GEO Certified® Report
Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club

Prepared by independent verifier, Tony Hanson

Certified by GEO Foundation: August 2022
Valid until: August 2025

“Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club demonstrates a range of projects, existing and new, which highlight their commitment to sustainability.

Reducing the close mown amenity grass has reduced annual operational costs by around £10,000, increasing the area of natural habitat, enhancing biodiversity and improving the visual appeal of the courses.

Working with ecology and woodland consultants has informed the plans for further improving and refining the natural environment, which is an enormous asset to the golf club. These projects have allowed greater staff involvement and opportunities to gain knowledge and learn new skills.”

Tony Hanson

(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Royal Mid-Surrey 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.

Royal Mid-Surrey 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, **Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Royal Mid-Surrey 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**

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	Reviewed maps/aerial images of the site. Confirmed and discussed ecological and Arboricultural survey – including plans for implementation. Observed habitats onsite during the course walk.

	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 site is subject to Covenants held by Crown Estates There are a range of requirements from specifying materials used on site to preventing removal of soil.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The Kew Observatory in located within the course boundaries, although privately owned the club liaise with the owners on course and maintenance matters to inform and protect the building.
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	The club have been reviewing the course landing areas and fairway definition, to enhance the playing experience and reduce man hours and fuel consumption. The indications are that the club has reduced fuel consumption by around £10,000 per year.
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	A survey was recently undertaken by James Hutchinson from BIGGA. This has reinforced the management style of the club and provided additional ideas to further enhance the natural environment.
N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species**		The increased areas of rough grassland and lower maintenance will provide habitat for a range of insects and small mammals. Badger setts are located in several areas around the course.
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 current sward mix provides the course with the combination of playing characteristics and disease/drought tolerance. Sward content is reviewed periodically, in light of recent temperatures exceeding 40C, and long dry periods this has never been so important. During the course walk the discussions included drought tolerance, but also due to the location next to a tidal stretch of the Thames River, possible cultivars that are more tolerant to brackish water. This could provide the club with alternative irrigation water source at some point. CIP Continue the creative discussions around alternative cultivars – I would be interested in any test using brackish water tolerant cultivars.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Good cultural practices are maintained

	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 allow informed turf management. There appears to be a good mix of knowledge and experience throughout the course management team.
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 and physical interventions are integral to the turf management programme. Awareness and attention to detail assist early detection of stress allowing preventive measures to be taken at an early stage.
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	Observations, site knowledge and records are combined to ensure chemical interventions are needs-based. Awareness and observation are encouraged to allow early identification and action. Data records helps to highlight conditions likely to create problems, highlighting specific areas where issues are more likely.
	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	Confirmed chemical application records. Chemicals brought to site and used immediately – no stock help on site. Spray licenses discussed and confirmed. Confirmed the use of Personal Protective Equipment. Discussed areas of turf used for dilute excess chemical mix
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.	Discussed Incident Response Plan. Buffer zones are maintained. Mapping confirmed and observed. CIP Formalise the Pollution Incident Response Plan in line with Pollution Prevention Guidelines -21. Consider periodic water testing at discharge/ingress points for the Thames
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored;	Fuels and oils are stored in bunded proprietary tanks.

		pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Further security is provided for the diesel tank by positioning it on the contained, covered washdown pad. Licenced contractors are retained to collect waste oils and other hazardous materials. Washdown water is treated by a closed loop biologically dosed treatment 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	The closed loop washdown pad is also used for refuelling vehicles and mixing pesticides and fertilisers. The area is contained and covered to prevent rainfall from reducing the system capacity. Old containers awaiting collection are triple washed. Waste oils are stored on bunded stands prior to collection by a registered contractor.
	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. Bunded fuel tanks are used, inspected regularly, and located appropriately. Spill kits were confirmed and discussed. Emergency wash areas are in place.
	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)	Mains sewerage for clubhouse and maintenance buildings. Closed loop washdown and containment pad with biological treatment.

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	Application is needs assessed to reduce overwatering. Data from soil moisture meters, weather station, and forecasts are considerations prior to irrigation runs.
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	Confirmed and discussed soil moisture monitoring. Confirmed and discussed irrigation controls – remote control. The irrigation system is regularly maintained and monitored to ensure accuracy of volume and location.
	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	Meters are read regularly and water bills are checked. Meters at the clubhouse have recently been reviewed by the water company to ensure accuracy.
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	Abstraction Licence discussed and confirmed
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	Managed turf areas have been reviewed and adjusted of the last 5 years. The club are continuing to monitor play, but they feel they have the optimal course set up currently. Additional areas of rough unimproved grassland.
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 checked against meter readings to ensure accuracy and anomalies. The club are reviewing energy use across the clubhouse, with upgrades to LED lighting and controls on air conditioning. CIP Continue the transition to LED Lighting. Consider the use of PIR sensors in store cupboards. Professional shop energy usage should be reviewed, although the professional services are effectively operated outside the club's control,

				at that time of the visit (air temperature 35C) the air conditioning was on, but the shop door wedged open. The professional shop lighting was switched on, and although lighting is important for retail areas and the fittings were LED, consideration should be given to matching lighting levels to natural light levels to reduce consumption.
	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 club has installed a solar array to the clubhouse roof to help reduce grid consumption. Grid electricity is purchased on a green zero emission tariff.
	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 is working with their waste contractor to improve separation and reporting. Waste used cooking oil is collected and recycled.
	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	Local suppliers are encouraged, particularly with services and fresh produce. Certain industry specific suppliers are required for business operations, but consolidating deliveries and supply route are considerations.
	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 separation is undertaken on site to increase the value of recycled materials. Bin labelling is in place. The club are starting a project to increase the waste to compost – reducing waste collection and providing compost for the gardens or other areas around the site.
	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	Waste contractors (local council) are licenced for the waste collected and the club periodically review approvals. CIP Continue to press local council waste department to provide better data as to where the club's waste ends up.

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**		There are opportunities for public access to the site. Birdwatchers are visitors to the site, along with local wildlife groups to monitor species on site. The clubhouse provides a venue for local community groups to meet.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	**C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes**		The club encourage staff to volunteer for good causes, and provide time off.
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'	Confirmed and discussed environment group meetings. The group consists of elected committee members and club staff.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	**C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities**		The club is aware of the mental and physical health benefits the club provides. Management works closely with staff to ensure needs are met, providing opportunities to initiate specific projects and scheduling activities.
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's membership and employment policy is open and inclusive.
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	Staff induction is undertaken and training provided and encouraged across the club. Greenkeeper training (internal and external) is provided, with flexibility to initiatives suggested by staff, or drawing staff in to wider club projects to increase interest, knowledge and team spirit.
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	Communications are provided by a combination of social media, electronic newsletters and face to face meetings/course walks.
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 club work with a range of stakeholders including local wildlife groups and local business to highlight the benefits the site offer to the natural environment.

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