GEO Certified® Report
Golfclub Interlaken-Unterseen

Prepared by independent verifier, Hector Forcen

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023
Recertification due: 2026

GEO Foundation
Sustainability in and through golf

“Golf Club Interlaken is a successfully managed facility, beautifully embedded in an imposing mountain backdrop, a dreamlike panorama that will accompany you on every stroke. An intelligent club management policy is promoting golf in the region. An open restaurant with numerous events has made possible a considerable increase in members and players over the last 3 years. I look forward to seeing the new clubhouse and maintenance facility, which will be a great step towards its quality policy and commitment to golf and the environment.”

Hector Forcen
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfclub Interlaken-Unterseen 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.

Golfclub Interlaken-Unterseen 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) set for the future, Golfclub Interlaken-Unterseen should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfclub Interlaken-Unterseen 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

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**

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

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• 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	Golf Club Interlaken is a semi-private, picturesque 18-hole golf course that extends along Lake Thun's Weissenau nature reserve in Interlaken-Unterseen. The course is a dreamlike panorama with idyllic surroundings and wonderful views of the imposing mountains.

			https://www.ala-schweiz.ch/index.php/reservate/weissenau **CIP: The club should make inventories of their fauna and flora.**
	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	The club cooperates closely with local authorities and several pro natura associations. They maintain a direct relationship with the Weissenau nature reserve. There are no known legal designations on the property. They are not aware of any rare or endangered species on the site.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	No archaeological, historical, or cultural designations are present (or known) on the course.
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	Despite being located on a small parcel of land, the club is making an important effort to naturalise some rough areas on the course. These include carries with grasslands and wildflowers meadows. These are new projects in the testing phase, but the acceptance by members and the players is good. An external company is carrying out an evaluation. They are monitoring the project and progress of the surfaces using drones.
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	The club has been working for several years with various external environmental associations. There are about 14,000 trees on the golf plot. Tree experts advise on the management of the trees and offer recommendations on their maintenance and the most convenient native species to replant. In collaboration with the tourism authorities, the club have created a budget for planting new trees every year. They always use indigenous species that are well-adapted to the peculiarities of the area.
N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		The remains of trees and pruning are piled up in natural areas. This creates a natural shelter area for mammals and amphibians. Meadows are not fertilized to maintain the natural flora.
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	The Greenkeeper's have extensive experience and perfectly know the specific conditions of the course. The sward is 60 % Agrostis and 40% Poa annua. The greens are overseeded with new Agrostis varieties, which are more performant and tolerant. They have a turf nursery where they carry out tests and trials.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Mechanical practices are used to keep the soil in good condition. These include regular verticutting, sand topdressing, solid & hollow tine aeration, and deep aeration at the end of the season on the greens. An external company performs aeration work on the fairways each year. The club continues to invest in machinery that is more efficient and productive for the greenkeeping department. Examples of these are the hybrid greens mower and the new spraying machine. This has a cabin and GPS system to help increase the efficiency of each treatment.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil tests are carried out every year. At the beginning of the season, the club test for OM content. At the end of each season, they complete soil tests of every green and some fairways to know the physical properties and needs for nutrients. This allows them to correctly decide the fertilization plan for the following season. In terms of fertilization the club works with granular and liquids, minerals, and organics.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Mowers cylinders and blades are sharpened by the mechanic. Machines are washed every time after they have been used. Dew moisture is removed to keep the turf as dry as possible. Standard good practises (daily inspections, local weeding etc) are used to minimise the consumption of chemicals.
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	The problems on the greens are mainly snow mold & dollar spot. Visual inspections and checks are carried out daily on the course. The Head greenkeeper maintains a program of preventive applications every 28 days. This has been progressively reduced in recent years following an IPM program.

	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 .	Only legislated chemicals are used. Chemicals are in locked, and secure storage. They have placed an order for a new cabinet to store phytosanitary products. The applications are made by trained and qualified employees using the necessary security measures. Ecological conditions and weather are considered before the application is carried out. Untreated turf areas are used for disposal of diluted leftovers. The club has acquired a new GPS + cabin spraying machine.
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.	The Club is perfectly respecting the Swiss law in terms of pollution prevention and emergency spill responses. **CIP: The club should redact an emergency spill responses plan.** **CIP: The club should create maps showing buffer zones.**
	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	Contracts for the disposal of hazardous waste from the facility are established with external local companies that are specialists in waste management. Wastewater is led to the municipal wastewater treatment plant.
	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	Pesticides and fertilizers are mixed and loaded in an area with concrete floor. The drains are connected to a collecting tank. In the workshop all drums with oils for machinery maintenance have their corresponding anti-spill containment system.

			CIP: These points will be improved with the construction of the new maintenance hall in 2024.
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 personal that handle pesticides have an education and valid authorizations (licenses). Personal protection equipment, such as clothing, boots, protective goggles, and gloves, are handled by the club. The Head Greenkeeper records products and treatments in the computer. Chemicals are maintained in a suitable room for the storage of phytosanitary products. Hazardous waste is provided to a licensed contractor. Fire extinguishers are placed in locations with fire risks. They are inspected annually by a certified company. All fuel tanks are installed according to legislation and have approved inspections and controls. **CIP: This point will be improved with the construction of the new maintenance hall in 2024.**
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)	The wash bay outside the machine hall has an impermeable surface and is collected by the sewer that takes the wastewater to the local treatment plan. During the season, the machines are washed with non-potable water from the irrigation system. **CIP: This point will be improved with the construction of the new maintenance hall in 2024.**

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	The club only irrigate when necessary, based on the Greenkeeper's experience in combination with weather station data.

			The club has an automatic irrigation system with sprinklers on tees, greens and a single row on the fairways.
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	They have a soil moisture sensor that is frequently used when looking for humidity levels on the greens between 20-25%. Efficiency is being achieved thanks to an automatic irrigation system with block sprinkler control. Tees, greens and fairways have sprinklers working individually. New software installed in 2018 is improving the performance of the daily irrigation. The pumping is serviced every year to be more efficient with considerable savings in electricity consumption. The club has their own weather station. **CIP: Consider water & irrigation audit.** **CIP: The club could consider looking for values not greater than 20% soil moisture with the consequent saving of water and possible help to reduce undesired grasses.**
	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	The clubhouse is ancient but well equipped. Water saving activities are in place. Low-flush toilets and taps have been installed. **CIP: this point will be improved with the construction of the new clubhouse in 2024.**
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	The club has legal access to extract water from the nearby lake for irrigation. There is an interesting contract in force. The water consumption is read and reported to the municipality that is the supplier of freshwater to the clubhouses.
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 naturalized areas of the club have been increased. The maintained rough has been diminished. There are natural areas that are cut only once a year by local farmers. **CIP: this point will be improved with the construction of the new maintenance hall in 2024.**

	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	The property complies with the Swiss directives in terms of energy. The club is switching from more traditional energy consuming lighting to LED lighting. With the new construction of the club house (2024), energy efficiency measures and reduction of both electricity and water consumption will be positively affected, because they plan to use the most up-to-date techniques and materials. The club have electric buggies for players who need them. **CIP: The club should consider tracking energy consumption in greater detail.**
	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	No renewable electricity is produced yet. **CIP: with the new clubhouse, the use of renewable energy will be a reality.**
	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**	Undertake a review of materials consumed	The club works with a local waste management plant for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation. They are composting some vegetal material, which is collected and used by local farmers. The purchase of chemical products is kept low.
	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	Mainly local distributors are used, and some furniture of the golf course has been built by local companies. In the restaurant the use of local products is preferred and desired by members and visitors. **CIP: The club should consider a more formal sustainable purchasing policy.**
	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	The club keeps internal bills and invoices of annual quantities of waste and recycled materials. Almost all waste is recycled or reused, including PET, aluminium, metals, glass, paper, and cardboard. Wood from removed trees is used for creating brush piles and habitat areas. Other wood and vegetal materials are pilled for compost. Materials from the kitchen and maintenance area such as detergents, oils, lubricants, pesticides, and batteries are collected and disposed by a specialized company.

				The club dispose at different points with labelled bins around the facility and waste receptacle areas. The employees prepare compost with the remains of pruning, mowing and materials from lakes that is later used by farmers in the area. The wood from old trees and pruning goes to a small nearby town that uses it for heating.
	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	The club complies with all Swiss waste management regulations. Authorized waste and recycling contractors are used for both housekeeping waste, industrial and hazardous waste. Waste is collected by the municipal contractor and the specialized recycling company.

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**		Interlaken golf club is open to new players who wish to start and practice the sport of golf. The club organizes free introductory golf lessons. 'Ferienpass' activities for the local youngster's during the periods of school holidays. The restaurant is fully open to visitors who can use the facilities as well as organize events. Around the facility there are several public paths that are used by the locals and tourists for walking or running.

	C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	**C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes**		The club provide staff with time and opportunities to volunteer. They are also encouraging golfers to volunteer on tournaments, committees, and projects. They have a group made up of employees and volunteer members who come to help to prepare the course in situations of storms and unforeseen weather.
	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 communicates monthly with a newsletter, as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse. The club organizes days of work and knowledge of the nature of the golf course with young schoolchildren from the area. They maintain contact and collaboration with the fishermen of the lake and ornithological groups to organize visits in their surroundings. **CIP: The club should form an official sustainability working Group.**
	C2 Golfers & Employees			
	C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	**C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities**		Seniors, ladies, and juniors enjoy the facilities weekly. The club collaborates with a local school. The students carry out their practices and certain gardening work in the club's facilities.
	C2.2 Be open and inclusive	**C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies**	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Golf Club Interlaken regularly organizes free introductory golf lessons. They also regularly organize activities for young people during the school holidays. The restaurant is open to the public. Proof of this are the more than 100 new members obtained in the last 3 years.
	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 are compliant with the extensive Swiss health and safety legislation for safe, ethical, equal, and legal working conditions. The club promote education and membership of the professional's associations. Continuous training and giving maximum stability to employees is the policy. Proof of this is that both the General Manager and Head Greenkeeper have been with the company for many years.

			Personal protection equipment and working clothing are provided.
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	The club communicates monthly with a newsletter, as well as daily through its website and the information panel of the clubhouse. Members are quite proactive, and the club encourage them to promote the facility in the community. The club truly promotes awareness within the employee community with respect to energy and safety aspects. **CIP – The club should communicate on sustainable objectives and success. The Communications resources accessed via the OnCourse dashboard provide some helpful guidance on effective outreach.**
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	Golf Club Interlaken is an open club that offers the opportunity to play golf to many citizens of the area. Proof of that is the members, visitors, new players and young people who come to the facilities each year. Members and players are properly informed of all activities and actions carried out in the club.

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