



**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

# **GEO Certified<sup>®</sup> Report Frilford Heath Golf Club**

Prepared by independent verifier: Dino Minoli

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023  
Recertification due: 2026

**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

 **GEO  
Foundation**  
Sustainability in and through golf

*“Frilford Heath Golf Club shows good policies and practices for more responsible and sustainable golf. Highlights include successful management of a Site of Special Scientific Interest for wildlife and biodiversity, irrigation upgrades for improved efficiencies, rainwater harvesting, e-vehicle charging and ground source heat pump, and significant junior coaching, volunteering and charitable support. I look forward to seeing how the Club’s sustainability working group generates and realises more ideas for sustainable golf in sustainability and competitive business advantage.”*

*Dino Minoli*

*(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



# Introduction

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GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Frilford Heath 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 and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Frilford Heath 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 (CIP) for the future and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Frilford Heath Golf Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Frilford Heath Golf Club 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

Carole Kerrey  
Manager, Data and Reporting, GEO  
Certification Ltd.



# Verification and Certification

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## 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](http://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](http://www.isealalliance.org)



# Verifier's Report

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

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
<b>Nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitats &amp; Biodiversity</li> <li>• Turfgrass management</li> <li>• Pollution prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships &amp; Outreach</li> <li>• Golfing &amp; Employment</li> <li>• Advocacy &amp; Communications</li> </ul>

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

<b>NATURE</b>			
<b>N1 Habitats and Biodiversity</b>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
<b>N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings</b>	<b>N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site</b>	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Frilford Heath Golf Club (FHGC) is a 54-hole course in Frilford, Oxfordshire, set in 500 acres of heathland to the southwest of Oxford city. Within is a 109-hectare biological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Frilford Heath, Ponds and Fens.

			<p>In 2020, Natural England conducted a review of the nature conservation objectives and assessment of the condition of the SSSI. The report found that the green staff have done a lot of work to restore and maintain the habitats of special interest over several years, and recent management changes have resulted in positive benefits for many notable plants that could be critically important in ensuring their survival.</p> <p><b>CIP: Continue working with Natural England, environmental groups and consultancies concerning the careful stewardship of the site. Provide feedback to golf course managers and owners and communicate to members, visitors, and other stakeholders.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site with an ecologist and/or Google Maps</b>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Xlw3fqOxWM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Xlw3fqOxWM</a>).</p>
	<p><b>N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species</b></p>	<p>Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site</p>	<p>Natural England is the public body responsible for ensuring the above SSSI is protected and improved.</p> <p>FHGC has a higher-tier multi-year management agreement with Natural England to protect, restore and enhance the SSSI.</p> <p>The Club receives the support of Abingdon Green Gym, a local volunteer conservation group (that visits the site 6-12 times per year) and a local botanist (mentioned below).</p> <p>The Club is well aware that the SSSI is a unique and special place with exceptional nature conservation interest supporting nationally rare habitats that include highly unusual collections of specialised plants and insects and species-rich sandy grassland, fens and wet woodland areas.</p> <p>Tim Perkins, a local botanist, does an excellent job of recording and monitoring the significant wildlife around the course on a website, 'Frilford Heath Nature Trail' (<a href="https://frilfordheathnature diary.blogspot.com">https://frilfordheathnature diary.blogspot.com</a>). The blog includes photographs, descriptions and detailed lists of the different kinds of birds, mammals, fungi, wildflowers and insects, and other invertebrates.</p>

			<b>CIP: Continue to work with Natural England, Tim Perkins and other local environmental groups to record, monitor and report on the site's important wildlife and rare species.</b>
	<b>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</b>	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The Club is not aware of any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site.
<b>N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course</b>	<b>N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass</b>	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	<p>Expanding rough around tee areas and bunkers increases habitat and connectivity for wildlife to support biodiversity and reduce costs (labour, fuel and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions).</p> <p>No fertilisation of natural rough, creation of wildflower patches for local pollinators, native trees and shrubs when planting and natural transitions between grassland and woodland.</p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to explore opportunities to naturalise the course as appropriate in the forthcoming Environmental Management Plan. Monitoring player traffic can identify areas for further naturalisation without compromising pace of play or shot value.</b></p>
<b>N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife</b>	<b>N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf</b>	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	<p>The above report notes several management successes for wildlife and biodiversity, including the alkaline fen and the wetland invertebrate. The invertebrates associated with dry, sandy grassland meet nature conservation targets and are in favourable condition. The acid grassland supports a remarkable assemblage of scarce plants and is in excellent condition. The rare plants remain highly diverse, and most species for which the site is significant remain present.</p> <p>The Club has received positive comments from a local botany group on the practice areas, where the minimal grass mowing benefits flora and fauna.</p> <p>A 'Courses and Estates Policy Document' was last reviewed in 2023. The policy recognises the importance of nature conservation and the varied and unique habitats that support interesting and rare wildflowers, insects, birds and other wildlife and the SSSI.</p>

			<p>Several projects to manage habitats best for wildlife and golf include providing biodiverse areas in the long rough.</p> <p>In 2021, a bunker renovation programme reduced mowing and increased the long rough around the edges away from play to give contrast and character.</p> <p>Projects to improve the heather to add to the heathland feel of the course and gorse management, heather and sand scrape restoration and connecting habitats on the golf course.</p> <p>Natural pathways where strong and healthy growth is possible.</p> <p>Tree surveys and work programmes every 2-3 years - for 'duty of care' and safety reasons and to preserve trees in the landscape to support wildlife, biodiversity, and heathland restoration. The latest survey recorded 40 trees and ten groups.</p> <p>Course Management Practices and Greenkeeping Code of Practice are documented and displayed in the maintenance facility.</p> <p><b>CIP: Investigate opportunities to actively manage habitats for wildlife in support of biodiversity in the forthcoming Environmental Management Plan.</b></p>
<b>N1.4 Conserve key species</b>	<b>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</b>		<p>Microhabitats include bird boxes, bug hotels, open sandy areas, amphibian houses, and bee hives, which a local beekeeper is currently relocating.</p> <p><b>CIP: Record and monitor microhabitat occupancy.</b></p>
<b>N2 Turfgrass</b>			
<b>N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health</b>	<b>N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors</b>	Select appropriate grass species for climate	<p>Ongoing transition to drought and stress-tolerant grasses containing a rye/fescue mix and bentgrass.</p> <p>Turfgrass tolerance to drought, disease and winter stress inform their selection.</p>



			<p>A growing turf nursery provides in situ materials for the course, which reduces the costs and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions of the club's supply chain.</p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to explore opportunities to transition grass species using less pesticides and fertilisers while managing and maintaining suitable playing surfaces.</b></p>
	<b>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</b>		<p>The evaluation of careful pesticide applications includes annual testing and monitoring of soil pH and application of compost teas/bio-stimulants.</p>
	<b>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</b>	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	<p>Soil tests, temperature, sunlight hours, rainfall, height of cut, foot traffic and clippings inform fertiliser applications.</p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to explore opportunities for more sustainable fertiliser applications, where appropriate.</b></p>
<b>N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance</b>	<b>N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management</b>	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	<p>Mechanical maintenance practices include sharpening of mowing blades, removal of surface moisture and weekly brushing of greens.</p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to support the practice of mechanical maintenance.</b></p>
<b>N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly</b>	<b>N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues</b>	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	<p>Daily scouting of the course by the greens staff to identify early signs of pest pressure.</p> <p>A turf care identification chart informs pest and disease identification.</p> <p>Mapping and tracking pest and disease hotspots and accurate diagnosis to determine the causes of weeds, pests and disease.</p> <p>Pest and disease prevention measures include frequent planned washing of machinery and shoe washing stations.</p>

	<b>N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions</b>	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 .	Course management only uses legally registered and approved chemicals, which are applied based on their specific weed, pest, disease, and toxicity rating.  Chemical product log following onsite visit.  Staff are qualified and trained to use pesticides (NPTC). PA1 (Principles of Safe Handling and Application Pesticides Guidance), PA2 (Safe application of pesticides using self-propelled, mounted, trailed horizontal boom sprayers) and PA6 (Safe application of pesticide using pedestrian handheld equipment).  Applicators are regularly calibrated and tested, and there is appropriate protective equipment.
<b>N3 Pollution Prevention</b>			
<b>N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site</b>	<b>N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations</b>	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.	A chemical spill procedure will be on display following the onsite verification.  Retention of no/spray buffer zones next to ecologically sensitive areas.  There is light irrigation after fertiliser applications and hand weeding when possible.  Cut lines define buffer zones, and course managers and green staff have pesticide application licences, as mentioned.  <b>CIP: Map no-spray buffer zones.</b>
	<b>N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations</b>	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	There is safe storage of hazardous chemicals.  Disposal of hazardous waste is through a licenced waste contractor.
	<b>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are</b>	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces;	Wastewater discharge, machinery wash station features include impermeable, curbed surface and wash water treatment involves a grass clipping filter and closed loop, where wastewater is

	<b>minimised from maintenance facility operations</b>	Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	collected in a tank and removed by a licensed waste contractor and the collection of grass clippings for composting. There is an air pressure washdown that helps reduce water usage.  <b>CIP: Repair wall as discussed.</b>  <b>CIP: Explore air pressure washdown of electric buggies at the professional shop.</b>
<b>N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances</b>	<b>N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances</b>	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	Measures for the safe storage of hazardous substances include appropriate building, impermeable flooring, emergency wash area and spill containment kits.  Similarly, measures for safe storage of fuels include secondary containment in the event of spills, fire extinguishers and inspection of storage tanks.  Chemical store product inventory following the onsite visit.  <b>CIP: Continue practices to manage hazardous substances safely.</b>
<b>N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water</b>	<b>N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences</b>	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Building wastewater discharge to mains sewer subject to formal discharge agreement.

<b>RESOURCES</b>			
<b>R1 Water</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>R1.1 Minimise water demand</b>	<b>R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water</b>	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Problems with existing irrigation systems are poor distribution uniformity from very old sprinklers, inefficiencies from full circle heads around greens, which wastes a lot of water and output shortfalls, and the small diameter pipework results in high-duration irrigation window application.

			<p>In 2021, FHGC started a phased replacement for irrigation provisions across the estate. The plan is to replace the irrigation system with the Blue Course (which is complete), followed by the Red Course (circa 2024) and Green Course (circa 2026). And reshape and re-line the reservoir (which is done).</p> <p>Environmental benefits include greater irrigation efficiencies, water reduction and reduced costs.</p> <p><b>CIP: Continue with the above irrigation plan.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to monitor, record and report performance.</b></p>
<p><b>R1.2 Maximise water efficiency</b></p>	<p><b>R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course</b></p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Automatic watering on greens, tees, approaches and most fairway areas. Automatic sprinklers give a controlled amount of water to ensure the grass is kept healthy and provide desirable playing conditions and surface performance. The sprinklers are maintained to ensure the best possible coverage.</p> <p>A policy is to use as little water as possible to encourage firm playing conditions typical of heathland courses and the success of more drought-tolerant species without affecting aesthetics and playing quality, or losing turf cover.</p> <p>Overnight irrigation when rainfall has been insufficient to maintain desirable conditions and on-demand to wash in fertilisers and other turf products to increase their efficacy.</p> <p>Hand watering of water high/dry areas of the playing surfaces to avoid irrigation overwatering. When hand-watering, a soil moisture probe is employed to achieve a minimum of 15%VMC across the playing surfaces.</p> <p>Occasionally, especially during hot weather or prolonged dry conditions, hand-watering is undertaken to target dry/high spots.</p> <p>During irrigation, an inspection is carried out daily before, during and after watering to ensure that the system is operating correctly and that water coverage from overnight irrigation has been adequate.</p>

	<p><b>R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings</b></p>	<p>Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption</p>	<p>The Club's accounts department regularly reviews water bills.</p> <p>Water-efficient appliances, in part, include dual-flush toilets.</p> <p><b>CIP: Progress water-saving initiatives such as volume reducers in cisterns, efficient shower heads, percussion taps, water-efficient dishwashers and washing machines where appropriate.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Consider the Unified Water Labelled products in purchasing decisions <a href="http://www.europeanwaterlabel.eu">http://www.europeanwaterlabel.eu</a>.</b></p>
<p><b>R1.3 Source water responsibly</b></p>	<p><b>R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water</b></p>	<p>Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required</p>	<p>FHGC's irrigation water is from Piling Brook and a borehole. The Red and Green Course holding tanks have an additional main water supply.</p> <p>Water is stored in a reservoir (64,000m<sup>3</sup>). The Blue Course has a holding pond of 800m<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>There is a recent upgrading of the pump house.</p> <p>A mains water supply is available to fill the Red and Green holding tanks and the storage pond at the Blue sheds.</p> <p>FHGC have two Environment Agency abstraction licenses. One is for 46,000m<sup>3</sup> from Piling Brook and the other for 14,000m<sup>3</sup> from the Borehole. Both are year-round licenses and subject to enforcement when the level in the River Ock drops below a given figure. Monthly abstraction records and yearly returns to the Environment Agency. Both licenses are up for renewal in 2025.</p> <p>There is harvesting of rainwater from one side of the maintenance roof, which tops up the reservoir for irrigation.</p> <p><b>CIP: Progress opportunities to increase rainwater harvesting across the facility, for example, the maintenance facility and professional shop.</b></p>
<p><b>R2 Energy</b></p>			

<p><b>R2.1 Reduce energy demand</b></p>	<p><b>R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance</b></p>	<p>Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs</p>	<p>Around 60% of the site is a natural habitat primarily left unmanaged.</p> <p>The above bunker remodelling reduced mowing, saving workforce hours, fuel, and carbon emissions.</p> <p>In 2022, FHGC commissioned GreenClub consultancy (<a href="https://greenclub.energy">https://greenclub.energy</a>) to identify renewable energy opportunities at the Club.</p> <p>The report noted that the Club is encouraging and adopting sustainability practices in the Clubhouse with staff, members and visitors through the Sustainability Working Group introducing green initiatives. Including progressively eliminating single-use plastics, paperless office practices, adoption of digital scorecards prioritising the use of recycled products and 4 EV car parking spaces.</p> <p>The report identifies several opportunities where renewable energy solutions would positively affect fiscal performance, reduce grid reliance and reduce the Club's carbon footprint. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• photovoltaic panels on the Clubhouse, maintenance compound and Pro Shop buildings – including battery storage,</li> <li>• a floating PV array on the irrigation pond,</li> <li>• a potential wind turbine,</li> <li>• replacement of the irrigation system,</li> <li>• infrastructure survey of possible improvements and efficiencies,</li> <li>• progressive installation of LED lighting,</li> <li>• waste management and recycling policy,</li> <li>• environmental policies,</li> <li>• staff education and training and,</li> <li>• sustainability champions</li> </ul> <p><b>CIP: Progressively implement initiatives in the above report as practical and cost-effective.</b></p>
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<p><b>R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency</b></p>	<p><b>R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings</b></p>	<p>Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption</p>	<p>Energy use is regularly reviewed and tracked across the facility.</p> <p>FHGC has upgraded its fleet of greenkeeping machinery, increasing efficiencies and productivity and reducing fuel costs and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. Including four hybrid mowers and five electric utility vehicles.</p> <p>A new workshop manager tracks the cost-effectiveness of course machinery and equipment.</p> <p>The Club has installed four e-vehicle charging points in the car park for members and visitors.</p> <p>The Clubhouse, in part, makes use of natural lighting.</p> <p>The Clubhouse has recently been refurbished, including new efficient boilers, thermostatic controls and radiator upgrades.</p> <p><b>CIP: Progressively electrify the course machinery and fleet via the Club's machinery 5-year leasing programme as cost-effective.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to investigate solar panels (e.g., maintenance facility and e-vehicle charging) and wind turbine.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Progress motion sensors and or switch off soft signage throughout the facility, as appropriate.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Explore further opportunities to use natural lighting across the facility where appropriate.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to monitor, record and report performance.</b></p>
<p><b>R2.3 Source energy responsibly</b></p>	<p><b>R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy</b></p>	<p>Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers</p>	<p>A recent redevelopment of the golf shop includes various low-energy solutions, such as an air source heat pump for low-carbon heating, LED lighting, and a carefully arranged natural ventilation strategy. The solution provides the Club with a low-running cost and highly sustainable development.</p> <p><b>CIP: Consider a green energy tariff through the Club's purchasing manager, Material matters. Some or all of the</b></p>

			<p>electricity comes from renewable electricity with a Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin Certificates. (See Energy Saving Trust <a href="https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/switching-your-energy-supplier/">https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/switching-your-energy-supplier/</a> and Centre for Sustainable Energy).</p>
<b>R3 Materials</b>			
<b>R3.1 Reduce materials demand</b>	<b>R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives</b>	Undertake a review of materials consumed	<p>The above bunker renovation programme reduces the sand area across the estate by 30-40%, resulting in material, labour and fuel savings.</p> <p>Rough areas receive no fertilisers.</p> <p>Composting sites reuse of materials on the golf course.</p> <p>The Club favour local suppliers, when practical and cost-effective, that reduce the Club's carbon footprint and support the local economy.</p> <p>Water dispensers in the changing rooms in the Clubhouse.</p> <p><b>CIP: Replace single-use plastic cups in the changing rooms with recyclable ones.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Progressively install water-saving self-closing taps as appropriate.</b></p>
<b>R3.2 Purchase responsibly</b>	<b>R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy</b>	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	<p>The pro-shop stocks MGP Nutrition water (a fully recyclable paper bottle and plant-based cap – a suitable solution for bottled water), bamboo tees and branded refillable water bottles.</p> <p>The maintenance facility purchases bulk whenever possible to limit packaging and transport.</p> <p>The catering serves a 'popular' veggie breakfast, and local beers (Brakspear and Bombardier), for example.</p> <p><b>CIP: Establish a formal ethical procurement policy for all purchasing departments and managers across the facility. Include green procurement goals and criteria, identify</b></p>



			<p><b>suppliers and products, evaluate and compare options, implement and monitor practices and review and improve them.</b></p>
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	<p>Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled</p>	<p>The Clubhouse separates and recycles cardboard, paper, plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays, food tins and drinks cans, glass and general waste.</p> <p>There is one double-bin every third hole on the golf course for general waste and the other for recyclables. All waste is sorted and put into the appropriate bins for daily emptying and removal from the site.</p> <p>Used coffee grinds are collected and used on the golf course by the greenkeepers in pest control.</p> <p>The bunker refurbishment programme reuses course materials (e.g. cores).</p> <p>Used cooking oil is collected for recycling by a local company, Oxford Oils, a UK-licenced waste carrier.</p> <p><b>CIP: Consider a no-plastics policy.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Monitor and annually report on waste generated across the site and set appropriate targets / key performance indicators for continuous improvement.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Consider how the Club can support a Circular Economy <a href="https://www.bitc.org.uk/circular-economy/">https://www.bitc.org.uk/circular-economy/</a> and the Waste Management Hierarchy <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69403/pb13530-waste-hierarchy-guidance.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69403/pb13530-waste-hierarchy-guidance.pdf</a>.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Continue to monitor, record and report performance.</b></p>

<b>R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance</b>	<b>R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations</b>	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	All waste management practices use official contractors such as Biffa and Greensman, leading UK-licenced companies.
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<h1>COMMUNITY</h1>			
<h2>C1 Outreach</h2>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
<b>C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality</b>	<b>C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility</b>		<p>Public footpaths throughout the course with signage for walking nature trails and birdwatching.</p> <p>Function rooms are available to charitable and local organisations, for example.</p>
<b>C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity</b>	<b>C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes</b>		<p>Club members volunteer for professional golf tournaments hosted at the Club, such as the Challenge Tour.</p> <p>The Club hosts six annual charitable events and provides 100 free four-ball generous vouchers.</p> <p>Annual Captains Charitable Support, e.g. The Trussell Trust (2023), supports a nationwide network of food banks to provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty and to campaign for change to end the need for UK food banks.</p> <p>The Club as well supports Heart Research UK and Oxfordshire charity Flexicare, which offers babysitting for children with severe disabilities.</p>

			<p>Staff have also rewarded The Abingdon Bridge with £13,448 after a year of fundraising. One fundraising event saw a club member (James Bowler) play 108 holes of golf in a 15-hour slog across the greens, raising £2,000.</p>
<p><b>C1.3 Establish active community partnerships</b></p>	<p><b>C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups</b></p>	<p>Create a 'sustainability working group'</p>	<p>FHGC's 4 PGA Professionals deliver coaching at six local schools that average 8-10 weekly classes, totalling approximately 300 juniors monthly.</p> <p>The Club donates pins, cups and tee markers to a school's golf course.</p> <p>The Club has work placements with schools at the request of members with children, mainly in the office, shop and greenkeeping.</p> <p>FHGC is progressing with its Sustainability Working Group to steer continual sustainability improvements. The group includes staff/managers from the golf course, kitchen, bar, golf shop and general manager.</p> <p>The Club's core values make account of valuing, respecting, protecting and making positive contributions to the local environment and engaging the community to build sustainable relationships.</p> <p>FHGC's environmental policy and mission statement aim to provide an unrivalled and environmentally responsible golf experience, a commitment to improving environmental performance and carbon-neutral ambition and wide-ranging environment commitments (e.g. sustainable business development, environmental leadership, renewable energy, educational and awareness programmes, ethical procurement, environmental legislation and sustainability policy compliance).</p> <p><b>CIP: Set environmental goals and key performance indicators for the golf facility based on the UNSDGs. See R&amp;A Golf Course 2030 and the UNSDGs. <a href="https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/its2.38">https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/its2.38</a></b></p> <p><b>CIP: Sign, date, implement, review and update the above environmental policy</b></p>

			<p><a href="https://sustainablebusiness.org.uk/news/an-easy-guide-to-writing-an-environmental-or-sustainability-policy/">(https://sustainablebusiness.org.uk/news/an-easy-guide-to-writing-an-environmental-or-sustainability-policy/)</a>.</p> <p><b>CIP: Forthcoming visit from an independent environmental consultant, Sophie Olejnik, concerning an ecological management plan for the courses.</b></p>
<b>C2 Golfers &amp; Employees</b>			
<b>C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing</b>	<b>C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities</b>		<p>The golf course is easy to walk and supports mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Pull and electric trolleys and buggies for those requiring them.</p> <p>Accessible toilets in the Clubhouse and out on the golf course to meet the needs of independent wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments.</p> <p>Fire extinguishers and emergency defibrillators are apparent.</p> <p>One water fountain and compost toilets on each golf course.</p> <p><b>CIP: Explore a cycle-to-work scheme.</b></p>
<b>C2.2 Be open and inclusive</b>	<b>C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies</b>	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	<p>FHGC's core values policy includes a commitment to inclusivity.</p> <p>The Club is a signatory to the R&amp;A's 'Women in Golf Charter'; this commitment is to promote a culture that allows women, girls and juniors to thrive in golf in participating or a career in the sport.</p> <p>The Club is offering ability-based tees on the Blue Course next year.</p> <p>FHGC is an Oxfordshire Ladies County Golf Association member who supports and promotes women's and girls' golf, including junior county championship competitions, county junior team matches, academy coaching and monthly golf days.</p>

			<p>FHGC is an official Golf Roots Centre. This HSBC Golf Roots Plus project enables children (including those in disadvantaged communities) to enjoy a fun and positive introduction to golf that increases well-being and confidence.</p> <p>CPD is encouraged and supported through, for example, the Club's GEO OnCourse registration and recertification.</p> <p><b>CIP: Extend ability-based tees for the red and green courses. Ability-based tees encourage players to use those most suited to their choice or ability, allowing golfers, regardless of gender, to play together rather than separately.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Continue equal opportunity monitoring across staff and club members. To support under-representative groups and avoid discrimination.</b></p>
<b>C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities</b>	<b>C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development</b>	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	<p>FHGC is a SafeGolf Accredited golf facility.</p> <p><b>CIP: Investigate sustainability awareness training days/seminars on ethical procurement, green marketing and events, applied behaviour change and change management, for example.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Monitor and follow all relevant legislation and best practices (see, for example, Netregs <a href="https://www.netregs.org.uk">https://www.netregs.org.uk</a>).</b></p>
<b>C3 Communications</b>			
<b>C3.1 Engage golfers and members</b>	<b>C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors</b>	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	<p>A notice board in the Clubhouse entitled 'Frilford Heath Nature Notes' includes notes on SSSI and professional photos of flowers and butterflies, birds, otters and deer and habitat restoration work across the site.</p> <p>Communications on sustainability initiatives via social media and the weekly club newsletter.</p>

			<p><b>CIP: Improve and support recycling performance through heightened clear signage and messaging.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Consider joining Sustainable Greenkeeping, a group of Greenkeepers who believe minimal inputs and traditional management can achieve fine turf. Biology and fungi are encouraged to help achieve this aim.</b>  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/433889575110134/discussion/preview">https://www.facebook.com/groups/433889575110134/discussion/preview</a></p> <p><b>CIP: Include information on GEO OnCourse on the Club's website, as it symbolises excellence that helps build brand value, customer loyalty and competitive advantage (and there is a demand for environmental quality on the golf course).</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Promote the GEO-certified label across the facility, such as the Pro Shop and Golf Course.</b></p> <p><b>CIP: Consider a cost-effective survey of golf members' environmental attitudes, as this would help the Club gauge likely support for ecological initiatives.</b></p>
<p><b>C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability</b></p>	<p><b>C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community</b></p>	<p>Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement</p>	<p>FHGC has posted its GEO OnCourse Highlights on the GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf website.  <a href="https://sustainable.golf/highlights/?cat%5B%5D=Courses&amp;country%5B%5D=96">https://sustainable.golf/highlights/?cat%5B%5D=Courses&amp;country%5B%5D=96</a></p> <p>In 2023, FHGC received a special commendation, community organisation of the year award from Cancer Research UK for volunteering.</p> <p><b>CIP: Consider hosting a new green amateur golf tournament to celebrate and promote sustainability in and through golf that will help position the Club as a leader in sustainable golf.</b></p>

## 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](http://www.sustainable.golf)