



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Sunningdale Golf Club

Prepared by independent verifier, Tony Hanson

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

'Sunningdale Golf Club has undertaken a range of ecological projects including heathland restoration, woodland management and woodpiles to enhance biodiversity and habitats, in close collaboration with Surrey Wildlife Trust and other organisations.

Resource efficiency projects have been undertaken with LED transition, building management and water efficiency projects improving efficiency throughout the club.

The club is committed to continuing its journey to improved sustainability and climate change adaptation – I look forward to seeing the progress over the coming years.'

Tony Hanson

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that **Sunningdale 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.

Sunningdale 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, **Sunningdale Golf Club** should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, **Sunningdale 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 reviewed mapping including online mapping used for course management. Discussed and confirmed habitats and survey information.

			Observed and discussed habitat management including management of heather, woodland and wetland – reducing pioneer species overtaking heather, creating brash, woodpiles and standing deadwood.
	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	Discussed and observed the SSSI and the collaboration the with Surrey Wildlife Trust The club have engaged with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) and are working with the organisation to undertake surveys to better understand and protect the species onsite
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	No statutory protections onsite
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	Wear patterns and observation are used to identify key playing areas and to review areas in play
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	Discussed habitat and management plans – forthcoming ARC and hedgehog surveys, and the engagement with Surrey Wildlife Trust. Observed wood piles, brash, water and wetland, and beehives during the course walk. Collaboration with Surrey Wildlife Trust and ARC outlined previously.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Advice is taken to maintain habitat onsite to enhance ecological diversity while keeping the heathland character of the course and wider 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	2018 highlighted the need for the club to take action to adapt to climate change – longer drier periods with hotter summers. Fescues have been identified as the preferred species to provide greater drought, pest resilience and playing characteristics. There is a trial turf nursery adjacent to the maintenance buildings allowing testing cultivars and a source of turf for repairs and maintenance.

	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		<p>Cultural practices include coring and topdressing to encourage deeper rooting and consistency.</p> <p>The club have traditionally undertaken renovation in August, a time the membership accept as a quiet period, allowing recovery for events and competitions in September.</p>
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	<p>Soil testing forms part of the knowledge gathering allowing informed and targeted management.</p> <p>Applications are undertaken through a combination of site knowledge, observation, and data review.</p> <p>The club also has access to computer-based course mapping allowing locations requiring inputs to be linked to GPS spray equipment on course.</p>
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	<p>Equipment maintenance is a primary consideration, with equipment logs maintained by staff highlighting issues or problems.</p> <p>Cutting equipment is maintained onsite to ensure quality of cut. Moisture removal is undertaken, along with hand removal of weeds where appropriate.</p>
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	<p>Knowledge of the course, continuous inspection and data gathering allow turf management to be based on a systemic approach.</p> <p>Managing stress and identifying early indicators are a key element to the management process.</p>
	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	<p>Chemical applications are recorded and stock levels maintained.</p> <p>Applicator licences discussed along with access to chemical storage areas being restricted to qualified staff only.</p> <p>PPE observed and discussed.</p> <p>The GPS system provides a high level of accuracy in volumes mixed and areas sprayed resulting in very low levels of 'spare' mix – any residual mix is used on the practice ground</p>
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 staff have a good level of knowledge, with spill kits in place and a significant overlap with their detail COSHH product risk assessment. Buffer zones are programmed in to the spray equipment GPS preventing the risk of inaccurate application. CIP Formalise the Pollution Incident Response Plan in line with PPG-21 (provided)
	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	Observed, reviewed and discussed fertilizer, chemical and fuel storage areas and infrastructure. Observed and discussed waste contractor certification and transfer documentation. Discharge licence not required. CIP Create an independent Pollution Incident Response Plan in line with PPG-21 as part of the COSHH and H&S review being undertaken.
	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	Washdown, preparation and fuel dispensing are undertaken on a closed loop pad. Wash down water is treated and reused.
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	Local authority inspection is not required. Fuel tanks and pollution control/bunding observed and discussed – the maintenance area is being reviewed with a view to potential redevelopment. Observed first aid and access to water / showers.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences	Wastewater discharge licence;	No wastewater discharge licence required. Wash bay observed and reviewed as outlined previously.

		Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Mains sewerage. CIP Investigate the potential for car park and club buildings runoff attenuation for irrigation stock.
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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	Irrigation is based on need, weather conditions and incorporates weather compensation.
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	The club uses POGO moisture sensors linked to a computer based application to monitor soil moisture levels. The irrigation system and controls were upgraded after the summer of 2018, allowing greater application accuracy and control to individual heads.
	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 bill and meter readings are used to review consumption and to check for anomalies that may indicate leaks or control issues. Management accounting provides a secondary check to identify potential issues.
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. Abstraction volumes are metered and recorded, with option to use mains water if required.

			A water tank is located to the side of the pump house to help reduce the need to take water at peak times and avoid demand conflict with public water supply.
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>Over many years the club has reviewed areas in play on the course, resulting in what is now considered to be the optimal between challenge and habitat.</p> <p>Work to maintain habitat if ongoing – reducing pioneer species overtaking the preferred heathland character.</p> <p>CIP Continue the transition to LED lighting across the estate.</p>
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	<p>Energy bills are reviewed, and a pattern of consumption identified allowing anomalies to be identified.</p> <p>Building Management System is installed on site to improve energy efficiency.</p> <p>CIPs Review Building Management System capabilities to check whether it includes weather compensation and inhibits dry cycling.</p> <p>Review the potential to reduce the areas of the building in use and heated through the winter to reduce energy consumption.</p>
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	<p>Renewable energy options are being reviewed as part of a potential upgrade to the maintenance yard and to the clubhouse.</p> <p>CIP Review solar PV and solar PV potential during the potential refurbishment / replacement of the maintenance area, and clubhouse roof renovation.</p>
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	<p>Waste separation is in place across the facility.</p> <p>Paper use has been significantly reduced through the use of electronic correspondence and membership renewals.</p>

			<p>The club are continuing the process of identifying and reducing waste coming to site and improving recycling rates.</p> <p>CIP Continue the review of the halfway house operations to find ways to increase recycling / reuse rates – specifically the use of single use cups.</p>
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	Catering and local servicing and maintenance contractors have afforded the greatest opportunities for the club to access local supply chains.
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	<p>Confirmed and discussed the recording and processing of energy and water bills.</p> <p>Observed recycling separation across the site.</p>
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	Discussed and observed contractors used for waste collection from the site.

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		<p>The site is crossed by multiple footpaths providing access to the public.</p> <p>The club has invested in the creation of a website for the public, with QR codes on interpretation boards on the footpaths – scanning the QR</p>

			code provides access to maps and paths helping to improve the visitor experience and maintain safety from areas in play.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		The club encourages staff engagement and volunteering to help local communities and charities.
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'	Discussed and confirmed the working groups at the club Input in encouraged from all areas of operation.
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 are fully aware of the benefits the site offers to both players and to members of the public.
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 operates and open and inclusive policy.
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 and ongoing training is encouraged to benefit staff, the club and the patrons.
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	Information is disseminated on social media and websites highlighting the sustainability actions taken by the club and the wider natural capital value. The public access website and interpretation boards create reach beyond members
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 uses a range of electronic media discussed previously. The club work with a range of local stakeholders supplying the club with goods and services.

			Support for local community projects and charities is encouraged through time input and raising funds through a range of activities.
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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