



Sustainable Golf Development

Voluntary Sustainability Standard

Second Edition

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Foreword

It is a positive signal of intent from the golf construction industry to be releasing the second edition of these criteria at this moment in time. We are currently seeing more people than ever playing the sport and reading of more places building new venues and finding ways to make golf, and the open spaces it is played in, more accessible to more people. While the awareness of the climate emergency we now all face has never been greater, there remains a need to continue to set all our sights on even greater improvements and to maximise the value, productivity and ecosystem services gained from new developments.

Increasing expectations from policymakers and society is placing additional scrutiny and regulation upon proposals for new development. We know now that taking proactive steps to create a dialogue with our local authorities and communities leads to innovative solutions for change, that are grounded in the place and are underpinned by substance and integrity.

By the golf construction industry continuing to contribute and adopt transparent published voluntary standards, the industry is together on taking climate action in its work and being the sport that plays a leading part in this global challenge. Through the application of this voluntary standard over the past five years, we have seen golf courses restore and create significant areas of new native habitats, generate hundreds of new jobs for local communities and remove high energy demands, reducing long-term emissions.

This new edition moves the bar even higher and reflects the changing times in which the industry now operates globally. The golf business and individuals who adopt these criteria can be assured that they are playing their part, and through this voluntary standard, have a tool at their disposal to be able to credibly demonstrate the true positive impact their work is generating.

By aligning golf development practices with healthy native ecosystems, the needs of local communities and the ambition of local and international business, this document ensures benefit to developers, owners, designers, constructors and others by means of the following:

1. Understanding the baseline for sustainable golf developments.
2. Supporting golf development's associated professions.
3. Ensuring rigorous and comprehensive coverage of a project's positive impacts.
4. Delivering credible international recognition and messaging.

The central principle underpinning the work that has gone into creating this voluntary international standard is that any golf development has the potential to enhance local ecosystems, conserve resources, support communities and take climate action.

GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf
2021



photo credit: Ombria, Portugal

Acknowledgements

The consultation process of this standard was conducted in line with ISEAL Alliance Codes of Best Practice and was overseen by a diverse body of consultees making up the Working Group.

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Preface

This document forms the international voluntary sustainability standard for the process of developing a golf course. It is part of a larger body of sustainable golf documentation that also includes guidance, mentoring and a certification system for the:

1. Operations of a golf facility.
2. Development of a golf facility.
3. Hosting of a golf tournament.

The schematic below illustrates this larger set of information and the respective ownership groups:



Figure 1: Sustainable golf documents

Application

The voluntary sustainability standard for golf developments sets out a framework for the effective integration of sustainability into the design and construction processes for golf developments.

This document is intended for use by a number of groups, including golf industry professionals and developers, to inform about a generally understood baseline. The document should also be used by governments and permitting authorities to support policy making and raising awareness.

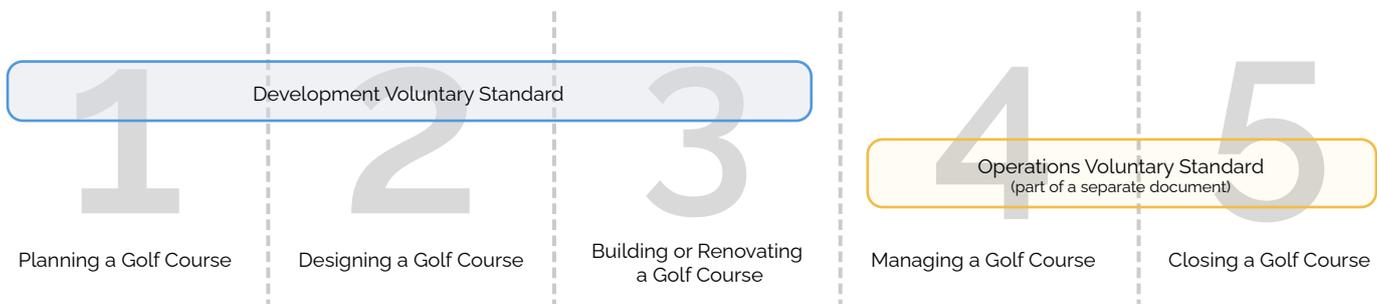


Figure 2: Relationship between the activity and the appropriate voluntary standard

Auditing and Certification

Auditing is an information gathering process that is integral to participation in a certification system. Auditing evaluates how well voluntary standards are met and how well outcomes are delivered through the certification process.

Certification is achieved by demonstrating independently verified practical outcomes against a voluntary standard.

This voluntary sustainability standard document, the mentoring and the certification process should be viewed as individual parts. A golf development choosing to use the voluntary sustainability standard can adopt one of four scenarios. The schematic below illustrates those four scenarios, the items a proposed golf development would use and the types of claims it could make:

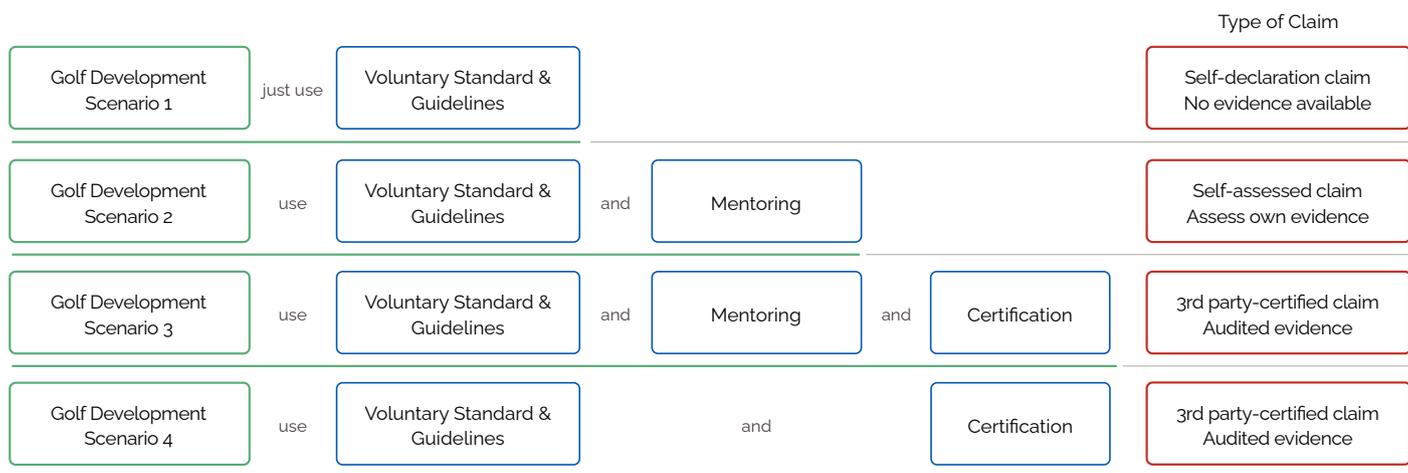


Figure 3: Golf development scenarios

Document Structure

This document covers the stages of a golf development, from preparation to completion, as well as the range of sustainability issues relevant to the golf development process under the headings Nature, Resources and Community.

There are three core components for each criterion:

1. The **sustainability objective** sets out the individual issues to be addressed and targeted.
2. The **detailed performance requirement** represents action that should be taken and frames the outcomes to be achieved.
3. The **supporting documents** are used to prove that a criterion has been met – see the 'Supporting Documents' section on page 22 for details.

As an international voluntary standard, the generic criteria are as specific as they can be, setting out a framework to guide individual projects and allow the development process to respond to site-specific conditions.



photo credit: St Andrews Links Trust, The Castle Course, Scotland

Climate Action

Alongside the benefits a golf development can generate for native biodiversity and local communities are key climate action issues. Throughout the voluntary sustainability standard, reference points have been added to those individual criterion that contribute the most to the climate profile of a new project in the preparation, design and construction stages – all of which have a lasting impact on the lifetime operations of the facility.

The decision-making by golf development teams on the identified carbon profile criteria will directly impact their contribution to global climate action. This in turn helps the sport do all that it can to restrict the global temperature rises, sea level rises and climate shifts predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Key, impactful decisions can be made in areas such as:

- Minimising energy and fuel demands.
- Maximising resource efficiency measures.
- Opting for low embodied energy and recycled materials.
- Designing resilient and balanced land use plans.

As the industry takes greater measures to step up its efforts in furthering climate action, it is vital that the industry's voluntary sustainability standard identifies practical ways in which golf development can positively contribute. Climate resilience, resource efficiency and a reduced reliance on chemical controls are central issues to consider in the sustainable approach to golf development.

Buildings

The scope of the voluntary sustainability standard extends to include core golf buildings. The definition incorporates building components within the project's boundary that are exclusively used for the purposes of maintaining and operating the golf course itself. This specifically includes:

- Maintenance facility building(s).
- Starter's huts.
- Practice area(s).
- Restrooms or other small auxiliary buildings.
- Shelters or rest stops.

The scope of the voluntary sustainability standard expressly does not extend to cover operations such as for food & beverage, locker rooms, well-being centres, washrooms, pro shops, check-in and bag drop facilities. The non-golf buildings that house these kinds of operations are clearly important considerations in the sustainability impacts of a project and very relevant to tackling climate change issues.

Therefore, a sustainable design approach should be adopted at the earliest possible stage for these non-golf buildings, and appropriate sustainable buildings codes, guidelines and criteria should be followed. There are international building specialised sustainable criteria that are widely available and include systems such as:

- The US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Designs (LEED).
- The UK Buildings Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM).
- The Green Building Council Australia's Green Star.
- The International Living Future Institute's Living Building Challenge.

All projects engaging with the voluntary sustainability standard for golf development are strongly encouraged to seek additional guidance and standards for their non-golf building components.



The symbol used as a reference point throughout the voluntary standard to denote the relevant Climate Action criterion.

'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).
Our common future. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 43.



photo credit: Irie Fields Golf Club, St Kitts and Nevis

Criteria Introduction

The criteria are written in three stages, similar to the common stages of a golf development. The first is the preparation stage, the second is the design stage and the third is the construction stage. In each stage, the three sustainability themes, **Nature**, **Resources** and **Community**, are covered.

Each of the three themes has a number of criteria, categorised as **baseline** and **improvement**.^{1,2}

The level of consideration for any core golf building elements on a proposed development is limited to the external skin of the core golf buildings outwards into the landscape and their placement within the landscape. No criteria relate to the internal fixtures, fittings and internal finishes of any core golf buildings.

Each individual criterion has a code attached to it for ease of reference. Figure 4 explains the form of the nomenclature. The example code in Figure 4 refers to the **first** criterion in the **Design** stage of the process under the **Nature** theme. The letter '**B**' means it is considered a **Baseline** criterion.

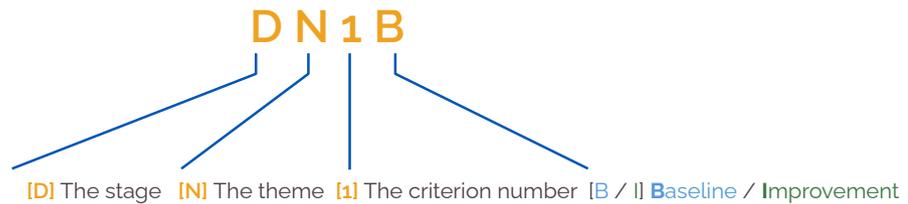


Figure 4: Criterion nomenclature



¹ For ease of referencing, the two categories are colour coded: **blue** – baseline; **green** – improvement.

² Definition of performance levels in line with ISEAL Standard Setting Baseline Guide, p. 21 – https://www.isealalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource/2017-11/ISEAL_Standard_Setting_Code_v6_Dec_2014.pdf.

Preparation Stage

Introduction

Possibly the most important decision pertaining to any potential golf development is site selection. A site that suits the proposed type of development is immediately well on the way to being more sustainable. A site selected for location or availability rather than suitability for golf will mean a far harder job. Site selection drives almost all of the criteria (detailed in the following pages). It is important to undertake a fundamental review of site suitability before starting design work so that developers understand the implications of choice of land. This fundamental review must consider the legislative context (e.g. environmental impact assessment laws), local planning context, existing land use and any local or national development plans consulted on and set by the appropriate authorities.

Example

Brief: 18-hole course capable of hosting regionally significant tournament and attracting golf tourists.

Client: Hotel chain with a strong corporate and social responsibility policy.

Site A: A sandy rolling land area with plentiful supplies of ground water able to be used for irrigation. The land form is an excellent match and the golf layout requires almost no earth movement. Much of the natural habitat can be retained and the golf worked in around it. The existing natural vegetation means that almost no new planting is required.

Site B: A flat site on fine-textured, slow-draining soils and largely wooded. Extensive clearance is needed and most of the site has to be reshaped to create interest. A new drainage system needs to be installed across the whole site because of the soils and the extent of the earth movement. The requirement of the client that the course be playable in all weathers means that the heavy soils need to be covered with 300 mm of sand, amounting to 180,000 m³ of imported sand.

These are two extremes, but it is clear that, with careful planning, **Site A** could meet the voluntary standard quite easily. On the other hand, it would be very difficult for **Site B**. Cases will likely happen, even on **Site B**, where individual criteria can be handled sympathetically, but potential overall losses resulting from inappropriate site selection need to be carefully considered.

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
P1B	Appropriate site selection	Ensure all efforts are made to minimise development of prime agricultural land, protect land supporting local livelihoods, protect floodplain capacity and conserve threatened and/or endangered habitats and species. Seek support and engage with relevant stakeholders, such as local authorities, where necessary.	Site selection statement
P2B	Establishment of legal context	Demonstrate that alternative sites have been considered, also within a larger multi-use development lot, and that Free and Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) or equivalent has been agreed. Ensure clarity around land ownership, transport access and legal permits from the correct local authority.	Site selection statement Land agreements
P3B	Economic due diligence	Ensure an economic feasibility study has been carried out to determine the economic sustainability of the project, where appropriate.	Feasibility study
P4B	Promotion of development team leadership	Ensure that the development team is committed to sustainable development is aware of its role and has expertise to deliver. Have in place a Sustainability Leader on the project team where possible.	Sustainability vision statement
P5I	Environmental and social due diligence	Ensure that, in the feasibility study, all material issues have been considered and addressed in their environmental and social contexts, in consultation with local stakeholders, community representatives/ members and suppliers.	Feasibility study

Design Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
DN1B	Develop clear understanding of species, habitats, hydrology and geomorphology	Study in detail ecology, hydrology, designations, soils, geology and geomorphology of the site. Any invasive species to be identified and managed appropriately. ³	Completed baseline surveys ⁴
DN2B	Ensure golf course and landscape design typology is clearly compatible with site and surroundings	Avoid predetermined artificial or enforced design styles.	Golf course design statement
DN3B	Protect the most valuable landscape, cultural and ecological features	Avoid ecological hot spots and sensitive landscape zones. Retain existing valuable and/or protected trees, habitats and cultural sites.	Landscape plan Routing plan Baseline surveys
DN4B	Use native or locally important species in landscaping designs, and drought-tolerant varieties if applicable	Landscape planting to maximise native, naturalised, locally adapted and important species (exceptions for some sites where aesthetic or cultural heritage issues are relevant, or for garden areas).	Landscape plan Golf course design statement
DN5B	Ensure that any topographic changes protect and enhance landscape character	Ensure no degradation to existing landscape character. ⁵	Grading plan
DN6B	Consider whether open water is appropriate	Provide clear justification for any open water in desert/arid locations.	Water resource statement
DN7B	Minimise pollution from maintenance facility	Plan early how to integrate best practice pollution control measures into maintenance facility design.	Building design statement
DN8B	Plan an ecologically rich landscape ⁶	Maximise the integration of native habitats and ecology in the design. ⁷	Routing plan Landscape plan
DN9B	Maximise habitat patch sizes and connectivity	Internal habitat patches to be large enough for identified key species. Link internal patches, maximise habitat size, and create connections to wider landscape habitats.	Landscape plan

³ National or regional advice should be sought for the appropriate course of action to handle invasive species.

⁴ See Supporting Document section for details of specific survey requirements.

⁵ The design and impact of associated infrastructure such as roads are not subject to this criterion.

⁶ A landscape with healthy interacting living organisms existing in plentiful quantities.

⁷ Endemic species are classed as native in this context.

Design Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
DN10B	Adopt a 'natural systems' approach to water management, considering water quality and habitat creation	Utilise natural soakaways, attenuation areas, swales and turfgrass biofilters. Incorporate vegetative buffer zones into design. ⁸ Allow seasonal flooding where possible. Demonstrate that water table control does not adversely impact upon the quality of surrounding water and habitats. ⁹	Landscape plan Golf course design statement Drainage plan
DN11B	Naturalise any water features as far as possible	Create diverse, living lakes and wetlands suitable to the site, maximising ecological value as far as practical. ¹⁰	Landscape plan Golf course design statement
DN12B	Minimise visual intrusion of bunkers, tees and green complexes on visually sensitive sites	No significant adverse impacts on visual amenity of key receptors or viewpoints.	Golf course design statement
DN13I	Consider the visual impact of core golf buildings	Avoid prominent or highly exposed positions and breaking skylines. External materials to be in keeping with geographical region.	Building design statement
DN14I	Use permeable surfaces	Hard surfaces on the golf course property, such as cart paths, to be made of permeable materials.	Landscape plan Materials specification
DN15I	Minimise the extent of intensively managed turfgrass areas	Minimum area of the site within the development boundary to become intensively managed turfgrass.	Grassing plan 
DN16I	Increase ecological interest of the external skin of the core golf buildings	Utilise ecological building techniques such as green roofs, green walls and insect housing.	Building design statement
DN17I	Minimise the visual impact of signage and furniture	Maximise the use of local sustainably sourced materials and position to integrate with the surroundings.	Landscape plan

⁸ Where circumstances dictate that the inclusion of these water management measures will have a detrimental effect on other connected items such as historical landscape setting, downstream watershed management and increased soil damage, inclusion of such measures may not be warranted.

⁹ Water quality indicators to be in line with the International Technical Committee on Water Quality (ISO/TC 147)

¹⁰ When the naturalisation of water bodies will have a detrimental effect on other connected items such as historical landscape setting, downstream watershed management and increased soil damage, the inclusion of such measures may not be warranted.

Design Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
DR1B	Ensure responsible use of site and surrounding water resources, including watershed.	Undertake and analyse baseline surveys to ensure informed water resource decisions and implement recommendations, particularly on water sourcing.	Baseline hydrology survey
DR2B	Seek opportunities to minimise energy use in design	Design to minimise energy use and demonstrate how this is achieved.	Sustainable energy statement 
DR3B	Minimise impact on key hydrological and flood zones on site if applicable	Avoid these areas for built development and net positive fill.	Grading plan Baseline hydrology survey
DR4B	Minimise volume of earthwork	Design a course which does not require excessive earthworks in order to minimise fuel use during construction.	Grading plan 
DR5B	Maximise irrigation water efficiency	When needed, install irrigation systems and technologies, such as weather stations, to deliver the correct amount of water most efficiently to the smallest possible area. Restrict irrigation only to genuine priority areas with flexibility in the system to control application areas. Identify ways golf course irrigation water can come from recycled or 'off grid' sources. ¹¹	Irrigation design Water resource statement
DR6B	Use local materials	Minimise the average total distance construction materials will travel. Give preference to onsite or locally, responsibly and sustainably sourced materials where feasible.	Materials specification 
DR7B	Select best-adapted turf species and cultivars for the local environmental conditions and to minimise long-term resource requirements	Maximum stress, disease, temperature and drought-resistant species to be selected where possible. Select grass species with moderate maintenance requirements such as mowing and top dressing rates. Consider these long-term maintenance impacts, budgets and the final quality of the playing surface in the decision-making process.	Agronomic statement 
DR8B	Optimise location of core golf buildings to benefit from natural heating, cooling and lighting	Analyse the location and aspect of core golf buildings.	Building design statement 

¹¹ The quality and potential impact of using recycled water on the local environment must be assessed before utilising recycled water sources as irrigation water sources.

Design Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
DR9B	Reduce fuel use in maintenance	Consider ease of maintenance access and mowing regimes to avoid excessive fuel use. Consider the use of electric- or hybrid-powered maintenance machinery.	Landscape plan Grading plan Materials specification 
DR10B	Maximise the energy efficiency of drainage design	Justify the use of piped drains in light of criterion DN10B.	Water resource statement 
DR11B	Maximise the energy efficiency of irrigation system	Design irrigation system to maximise benefits of topography, soil type and climatic conditions. Design irrigation system to optimise use of pipe and wire. Consideration to be given to use of recycled HDPE or an equivalent high-quality pipe material.	Irrigation design 
DR12B	Minimise fuel use in buggies	Design a golf course that can be walked where climate and terrain permit. Use electric- or hybrid-powered buggies if they are required.	Routing plan Materials specification 
DR13I	Use recycled materials and materials with recycled content	Maximise the integration of recycled material into the supply chain. Where available, maximise use of certified products and materials equal to ISEAL Alliance standards.	Materials specification 
DR14I	Manage precipitation onsite ¹²	Define the amount of precipitation to be retained and released from the site. Optimise the water management design to benefit the entire watershed.	Water resource statement
DR15I	Consider development as 'net zero energy'	Assess the potential of onsite or local renewables such as solar panels. Assess the feasibility of exporting onsite-generated energy back to the national grid. Integrate either or both where possible.	Sustainable energy statement 
DR16I	Integrate re-use and re-cycling of water around core golf buildings	Where possible, utilise harvested rainwater for graywater for golf and landscape irrigation as well as cart and machinery wash down. ¹³	Water resource statement
DR17I	Achieve an appropriate sustainability certification for the non-golf buildings within the property	Undertake an appropriate sustainability certification from the relevant authority/organisation for all non-golf buildings on the property.	Building design statement 

¹² Ensure a full understanding of the watershed and consider any potential detrimental effects on other connected items such as downstream watershed management and increased soil damage.

¹³ Use of harvested rainwater must be in accordance with relevant legislation.

Design Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
DC1B	Define supply chain of products and materials	Identify key opportunities and challenges in materials supply and demonstrate how they can be addressed.	Materials specification
DC2B	Undertake local consultation	Consult with local community and advertise to raise local awareness. Encourage input through meetings/ open days, in writing, by phone and via email.	Community engagement statement
DC3B	Protect cultural heritage	Design to protect and/or incorporate features of historical and cultural significance if any.	Archaeological survey and statement
DC4B	Ensure principles of 'Access for All' are implemented	Proactively consider all requirements for accessible core golf buildings to meet the access needs of disabled people.	Building design statement
DC5B	Incorporate public access where appropriate	Maintain an appropriate type of community access to all or part of the property, or mitigate any detrimental affects to the existing situation.	Landscape plan
DC6B	Justify transport impact	Minimise the demands placed on the community's transportation network through development both in construction and long-term. Promote future multi-modal transport methods as part of wider sustainable travel networks.	Community engagement statement
DC7I	Undertake local engagement	Engage with, listen and respond to local opinion. Encourage input through meetings/ open days, in writing, by phone and via email and give transparent feedback on how identified issues have been addressed.	Community engagement statement
DC8I	Promote ethically and environmentally led procurement	Define policy for procurement of products and services. Suppliers and contractors to conform with Ethical Trading Initiative's base code or equivalent.	Procurement policy



Design Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
DC9I	Promote community integration and awareness	Establish ways in which the development can contribute to local communities, for example, promoting publicly accessible outdoor facilities onsite or events programmes to help raise awareness of sustainability issues, such as local ecology, cultural heritage and renewable energy.	Community engagement statement
DC10I	Incorporate educational values	Design in educational opportunities such as placements, open days (i.e. pre- and post-construction) and onsite classroom facilities etc.	Community engagement statement
DC11I	Promote and improve community health and well-being	Incorporate opportunities for non-golf-related health and well-being activities appropriate and proportional to site conditions, project scope and location.	Landscape plan

Construction Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
CN1B	Ensure sensitive site clearance and protective measures are implemented	Plan to work outwards from centreline. Incorporate 'found' features where possible. Make allowance in the contract for appropriate site protection measures to be installed such as appropriate tree protection fencing.	Site clearance plan Site protection plan
CN2B	Avoid impacts on biodiversity	Phase construction works to minimise risk of disturbance to environmentally significant wildlife species. Give consideration to key times of year such as nesting times.	Construction programme
CN3B	Plan sensitive haul routes	No areas of high ecological value to be disturbed for site routes.	Baseline ecology survey
CN4B	Robust and secure site storage with critical pollution prevention measures	Fuel, oil and chemical stores to be on impervious bases within a containment or embankment to control spillage extent and wash pad runoff. Where possible, incorporate water recycling/disposal systems with oil separators or equivalent systems. Maintain all equipment and monitor for leaks. When possible, keep storage areas away from water courses.	Pollution control statement
CN5B	Minimise hazardous substances	Understand and comply with local and national legislation and with demonstrable voluntary measures brought on site relating to chemical application. Minimise amount of selective herbicide to be used for vegetation clearance.	Pollution control statement ¹⁴ Ecology survey Staff briefing statement Site clearance plan

¹⁴ See Supporting Document section for detail on indicators demonstrating that voluntary measures have been brought in.

Construction Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
CN6B	Protect high-value landscape, ecological and cultural features	<p>Set cordoned off 'no impact zones' to protect areas of high ecological or cultural value, both surveyed and found in construction.</p> <p>No damage to be caused to these areas as a result of construction works.</p> <p>Ensure no net loss of individual nationally and regionally protected species of flora and fauna.</p>	<p>Baseline ecology survey</p> <p>Archaeological survey</p> <p>Staff briefing statement</p> <p>Site protection plan</p> <p>Monitoring statement</p>
CN7B	Protect existing water bodies and groundwater	<p>Appropriate water body protection to be in place, including consideration for groundwater aquifers.</p> <p>Minimise sediment and chemical runoff from construction work.</p>	<p>Erosion control plan</p> <p>Staff briefing statement</p>
CN8B	Minimise soil erosion	<p>Use erosion control fences, temporary ditches, sediment traps, phasing of works and other measures.</p> <p>Minimise time bare soil is exposed.</p> <p>No unnecessary damage to integrity of native subsoil.</p> <p>No cultivation operations to be carried out in very dry/windy conditions without mitigation measures in place.</p>	<p>Soil resource statement</p> <p>Erosion control plan</p>
CN9B	Responsible use of pesticides and fertiliser	<p>Monitor and promote sensitive application of pesticides, fertilisers and other chemicals throughout construction and into grow-in stage, applying these controls on a last resort only principle.</p> <p>The strict application of buffer zones and no-spray/treatment areas around watercourses, wetlands, reed beds, ditches, marshy grasslands etc</p>	<p>Staff briefing statement</p> <p>Monitoring statement</p> <p>Pollution control statement</p>
CN10B	Minimise impact of chemical spillages	<p>All chemical, fuel and oil spillages to be cleared immediately.</p>	<p>Pollution control statement</p> <p>Staff briefing statement</p>



Construction Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
CN11B	Minimise topsoil damage	Only move topsoil when conditions are suitable. Use plant machinery expressly designed for the purpose. Minimise periods of topsoil storage, and stockpile in accordance with best practice guidelines.	Soil resource statement 
CN12B	Reinstate damaged areas of the site	Areas disturbed in construction to be reinstated, restored and where possible, ecologically enhanced following completion. ¹⁵	Statement of intent
CN13B	Managed risk of wildfire	Consider management of fuel on site and consult local authority for regional practices on vegetated areas.	Statement of intent
CN14I	Raise awareness of any sensitive habitats and species	Ensure all site staff are aware of any sensitive habitats and/or species that have been surveyed and mapped.	Staff briefing statement
CN15I	Plan efficient haul routes	Where feasible, use future permanent roadways as site routes.	Construction compound plan 
CN16I	No use of hazardous substances in out-of-play areas and areas of high ecological value	Mechanical methods to be utilised to remove weed species in out-of-play areas and within areas of high ecological value.	Staff briefing statement
CN17I	Reduce impact of ground works on adjacent roads	Prior to commencement of work, suitable measures to be implemented to ensure that sediment and other materials are not tracked onto a public road by vehicles leaving the site.	Pollution control statement
CN18I	Reduce noise levels to a minimum	Carefully plan construction compounds to be away from neighbouring property and areas of high ecological value. Use machinery with high-noise operating levels responsibly when within 50 m of any neighbouring property.	Pollution control statement Baseline ecology survey

¹⁵ If areas of acid sulphate soils were discovered during the geomorphological survey stage, the appropriate course of action needs to be taken if these areas were disturbed during construction. Seek local or regional agency advice.

Construction Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
CN19l	Reduce dust/smoke emissions to a minimum	Minimal onsite burning. Screen areas or use non-potable water bowser to minimise dust. Plan and manage timing of earthworks to reduce dust.	Pollution control statement 
CN20l	Zero or the absolute minimum application of pesticides during construction and grow-in processes	Use zero or the absolute minimum pesticide applications during the construction of the golf course. Monitor and record the alternative forms of control utilised.	Pollution control statement

Construction Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
CR1B	Minimise fuel consumption	Minimise trip numbers; ensure efficient delivery planning and reduce unnecessary grading and landscape changes.	Construction programme Logistics statement 
CR2B	Reduce waste	Sort construction waste streams onsite for safe and appropriate disposal or recycling.	Waste management plan
CR3B	Use low sulphur diesel oil	All diesel vehicles and equipment engines to use low-sulphur diesel.	Plant and equipment schedule
CR4B	Efficient waste management	Reuse or recycle as many non-hazardous materials from the site as possible such as vegetation, rocks, soil, oil, antifreeze, batteries and other chemicals used in the construction process, to reduce disposal in landfills or incinerators. ¹⁶	Waste management plan
CR5B	Minimise resources used in plant production and supply	Consider establishing an on-site plant, turf and seed nursery.	Statement of intent
CR6B	Ensure diligent water monitoring	Monitor the quality and quantity of water courses i.e. streams, creeks, ponds and groundwater pre- and post-construction.	Monitoring statement
CR7B	Avoid use of peat	Identify and implement all available alternatives to use of peat such as zeolites, porous ceramic and diatomaceous soils.	Soil resource statement 
CR8I	Explore transportation alternatives	When possible, use low carbon haulage methods such as rail or boat/barge. Give preference to electric or hybrid vehicles and machinery.	Logistics statement Plant and equipment schedule 
CR9I	Use onsite plant production and supply	Establish an onsite plant, turf and seed nursery.	Statement of intent
CR10I	Reduce fuel used for onsite machinery and generators	Maximise percentage of machinery, generators and site traffic running on renewable fuel or, where available, responsibly sourced biodiesel.	Plant and equipment schedule 

¹⁶. Any soils identified as acid sulphate soils are not to be reused.

Construction Stage



Nature



Resources



Community

Criterion	Sustainability Objective	Detailed Performance Requirements	Supporting Documents
CC1B	Promote sensitive traffic management	Create logistics statement to minimise impact on local people and public road surfaces. Minimise Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) that come and go to site per week. Set time limits and curfews on HGV deliveries (i.e. not before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.).	Logistics statement
CC2B	Provide staff with good working conditions	Availability of clean, hygienic onsite shelter(s) and provision of adequate sanitation and water.	Construction compound plan
CC3B	Provide opportunity and training for local workers	Maximise percentage of site staff and subcontractors from local communities. Provide proactive training for local workforce, using accredited providers where possible.	Employee schedule Staff briefing statement
CC4I	Promote community open day(s)	Plan day(s) of site open access to an invited list, i.e. pre- and post-construction.	Community engagement statement
CC5I	Raise environmental awareness around site	Provide environmental awareness for people, for example, site interpretation panels, toolbox talks, noticeboards covering key environmental, cultural and community topics, leaflets and educated staff members.	Community engagement statement



photo credit: Hoiana Shores

Supporting Documents Introduction

Whether a project wants to be certified or not, to make claims about its sustainability credentials, it is necessary to have compiled supporting documentation. This section is intended as a guide for project teams, enabling understanding of the kinds of information contained within the supporting documentation.

The list is by no means comprehensive or binding, but is intended to act as a guide to the kind of supporting documents anticipated in meeting the voluntary sustainability standard.

The list places supporting documents under generic document titles for organisational purposes only. It is accepted that not all golf developments can, or will, produce all the supporting documents listed, and widely understood that this information can be demonstrated through alternative methods.

The list is correct at the time of writing, but will be subject to ongoing review and amendment as new industry voluntary standards, technologies and methodologies emerge.

The relevant criteria to which each document relates are noted alongside each generic document title.

Figure 5 explains the listing components.

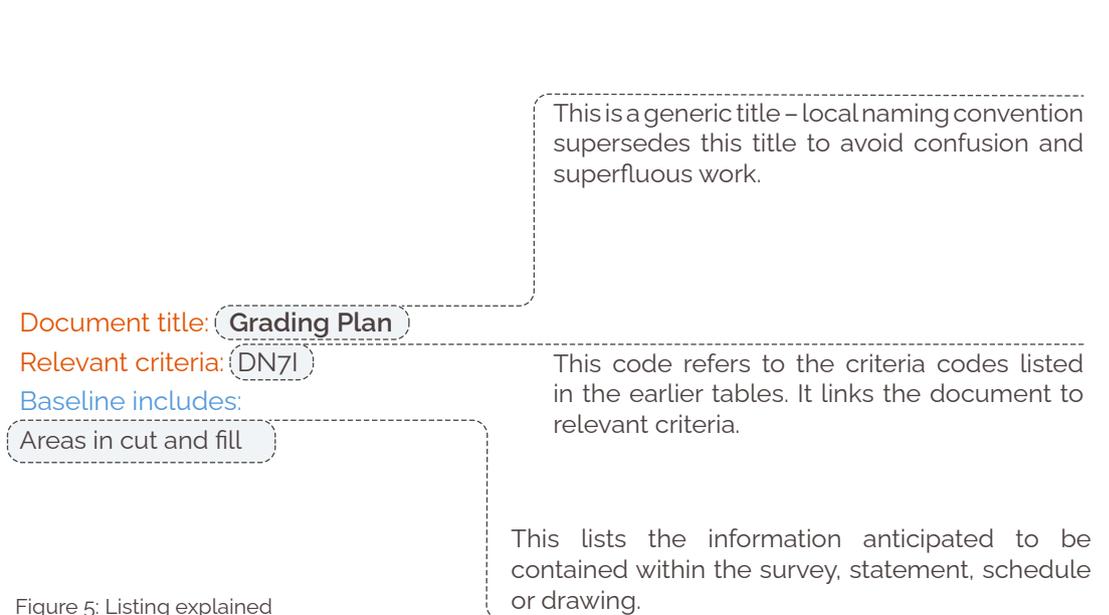


Figure 5: Listing explained



photo credit: West Cliffs Golf Links

Preparation Stage

STATEMENTS

Must submit:

Document title: Site selection statement

Relevant criteria: P1B, P2B

Baseline includes:

Justification for chosen site, considering agricultural land status, floodplain capacity and protected or threatened habitats and species

Explanation of the alternatives considered and why they were not chosen

Discussions with local authorities and stakeholders

Document title: Land agreements

Relevant criteria: P2B

Baseline includes:

Clarity around any Free and Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) or equivalent legal agreements

Clarity around land ownership, transport access and any local authority permits or equivalent

Document title: Feasibility study

Relevant criteria: P3B

Baseline includes:

Justification for site selection supported by market research for locality and region

Sustainable business case or rationale for development

Document title: Sustainability vision statement

Relevant criteria: P4B

Baseline includes:

Outlining project team's management structure/organisation chart

Project's sustainability vision

Individuals' expertise and their assigned roles and responsibilities

Document title: Feasibility study

Relevant criteria: P5I

Improvement includes:

Preliminary findings for supply chain challenges

Local environmental and social issues to be addressed in an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) or similar.

Local stakeholders and suppliers consultation records.



photo credit: Hilversumsche, Netherlands

Design Stage

SURVEYS

Document title: Hydrology survey and statement

Relevant criteria: DN1B, DR1B, DR3B

Baseline includes:

Site mapping of drainage channels and existing watercourses
Available mapping of watersheds and hydrological zones¹⁷
Available mapping of groundwater aquifers
Available flood risk assessment
Water quality sampling

Document title: Ecology survey and statement

Relevant criteria: DN1B, DN3B

Baseline includes:

Site mapping of habitats, trees and hedgerows and location of protected or vulnerable species
Available classification of existing vegetation types and areas of high ecological value
Available river corridor and habitat survey and assessment (if applicable)
Invasive plant surveys and responsible management recommendations (if applicable)
Available protected plant and animal species survey and any national action plans referenced

Document title: Archaeological survey and statement

Relevant criteria: DN1B, DN3B, DC3B

Baseline includes:

Assessment of likelihood of archaeological interest
Available information on past human cultures
Mitigation measures if there is a likelihood of archaeological interest on site
Responsible management recommendations of any archaeological interest

Document title: Geomorphological survey and statement

Relevant criteria: DN1B

Baseline includes:

Area characteristics, geomorphological features and sites for collection of data
Available mapping or listing of soil types and locations
Available mapping of any acid sulphate soils and methods for their management
Available data for river or wetland sediments to identify erosion or pollution risk

Document title: Contaminated land survey and statement

Relevant criteria: DN1B

Baseline includes:

Assessment of likelihood of contaminated land
Categorisation of contaminants and mapping of affected areas

¹⁷ Available mapping refers to publicly available mapping typical held in local or national authority collections.

Design Stage

STATEMENTS

Document title: Golf course design statement

Relevant criteria: DN2B, DN4B, DN10B, DN11B, DN12B

Baseline includes:

Design approach, including proposed course typology and context

Planting strategy, including proposed and existing plant species

Overall approach to water management and design

Statement on character of water feature(s) or wetland area(s), including indicative detail of construction technique

Assessment of impact the course design has on key receptors

Document title: Sustainable energy statement

Relevant criteria: DR2B, DR15I

Baseline includes:

Overall efforts to reduce energy in the design

Improvement includes:

Exploration of potential on site or locally sourced renewable sources

Assessment of potential to export energy back to national grid

Document title: Community engagement statement

Relevant criteria: DC2B, DC6B, DC7I, DC9I, DC10I

Baseline includes:

List of community stakeholders and interested parties and methods of gaining their input

Improvement includes:

Methods for contributing to local communities such as promoting an inclusive ethos and raising awareness of sustainability achievements and local ecology

Open day(s) to promote public education on proposals and onsite classroom day(s)

Assessment of impact of developments on local transport networks with mitigation measures

Consideration of multi-modal transport options

Document title: Agronomic statement

Relevant criteria: DR7B

Baseline includes:

Assessment of local environmental conditions such as soil and climate

Clear and logical recommendation of the mix of appropriate species in turfgrass areas for the proposed course type or presentation style

Estimate maintenance budgets and projected number of rounds

Assessment of recommended species mix against stress, disease, temperature, drought tolerance, playing quality and maintenance requirements

Detailed specifications for rootzone mixes, drainage materials, sands and other agronomic material recommended for use

Document title: Water resource statement

Relevant criteria: DN6B, DR5B, DR10B, DR14I, DR16I

Baseline includes:

Justification for any open water in desert/arid locations

Justification for amount of piped drainage

Water sources for irrigation and any opportunities to diversify

Improvement includes:

Proposed amount of water to be discharged from site with justification¹⁸

Opportunities for reuse and recycling of water for buildings and surrounds¹⁹

¹⁸ Into the public mains drainage system.

¹⁹ The use of harvested rainwater must be in accordance with relevant legislation.

Design Stage

Document title: Procurement policy or Purchasing policy

Relevant criteria: DC8I

Improvement includes:

Policy for procurement of products and services

Procedures to assess suppliers and contractors for compliance with ETI base codes or equivalent

Suggested content:

1. Commitment to FSC or equivalent sourcing of timber
2. Commitment to minimising waste
3. Use of recycled materials
4. Sourcing of legal and ethical services and materials
5. Project list of banned materials
6. Prioritisation of local suppliers and workforce where practicable

Document title: Building design statement

Relevant criteria: DN7B, DN13I, DN16I, DR8B, DR17I, DC4B

Baseline includes:

Design of maintenance wash down areas that include pollution control measures

Confirmation that all core golf buildings and accessible approaches meet the needs of disabled people

Reasons for location of core golf building(s) with respect to natural lighting, heating and cooling benefits

Improvement includes:

Reason(s) for the chosen location of core golf building(s) including consideration of key receptors

Design of any ecological improvement(s) to external skin of the core golf buildings

Confirmation of non golf buildings' sustainability certifications

Design Stage

DRAWINGS

Document title: Routing plan

Relevant criteria: DN3B, DN8B, DR12B

Baseline includes:

Ecological hotspots, cultural sites, sensitive landscape zones, existing trees and habitats

Areas set aside for habitats outside play areas

Circulation path layout with clear indications of tree and green locations and general land relief

Document title: Grading plan

Relevant criteria: DN5B, DR3B, DR4B, DR9B

Baseline includes:

Existing and proposed contours at 500mm or 2ft intervals

Areas in cut and fill

Volumes being cut and filled and the net result of works

Detail(s) of green complexes

Document title: Drainage plan

Relevant criteria: DN10B, DR14I

Baseline includes:

Areas of water attenuation, soakaways or flood controls

Layout of water connections both below and above ground, including typical details of pipes, connectors, swales, gullies and access chambers

Locations of water inlets and outfalls and connections to any public main drains or waterways

Document title: Irrigation design

Relevant criteria: DR5B, DR11B

Baseline includes:

Materials such as valves, taps, sensors, heads and pumps specified

Any irrigation controls, zones and management equipment/technology

Maps of areas showing any automated irrigation water source locations and water quality noted

Exploration of using gravity-fed systems and justification for chosen solutions for sites

Document title: Landscape plan

Relevant criteria: DN3B, DN4B, DN8B, DN9B, DN10B, DN11B, DN14I, DN17I, DR9B, DC5B, DC11I

Baseline includes:

Any ecological hot spots or sensitive landscape zones

Habitat areas retained

Proposed limits of site disturbance

Proposed and existing areas for planting

List of Latin names of plant species in key/legend, both proposed and existing

Proposed and retained habitat typologies and layouts

Any water filtration vegetation or buffer zones and proposed plant list

Any water features or wetland areas and their character

Paths, car park and locations of the hard landscape elements

Wider public access network

Improvement includes:

Areas of permeable paving

List of hard landscape materials and elements (signage, furniture)

Any other recreation areas

Document title: Grassing plan

Relevant criteria: DN15I

Improvement includes:

Areas of intensively managed turfgrass

Areas and species mix of turfgrass areas

Areas to be seeded and/or turfed

Design Stage

SCHEDULES

Document title: Materials specifications

Relevant criteria: DN14I, DR6B, DR9B, DR12B, DR13I, DC1B

Baseline includes:

List of external materials proposed, including supplier and origin

List of key opportunities and challenges involved in sourcing materials – demonstrate how any challenges were addressed

List of maintenance vehicles/machinery and fuel type (if applicable)

List of golf buggy specifications proposed (if applicable)

Improvement includes:

List of external materials proposed, their source, including recycled content, and any certification marks

List of external materials proposed for car parks, cart paths and other hardstanding to include permeability of materials proposed



photo credit: Irie Fields Golf Club, St Kitts

Construction Stage

SURVEYS

Document title: Ecology survey and statement

Relevant criteria: CN3B, CN5B, CN6B, CN18I

Baseline includes:

Site mapping of habitats, trees and hedgerows and location of protected or vulnerable species

Available classification of existing vegetation types and areas of high ecological value

Available river corridor and habitat survey and assessment (if applicable)

Invasive plant surveys and responsible management recommendations (if applicable)

Available protected plant and animal species survey and any national action plans referenced

Document title: Archaeological survey & statement

Relevant criteria: CN6B

Baseline includes:

Assessment of likelihood of archaeological interest

Available information on past human cultures

Mitigation measures if there is a likelihood of archaeological interest on site

Responsible management recommendations relating to any archaeological interest

Construction Stage

STATEMENTS

Document title: Construction programme

Relevant criteria: CN2B, CR1B

Baseline includes:

Phasing of construction work

Consideration of important ecological activities on site such as nesting seasons

Phasing of work across site

Document title: Logistics statement

Relevant criteria: CR1B, CR8I, CC1B

Baseline includes:

Efficient planning of haulage trips and maximised load fill of trucks

Timings and anticipated frequency of site deliveries

Number of haulage trips involved in construction

Improvement includes:

Haulage methods for imported materials

Document title: Pollution control statement

Relevant criteria: CN4B, CN5B, CN9B, CN10B, CN17I, CN18I, CN19I, CN20I

Baseline includes:

Design and locations of fuel, oil and chemical storage areas

Design of wash down areas/pads and disposal systems

Procedures for machinery wash down and routine maintenance

Confirmation of compliance with national legislation with regard to hazardous material

Statement or list of voluntary measures in place such as:

1. Storage and access protocol for chemicals, fuel and plant
2. Demonstration of awareness of fertility levels required for site's soil
3. Demonstration of credible recommendations for soil fertility treatment
4. Details of efforts made to reuse organic matter generated on site such as leaf litter
5. Demonstration of awareness of hazardous nature of any chemicals being used

Operator guidance on pesticide applications for vegetation clearance

Procedures for clearing spillages

Improvement includes:

Operator guidance on no-spray zones, particularly around watercourses, wetlands, reed beds, ditches and marshy grassland

Procedures for vehicles entering and leaving construction sites and wash down facilities

Procedures for minimising or mitigating incidents during construction relating to air quality, noise and vibrations

Conditions suitable for earthworks and mitigation measures for dust control

Record of non-chemical and other alternatives to pesticide applications during construction

Document title: Agronomic statement

Relevant criteria: CR7B

Baseline includes:

Rootzone specification with % of peat specified

Construction Stage

Document title: **Staff briefing statement**

Relevant criteria: [CN5B](#), [CN6B](#), [CN7B](#), [CN9B](#), [CN10B](#), [CN14I](#), [CN16I](#), [CC3B](#)

Baseline includes:

Instructions for herbicide application and methods for vegetation clearance in out-of-play areas and areas of high ecological value

Instructions regarding 'no-impact zones' in respect of high ecological value areas, retained trees and wildlife corridors

Instructions regarding silt and chemical runoff risks in areas close to water bodies

Promotion of sensitive application methods for any pesticides, fertilisers and other chemicals

Procedures for dealing with chemical spillages

Instructions regarding no-spray/treatment areas in respect of watercourses

Training procedures focused on skills development for locally sourced staff

Improvement includes:

Instructions to all site staff, visitors and subcontractors, drawing attention to sensitive habitats and/or species on site and in the local area

Method statement on weed removal in out-of-play areas and high ecological value areas

Document title: **Community engagement statement**

Relevant criteria: [CC4I](#), [CC5I](#)

Improvement includes:

Open day(s) promoting public education and opportunities to explore topics such as habitat and water systems

Awareness-raising techniques such as toolbox talks and notice boards

Document title: **Monitoring statement**

Relevant criteria: [CN6B](#), [CN9B](#), [CR6B](#)

Baseline includes:

Monitoring of any nationally or regionally protected species of flora and fauna

Monitoring of applications of pesticides, fertilisers and other chemical applications

Monitoring of water quality and pH levels in water courses, water bodies, groundwater and water outlets flow during construction

Document title: **Soil resource statement**

Relevant criteria: [CN8B](#), [CN11B](#), [CR7B](#)

Baseline includes:

Methods for stripping, stockpiling, respreading and ameliorating landscape soils and conditions conducive to this activity

Areas, depths and types of topsoil and subsoil to be stripped

Methods for topsoil handling, spreading and storage

Alternatives to peat used

Document title: **Waste management plan**

(Soil resource statement can be included in this document)

Relevant criteria: [CR2B](#), [CR4B](#)

Baseline includes:

Disposal action proposed for each different waste type

Action proposed for each different waste type, including reusing and recycling



photo credit: Nuuk Golf Club, Greenland

Construction Stage

DRAWINGS

Document title: Site clearance plan

Relevant criteria: CN1B, CN5B

Baseline includes:

Methods for clearing site

Document title: Site protection plan

Relevant criteria: CN1B, CN6B

Baseline includes:

Protection measures and locations

'No-impact zone(s)' to be protected during construction

Document title: Erosion control plan

Relevant criteria: CN7B, CN8B

Baseline includes:

Erosion prevention measures for soil erosion and sediment pollution of surface and ground water

Control of cultivation operations to minimise soil loss

Document title: Grading plan

Relevant criteria: CN11B

Baseline includes:

Locations of soil storage areas

Document title: Construction compound plan

Relevant criteria: CN15I, CC2B

Baseline includes:

Areas for workers' shelters and the provisions included

Improvement includes:

Site plan(s) indicating haul routes around site

SCHEDULES

Document title: Plant and equipment schedule

Relevant criteria: CR3B, CR8I, CR10I

Baseline includes:

List of all plants and fuel sources to be used

Improvement includes:

List of maintenance fleet and vehicle fuel type

List of all site generators, machinery and fuel sources to be used

Document title: Employee schedule

Relevant criteria: CC4B

Baseline includes:

List of construction staff, their key roles and responsibilities and their locations

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Acid Sulphate Soils	Naturally occurring soils, sediments or organic substrates (e.g. peat), formed in waterlogged conditions. In an undisturbed state below the water table, acid sulphate soils are benign. However, if the soils are drained, excavated or exposed to air by means of a lowering of the water table, the sulphides react with oxygen to form sulphuric acid.
Amenity Grass	Short-mown grass not used for golf.
As Built	A record drawing showing built conditions such as irrigation systems.
Aspect	Direction in which a building, window, piece of land, etc. faces; the side of a building facing in a particular direction.
Certified Material	Certified programmes complying with, or equal to, ISEAL Alliance Codes.
Core Golf Buildings	Includes maintenance facilities, halfway/starters' huts, practice area(s), restrooms and other similar small auxiliary buildings and convenience stations.
Ecological Hot Spots	Areas of a site with a collection of species considered to be under threat.
Ecologically Rich	Places with clusters of ecological community types, species and associated landscapes that are unique, rare or threatened, or are valued for their long-term services to keep our environment healthy.
Gardens	An area within the site typically adjacent to buildings where planting design is mainly ornamental or fruiting.
Geomorphology	The scientific study of the origin and evolution of topographic features created by physical, chemical and biological processes operating at, or near, the earth's surface. Both past and future landform changes can occur in response to factors such as tectonic and volcanic activity, climate and sea level change, and human activities.
Golf Development	The creation or improvement of one (1) or more golf holes that require the building, engineering or other operations on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.
Grow-in Stage	The stage in the construction process following the installment of grass in an area.
Invasive Plant Species	A plant with the ability to thrive and spread aggressively outside its native range. A naturally aggressive plant may be especially invasive when introduced to a new habitat. Refer to a national or regional agency for site-specific guidance on invasive species for your area.
Intensively Managed Grass	An area of grass sward maintained for the purposes of playing golf.
ISEAL Alliance	Global membership association for sustainability standards.
Major Renovation	Includes, but is not limited to, amendments to the golf course and/or associated core buildings beyond one single aspect, such as bunkering or drainage or practice facilities.
Multi-modal Transport	Provision of more than one transport mode option to enable reaching the golf course site.
Native/Indigenous	In the context of plants and/or habitats, this refers to plants or habitats that originate from that locality or are endemic in that area.
Net Positive Fill	In the context of grading works, not reducing floodwater capacity to areas by adding overall fill material in defined flood zone areas when compared to existing conditions.

No-Impact Zones	Areas to be protected from construction work.
Non-golf Buildings	Buildings that house operations, such as for food & beverage, locker rooms, well-being centres, washrooms, pro shops, check-in and bag drop facilities. Any residential buildings are also viewed as non-golf buildings.
No-spray Zones	Areas where application of soluble chemicals is banned or strictly managed.
Off-grid Water Source	Not being connected to mains or national water system, e.g. well, stream, treated sewage effluent (TSE) or rainwater harvesting. Note: Water sourced off-grid needs to meet national or regional water quality guidelines for its use, and its extraction must be undertaken responsibly.
Priority Irrigation Areas	Targeted areas considered vital to facility operation.
Plant/Machinery	Durable apparatus or part of apparatus employed in carrying out activities of construction.
Sediment	Any particulate matter able to be transported by fluid flow or wind and eventually deposited as a layer of solid particles.
Statement of Intent	It is understood that the scale of a development influences construction methodology and recording. In the absence of a piece of evidence, a statement of intent is requested to confirm a requirement. This statement is verified by a site visit from an independent verifier, or video/ photographic evidence.
Sustainability	Relates to social equity, environmental protection and economic development. It is very difficult for something to be absolutely sustainable, so qualifying words such as 'more sustainable' should be used, meaning that you are describing an active process, not a static one.
Sustainability Leader	A member of the project team acting as the point of coordination for a project's sustainability work.
Target Plant and Animal Species	Protected species as defined by local, regional or national policies, plans or legislation.
Key or Sensitive Receptors	A physical landscape resource, special interest or viewer group that will experience an effect from a site or part of a development in question, e.g. an individual dwelling, a point on a road or access way, or an elevated location.



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