



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report for The Island Golf Club

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Matt Johns

Certified by GEO Foundation July 2019

GEO Certified[®]

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“The Island Golf Club is planning to use GEO Certification as a launchpad to showcase its high quality ecologically valuable course, sustainability focus and approach.

This is an excellent example of a golf club committed to playing their part and we look forward to seeing more and more.”

Matt Johns

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that The Island 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.

The Island has:

1. Met all 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, The Island should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the next three years, The Island 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 the Independent Verifier accredited by GEO for verification of golf facilities seeking certification.

Verification involved reviewing practices and data, using the International Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. The Verifier then submitted a detailed verification report 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 and 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, Rain Forest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council and Marine Stewardship Council. GEO Foundation earned and retains Full Membership in the ISEAL Alliance 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 and outreach • Golfing and employment • Advocacy and 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	(Course management) Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site;	The club demonstrates a sound knowledge of the ecological and landscape setting, sensitivities and responsibilities of the club and course. An ecological management plan has been prepared by the STRI which

	value of the site	Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	guides course management and delayer of nature conservation objectives.
	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	In addition to the STRI guidance and management plan the club seeks advice from the landowner, Fingal County Council. The course is not covered by a statutory nature conservation designation but sits adjacent to protected coastline, estuarine and saltmarsh habitats. The course management and habitats provide continuity with the adjacent protected features extending the ecological interest and function.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	(Course management) Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	No cultural designations are present. The club is very aware of and promotes its own heritage including the original access using boats across the estuary, demonstrated through photographs and the promo at position of the club bell on the exterior of the clubhouse, which was used to signal the last boat home.
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	The club maintains good observational awareness of player usage of the course including areas of less frequent play and where balls regularly land in the rough. The playing surfaces are adjusted accordingly with a trend to reducing the need for extensive short mown turf. The club is considering the use of GPS based systems in the future.
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	The club implements works in accordance with its STRI Ecological Management Plan, informed and updated by local observations/conditions. This includes scrub management and promotion of the dune system habitats. The use of native species including natural recolonisation is the principal approach to habitat creation.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		The course supports priority dune habitats and the club has worked extensively to manage this diversity, extent and quality of these areas. This includes relocating the car park to the front of the club house and restoring this impermeable area to natural bare sand with marram grass. Further natural regeneration has occurred in the interim resulting in a high quality habitat being gained. Geofencing technology is applied to buggies to prevent damage to sensitive habitats.
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	The turf is predominantly fescue based resulting in naturalised grasses suited to the predominant conditions. Overseeing is used to maintain the coverage of grass but the playing surfaces are considered to require a low maintenance dominated approach. Members are pleased the a traditional links based approach with colours trending to golden browns in the summer with firm playing surfaces.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Annual verti-draining is applied where needed. Wetting agents are used helping to minimise water usage. No soil improvement produces are typically required. Bunkers are typically natural in style and structure, working with the natural dune geomorphology.
	N2.1.3 Careful and	(Course management)	The course requires minimal fertiliser application due to the low demand

	responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Soil tests and nutrient analysis	from the native turf species and conditions.
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	Hand pulling is used in conjunction with maintaining equipment in optimal condition.
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	Currently no significant problems in recent years from pests with regular monitoring from daily working practices. Problem areas can be mapped using smartphones and cloud-based mapping system.
	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 legal and best practice procedures, training, documentation and requirements are in place the club.
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 legal and best practice procedures, training, documentation and requirements are in place the club. Minimal use of chemicals occur on the course therefore minimising the risk of spillages/contamination. Smartphone based mapping app is used to highlight sensitive areas / areas where attention is required. Minimal chemical use requirements. Trend from 6 applications of fungicide per annum 10 years ago to one in 2018-19.
	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	All legal and best practice procedures, training, documentation and requirements are in place the club. Catering/cleaning chemicals are located in secure cupboard with safety data sheets present. External contractors with full PPE and insurance are used where potentially more hazardous chemicals are required (e.g. carpet cleaning).

	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	All legal and best practice procedures, training, documentation and requirements are in place the club. A high quality greenkeeping building and yard is present.
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 legal and best practice procedures, training, documentation and requirements are in place the club. All chemicals are stored in a secure Chemsafe.
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)	All legal and best practice procedures, training, documentation and requirements are in place the club. Wastewater is treated on site using a biodigester and discharged to soak away, ultimately feeding into the groundwater being abstracted for course irrigation.

RESOURCES			
R1 Water			
Objectives	Requirements	International 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	Water is sourced from shallow wells on the course and have been recently registered to the EPA. Irrigation management is very precise using GPS and cloud-based software allowing individual sprinkler control focusing on target areas only. The style of course and

			requirements of the turf results in minimal water application.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	(Course management) 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	Pogo moisture readings are taken and uploaded to a cloud system allowing remote monitoring and links to the computer-controlled irrigation control software. This takes into account climate data from a met station. This links in with drone mapping imagery.
	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	Mains water is metered by Irish Water. Annual reviews of water use (using cost and units) are completed.
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	Wells have recently been registered with the EPA.
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	The course includes extensive areas of low intensity rough and out of play habitat minimising the need to maintain extensive areas of highly maintained playing surfaces.
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 proactive approach to reducing energy requirements is taken by the club management team and staff members showing trends in the reduction of fuels for heating and electricity in recent years. Regular reviews of bills/statements are maintained as part of the business reporting and accounting. Energy efficient appliances are purchased and lighting/heating is all on timers, with manual overrides. Natural lighting helps to reduce artificial lighting needs.
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	The club intends to investigate further solar photovoltaic, solar hot water systems.

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	(Club management) Undertake a review of materials consumed	Low maintenance course regime results in natural reduction in the use of raw materials. A similar approach is adopted with the club house operations with a specific focus on locally sourced materials and food.
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's operations embrace sustainability but no formal policy has yet been written. This is something that will be prepared as a future action. Ireland and the local Dublin area in particular is the focus of for nearly all materials used, in particular food and drink.
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	The club monitors its Waste usage and costs through reviews on its bills as part of management accounts. Material separation and recycling occurs both at the clubhouse and from course management operations. This includes the licenced collection of any waste oils/chemicals, toner waste as well as recycled materials and non-recyclables. All green waste is composted and used at the club.
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;	The club follows all legal and best practice measures with respect to waste handling.

COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	International Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes

C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		Social groups and events are organised within the club but as a golf focused, competitive and traditional club, members have not expressed a desire for recreational diversification at the current time. As such, the emphasis is on multiple competitions and prizes.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Opportunities exist for volunteering on the course and in events e.g. the Amateur Championships. The club contributes to the Donobate Tidy Town initiative and is hoping to help a local group with initiatives to clean the adjacent beach. The club supports a range of local and regional charities raising money through Charity Days and through provision of 30-40 4-ball vouchers per year.
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'	The club has a good relationship with local neighbours and golf clubs. See above for involvement with local groups and charities.
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's membership and visitors are very passionate about golf and the inherent benefits to health are therefore enjoyed without the specific need to promote this at the current time. Staff get free access to the course and can also benefit in this way.
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 club is a traditional members club but has a very open friendly and inclusive approach. It enjoys a large visitor throughput. A strong junior golf element is promoted with free coaching provided once a week.
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 Island Golf Club adopts all legal and best practice requirements for employment and professional development. Full inductions are provided alongside specific training in different roles and requirements. The club funds staff to secure relevant qualifications and attend external courses alongside internal and on the job training.
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	The club's website and social media through twitter provide its external communications. Members and staff receive regular internal news letters. There are team leader briefings and morning planning meetings for greenkeeping staff. Management board decisions are published. All committees are involved in/kept up to date with sustainability initiatives and progress. The club is considering installing educational boards in key locations on the course.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider	(Club management) Provide evidence of external communications and community	The Island Golf Club is hoping to use GEO Certification as a launchpad to showcase its high quality ecologically valuable course, sustainability focus and approach. Future actions will include including a

	community	engagement	sustainability section to its website.
--	-----------	------------	----------------------------------------

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