



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Luffenham Heath Golf Club

Prepared by independent verifier, Tony Hanson

Certified by GEO Foundation: October 2022
Valid until: October 2027

'Luffenham Heath Golf Club has had a change of both general manager and course manager since the first certification in 2019. This could have impacted the sustainability ambitions of the club, and it has; the continued ambition and desire to improve was apparent throughout my visit.

Working and accommodating the varying demands of providing a course to challenge tournament golf and general club play, while enhancing and maintaining a site falling within a SSSI, has been achieved. Inputs are low and considered, falling back on the basic greenkeeping principles of the renowned Jim Arthur.

The clubhouse has been systematically upgraded to improve energy efficiency; heating is provided by biomass sourced locally following a process of supplier engagement.'

Tony Hanson

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Luffenham 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.

Luffenham 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) set for the future, **Luffenham Heath Golf Club** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Luffenham 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

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



Verification and Certification

Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at www.sustainable.golf

Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at www.isealalliance.org



Verifier's Report

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

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

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

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Confirmed and viewed maps and aerial images of the site. Reviewed and discussed surveys and plans.

			Course walk allowed a good overview of the work being undertaken to on the course to maintain and enhance habitats.
	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 is located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and they are working closely with Natural England and consultants to manage their site to encourage the calcareous grassland habitats. The management of the estate is designed to favour native species through managed succession, scalloping of woodland and soil impoverishment favouring a thinner more naturalised sward.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Not applicable
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	Areas in play are assessed through observation and wear patterns.
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	Reviewed and discussed the management documents. Observed and discussed the management of the habitats on site, and ambitions – natural flower meadow creation and gorse restoration projects
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Habitat creation and management are key to maintaining biodiversity on site
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 club favours a combination of predominantly <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> with <i>Festuca rubra</i> and <i>Poa annua</i> . The sward composition provides the club with the combination of drought and disease resilience, along with the preferred playing characteristics. The sward composition is reviewed periodically, along with research on new cultivars.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		The first principles of greenkeeping feature strongly, with the emphasis on cultural practices including spiking, hollow tining and slitting to improve rooting depth and reduce compaction.

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil testing is undertaken to determine the need for fertiliser inputs. The discussions during the course walk highlighted the management of the course is based on observation and assessment of the prevailing conditions.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Equipment maintenance, dew removal and hand weeding all feature in the management of the course.
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	Changes in the availability of pesticides have not affected the management style of the course manager, who favours the traditional management expounded by Jim Arthur. Observation and recording are key parts of the process of pest and disease management – understanding the conditions that create stress to alleviate where possible, identifying pests and diseases early and treat appropriately. Recording, tracking and communications all play their part to help players understand the active management process
	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	Reviewed the application records and stock records – low levels of stock are held. Discussed application licences and observed PPE and personal wash areas and equipment. Mixes are measured, but any excess is diluted and disposed of on turf adjacent to the maintenance buildings.
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 management have a clear understanding of the site and the actions they would need to take in the event of a spill. Aerial images of the site were discussed. Buffer zones and no spray zones are maintained. CIP Formalise the Pollution Incident Response Plan in line with PPG-21 (Provided) - Required for 2025 re-certification

	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	Hazardous materials are stored in proprietary double skinned tanks or appropriate contained cabinets. Waste contractor's licence viewed. The club has a contained wash pad with closed loop recycling system
	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	Observed contained wash pad and biological dosed water recycling system. Mixing is undertaken on the washdown pad to contain any potential spill. Containers triple rinsed prior to collection.
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	No Local Authority inspection required. The fuel tank is double skinned proprietary storage tank. First aid and spill kits are strategically placed and available. CIPs The mezzanine floor storage area should be completed with an additional tray containment for the wet products. Used cooking oil storage should have a bunded stand and a belt-tie to prevent the risk of the barrel being dislodged. This action has been confirmed by the general manager 19/10/22
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)	Discharge licence is not required. Observed wash pad and closed loop wash water recycling system.

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	<p>The management of irrigation, and system maintenance, are designed to encourage deep rooting, accuracy in delivery and system efficiency.</p> <p>The system is regularly serviced and maintained with heads replaced when worn.</p> <p>Spray arcs are monitored and adjusted as required.</p>
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	<p>Soil moisture levels are monitored to determine need.</p> <p>The irrigation system is computer controlled.</p> <p>Regular maintenance is undertaken to ensure efficiency</p>
	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	Water bills are reviewed and recorded allowing comparisons to identify billing anomalies indicating potential leaks
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 operates a licenced borehole feeding a reservoir that was oversized at construction providing 40,000 m3 capacity – substantially more than peak 2020 consumption.
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	<p>The areas under close management are continually reviewed – the club believe they have achieved the optimal course set up, but will continue to monitor play and request player feedback</p> <p>Management plans for the course are biased towards maintaining the historic character and managing pioneer species in favour of native species.</p>

			The club are continuing to work with a range of stakeholders including Natural England
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	Energy bills are reviewed and recorded regularly to identify unusual consumption patterns CIP Review the setting on the automatic lighting controls in the men's changing rooms and entrance foyer – adjust the sensitivity to reduce lights being on during "bright" days
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	The heating for the club, and some associated building, is provided by a biomass boiler installed prior to the 2019 verification. Fuel stock has been reviewed to identify a local source of waste woodchip – the management are keenly aware of the risks of woodchip created from clearcutting virgin forest and prefer to work with local suppliers that make due diligence easier.
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	Waste separation and recording are undertaken to monitor levels and improve the quality of recycled materials. Discussions with suppliers is ongoing to reduce packaging and improve recycling rates.
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	Biomass fuel stock has been included previously, the club also works with a range of local food suppliers and a range of services.
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	Waste is collected by a licenced contractor, as previously outlined. Waste bins are identified as 'general waste' or 'recycled materials'.

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	Licensed waste contractors are retained.
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COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		The club provides opportunities for bird watching and provides ecology talks and walks.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Volunteering for local charities and community projects is encouraged. Charity events are held to raise money for good causes.
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'	Collaboration with local schools and colleges and wildlife groups beds the club down with its community offering leisure and employment opportunities. Sustainability features within management meetings embedding in the management culture.
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 welfare and health benefits of golf or simply being out in nature are well known and promoted by the club.

C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The club has an open and inclusive policy for membership and general play.
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 follows national guidelines and requirements providing induction training and encouraging additional education to increase knowledge and encourage professional development across all areas of operation.
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 uses a range of methods to promote activities around sustainability including web and social media content.
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	The promotion of GEO certification, and engagement with wildlife organisation highlight the efforts on sustainability. Engaging with suppliers and stakeholders directly or via web, social media or other electronic formats increase awareness and promote sustainability.

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