower pollinators. The club have also engaged with Bug Life Scotland to plant wildflower in these roughs. The overall areas had not been recorded on plan but this has been implemented since Neil Hogg became head course manager.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Bats and badgers are present on site and left to their own devices. The club also keep bees on site with a number of hives present.
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	Annual meadow grass and a good mixture of bents are present on site. There is an overseeding program twice yearly of bents and with dwarf rye on the aprons to help give good colour and recovery throughout the year.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		The club use STRI for agronomical reports and testing. Terra Lift to build their fertilizer program (organic/natural). They also use AIR2G2 and needle-tine the greens with a pro core machine. Needle tine monthly through winter. Core beginning and the end of the season.

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	They build the program around the current thatch levels and the canopy density
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	The club have an in-house mechanic which keeps the machines serviced and blades sharp at all times. Using an organic feed program also helps reduce harmful chemical usages. Weed control only happens at the beginning or end of the year when their own bees aren't too active.
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	As above
	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	75% of staff are qualified to use chemicals safely
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.	Standard practice and as below. Buffers are maintained when spraying by qualified personnel
	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	The club use the Waste-2-Water treatment plant which utilises microbial life to clean out material such as, grease, chemical residues, fuels and grass clippings of the machines.

	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	Spill kits are kept and every tank mix is made up on the Waste-2-Water isolated, impermeable surface.
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	All chemicals and oils are stored in metal containers plus spill kits are kept nearby.
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)	Monthly records of water usage from the compound plus all of the irrigation water is pumped from a disused quarry on the course and not from mains. Appropriate SEPA licenses are in place for extraction. Waste-2-Water in place.

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	Confirmed. Greens and tees only.

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	Only recently has water usage started to be recorded. The system was installed in 1996, upgraded in 2016 and in good working order. Waste-2-Water reduces consumption when washing fleet. CIP Track and record water use more closely by different areas of the facility, buildings, course etc – utility provider a good first source of help.
	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	Staff do not use on-site showers Water refill taps are provided on the golf course in two locations.
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	In place
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 course manager & staff use the Pogo to measure soil temperatures and moistures around the course.
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	Audit carried out by 'Here's the Plan', though this is still in its infancy. Double glazing, LED lighting often on motion sensors, and thermostatically controlled heating, automatic urinal flushers, small capacity cisterns for the toilet bowls.
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	Not yet, although a % of the grid electricity supply is from renewable sources. Solar powered weather station. CIP Explore opportunities to increase electricity produced on-site from renewable means
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Reuse of cores for building new areas on the course plus keep large amounts of leaves for mulch when planting new trees.

	necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives		
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	This is done by way of business generally to avoid long journeys for deliveries.
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	Kitchen oil is collected by Olleco and recycled. Local authority uplift engine oil. CIP – work with waste contractor to identify how much of total general waste is recycled, landfill, incinerated etc.
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	As standard

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		The club's engagement with Edinburgh Zoo is a very good example of this where they donate brush, and donated an old buggy, for their giraffes specifically. During the pandemic the club allowed residents nearby and others to walk the course which is bounded otherwise by walls, fencing and housing. This was done to grow community interaction.

C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The club supports a different charity annually and donate c.£5k to their chosen charity normally via various fundraising activities held. 2020 and 2021 were restricted owing to the pandemic but they still managed to donate c.£1500 each of these years. Volunteering is required for events that are hosted annually.
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 club have a community invite to residents locally ordinarily but again in 2020/21 that has not happened owing to the pandemic. The Professional team engage with local schools and grow junior participation in golf.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		The club have extensive practice facilities and a robust programme for Junior golf including professional coaching.
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 is now open and inclusive, having been men-only a number of years ago..
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	The club do not have a policy for employment but do employ fairly and without any form of discrimination of ethnicity or gender. All members of staff are annually appraised and given opportunities to develop internally, experience other aspects of the business requirement and to develop generally.
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	As above the club engage with local schools and with the community to promote sport and to encourage those out with to visit and experience the golf club and course.
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	As above. Invite local community/residents to visit

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