## Verifier report.

## Executive summary (English & local language)

Österlens GK was founded in 1945 and has since then grown to be one of the major attractions for the municipality of Simrishamn since the club is on the third place in Sweden when it comes to guests. For some years the club consisted of only 6 holes and from 1951 of 9 holes. At 1981 the first 18 holes, Lilla Vik, where finished and the next 18 holes, Djupadal, where ready to play at 2001. At 2012 the Sustainbility group was founded and since then Österlens GK has made gigantic steps towards a sustainable management of the courses and the buildings. This is a tremendous effort. The facility with its courses lies on quite sensitive ground when it comes to geology, nature and water and the club has now began to take all the necessary steps to administrate this site in a long-term responsible way. The amount of chemical pesticides has for the last two years been down to zero and the use of organic fertilizers is in the absolute majority. Grazing sheep, manual sanding of sensitive sites and careful harvesting of the ponds is only a few of the activities carried out in order to enhance the biodiversity and attractiveness of the facility. Thorough activities and thoughts about energy use and trying diversify it is not only showing that the club is thinking in sustainable terms when it comes to this but in long-term when it comes to economy as the renewable energy sources is about to outburst the non-renewable ones like the fossil fuels. At last but not at least, it is a must to put forward the enthusiastic sustainable thinking in the leadership of the club, from the board and the club director to the course manager and the sustainable committee. This is a total must for a club to survive in the long run.

## Nature

The courses lie beautiful with overview of the Baltic Sea. At the oldest of them, Lilla Vik (Little Bay), has a clear seaside feeling and some of the holes have steep hills down to the sea. The newest, Djupadal (Deep valley) is a heathland course and lies a little bit further away from the sea but with some magnificent views over the sea.

The surveys from 2013, which consists mostly of the flora and fauna, on the both 18 hole courses are the ground for the thorough management plans for the courses, conducted by a professional ecologist in 2015. Worth meantioning is the rare Hazel dormouse (Muscardinus avellanarius), spotted at Orelund, a site on Lilla vik, and Dwarf everlast (Helichrysum arenarium), a very rare flower mostly seen in the southern Skåne, spotted at the sandy heath on the 14th hole on Lilla Vik.

The juridical designations that exists on the courses is the key habitat/biotope protected, the oak and hazel parts, along Orelund and the water protection area, consisting both of the courses and also a stonewall.

Creeping bent and red fescue, planted on the courses are ideal for the climate and Poa annua is still at the course since the old days. The club has no problem with the Poa as it is perenne. So the club is happy with the current mix. No red fescue is used on the greens though.

Since 2016 the club has thorough management plans for both of the courses. Some areas are sometimes sawn with meadow plant seeds. The sandy spots that are saved and maintained are

habitat for the sand lizard (Lacerta agillis). The creation of new ponds has enhanced the amount of water living animals and contains among others the rare and protected species like the Fire-bellied toad, European tree frog and Great crested newt. The ponds are harvested during autumn when no birds are breeding in them.
Grazing sheep, between hole 4 and 5 at Lilla Vik, in order to keep some areas from overgrowing is very beneficial and also appreciated by members and guests and the club is sure that the sheep attract customers. The sheep comes from an organic certified farm and the farmer was very hard about the conditions for the sheep, that is, no pesticides in the grass.

## Water

Most of the parts of the courses have a sandy soil leading to the fact that a lot of the water coming to the soil goes straight down below the growing area. Despite this, the level of consumption is rather ordinary for a Swedish golf club.

The water for irrigation is groundwater. The water is taken up by drilling and taken to the ponds. The club also must provide water to the creek leading down to the nearby village and this is the way of conducting this. The club is of course always very careful when pumping up water in order not to disturb the groundwater.

The irrigation is conducted in order to keep the turf alive, not to keep it green. A soil meter is used around three times a week. The wetting agent is used on certain spots on certain greens. All nozzles are changed to wind adapted ones. The sector sprayers are being adjusted manually.

Low-flow toilets have been installed in the clubhouse and the maintenance building. Djupadal is kept dry when no rain is falling and the irrigation done is only to keep the grass alive but Lilla Vik is more irrigated during dry season, much because of Poa. All in all, the club has noticed that the players think it more and more ok with really dry turf instead of wanting green turf all year around.

## Energy

In 2014 the club had a visit from the energy advisor from the municipality. He had several advices, among other things reducing the amount of subscriptions and securing down the ampere, which saves a lot of money. The advisor also had examples of how to save energy and money, for example putting curtains at the very large windows in the clubhouse.

All the measures conducted in order to save energy have saved the club around 50 000 -60 000 SEK/year. The entrepreneur revises the ventilation system every year in order to keep the amount of energy used for this.

The club uses grid electric for the golf carts and one of the cars owned by the club is driven on gas, both biogas and natural. Geothermal energy is used in order to heat the clubhouse. The area of the “hoses” (at about 1-11/2 meter under ground) used is about the area of a football ground/pitch

The new maintenance building at the Djupadal course now makes it possible for the staff to do all the work on the machines on spot instead of needing to drive the vehicles to the maintenance building on the other course. Together with the air/water-heating pump this of course will decrease the amount of energy needed and also decrease the amount of air pollution from the vehicles. And, of course the long-term economic benefits of these investments can be large.

## Supply Chain

The course manager doesn't like chemical pesticides because of the danger for humans, the nature, walking dogs and others. This set the criteria for how the courses are managed and obviously the courses are doing very, very well this criteria being followed.

The purchasing policy is informal but is used during all purchases. The club is always trying to buy local and to purchase energy efficient machines for example to the restaurant.

The club uses a lot of local suppliers, which of course is decreasing the transportations.

The absolute majority of the fertilizers used on the courses are since 2013 organic, which is brilliant. The company providing the organic fertilizers is called Ecoturf. The club procure bacteria from the local forest. The bacteria is grown in an aerated "compost tea" and then used as organic pesticides. These soil bacteria used on the greens are working very well. The small amount of inorganic fertilizers is used mainly in the early spring in order to get the turf going after the winter.
The amount of used chemical pesticides is almost down to zero and for the last two years no use at all has been carried out. This is of course great and goes well with the 2011 survey conducted by Scandinavian Turf grass and Environment Research Foudation (STERF) showing that around 60 per cent of golfers are willing to pay a higher fee for a chemical restricted course. The amount of fertilizers used is very similar because of the weather, which has been the same for the last three years.

The recycling station is most proper at the clubhouse, the shop and the restaurant. At the maintenance building the recycling is more uncertain as SITA comes at get it from a container.

## Pollution Control

For some years the club used a wetting agent based on coconut but as the result was not good enough the club stopped using it. Nowadays a more conventional wetting agent is used.

The analysis (As, Pb, Cd, Cr, Ni, Zn and Hg) made in 2001 of the groundwater used for irrigation showed a good status for the water. The municipality have no will to make the club make more analysis The municipality several times a year measures the water level.

The wastewater from the maintenance building goes to an oil separator, further on to a grease separator and from that out to the mains sewer. An alarm tells if the amount of fat and oil is to high and if that happens the responsible entrepreneur comes and empties the tanks.

The handling of hazardous materials is done in a proper way. Worth mentioning is that the regulations for this in Sweden is quite rigorous so the club has to do it very well in order not to breaking the law.

The club used to mix the pesticides in the field, all according to the rules from the authorities. Now with the new maintenance building at Djupadal the mixing is supposed to be done there but no pesticides have been used for the last years.

The club uses practically no chemical pesticides and an absolute majority of fertilizers used on the coursers are organic. This is major step in preventing pollution on the courses. Hybrid machines are used on the greens in order to keep the oil spill down.

## Community

The club has in its goals for the sustainability work clearly announced that this work would benefit the club when it comes to good-will, joyful golf playing, quality and the economy. Except for the annual sustainability plan the club since 2016 also have a long-term plan stretching until 2021, very impressive. Enhancement of the multifunctionallity is in the club's plans. The club has thoughts of installing an outdoor gym in order to enhance the multifunctionality. The club has overall serious plans to get more non-golfers to the courses, especially at Djupadal.

The course staffs have during 2016 received education concerning the new management plans for the nature at Djupadal and Lilla Vik.

The sustainability-working group has since 2013 the status of a proper committee. This certainly strengthens the sustainability work and gives this equal status to other committees as for example the Committees for the courses and the buildings.

At 2015 the club let three students from the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics conduct a serious competitive environmental strategy proposal for the club. The study clearly points out the environmental impact, both negative and positive, and gives clear proposals of how the club can conduct its sustainability work. This is, and will be, of great help to the club.
The club has close cooperation with the local group of Naturskyddsföreningen (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation).

At Djupadal there are two bronze-age habitats, which are saved by the club. Several old stonewalls are saved not only for the cultural heritage but also for the biodiversity.

Since the club started its serious sustainability work, which is only a few years old, members, board and staff have developed a thorough culture of embracing new environmental sustainable ideas. This is quite impressive and shows the enthusiasm and energy for this topic throughout the club's organisation.

The club makes annual surveys of the members and guests among other things the sustainability work. The club has serious plans, together with the municipality, to make a nature-walking trail around and on the Djupadal course. Arranged nature field trips are open for the public and at some of the trips around halve of the attendants have been non-golfers.

The club is one of five companies together with Region Skåne trying to develop the tourism in the local region. The project is called Tourist Destination Development Project, which includes the crucial development of the outdoor activities.

## Documentation Reviewed

- Action Plans and Project Proposals
- Awareness Raising Materials
- Certification Report
- Environmental Data
- Environmental Management Plan
- Environmental Policy
- External Surveys and Reports
- Internal Reports
- Minutes of Meetings
- Newsletters
- Register of Accidents

## Conclusion

Since the club started its serious sustainability work, members, board and staff have developed a thorough culture of embracing sustainable ideas. This is quite impressive and shows the enthusiasm and energy for this topic throughout the club's organisation. The deep concern about the nature, environment, eco-branding and at the same time thinking in a long-term way about the economy clearly shows that the club is on the right track. There are many things to highlight; The collaborations with external partners, the will not to use chemical pesticides and use more and more organic fertilizers, all the activities to enhance the biodiversity and the serious activities, now and in the near future, in order to create a sustainable energy consumption. If I have to put the spotlight on one of those topics I must chose the pesticides and fertilizers. One of the things that golf clubs in general is being accused for is using too much chemicals while managing the golf courses. This is of course true for a lot of golf clubs but when a club like Österlens GK really put efforts in showing that you can manage a golf course without using chemicals and inorganic fertilizers it makes the image of golf clubs brighter and at the same time produces a sustainable golf course. The challenge for the club is now how to use its sustainable management in order to go out and do some serious eco-branding. Österlens GK has all the possibilities in the world to achieve this goal.

## Certification Highlights

- The new maintenance building at Djupadal saving money, time and decreasing air pollution of not at least greenhouse gases.
- The grazing sheep is really a good idea from many points of view.
- The concrete energy savings is, from my point of view, one of the main things that shall be carried out by a serious golf club. Nevertheless, it is great that a club like Österlens GK, that has been doing serious sustainability work for only a few years also has been taken on this topic really good.