



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Golfclub Houtrak

Prepared by independent verifier Adrie van der Werf

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2030



“Over the last five years a range of actions have been undertaken at Golfclub Houtrak to further increase their sustainability footprint. The ones that most impressed me were - they reduced fertilization rates significantly, pesticide use has gone down to almost zero, a new irrigation system was installed, and over more than 100 solar panels have been installed. Furthermore, 50% of the total 84 ha is non-golf playing area and maintained as nature area.”

*Adrie van der Werf
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfclub Houtrak 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.

Golfclub Houtrak 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 and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Golfclub Houtrak should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfclub Houtrak 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

Carole Kerrey
Director, Certification and Credibility,
GEO Certification Ltd.



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 – 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	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• Partnerships & Outreach • Golfing & Employment • Advocacy & Communications

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

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	General knowledge of the wildlife and habitats on the site	During our field visit it became clear that the GEO-cie is well aware of the presence of both common and rare species. In particular, flora in and around the course has been recorded regularly over the years. A new flora survey will be conducted in 2026. Bird surveys are performed regularly and over the years more 100 species have been observed. CIP: Please conduct a new fauna survey, especially for mammals and amphibians, as the latest one is now several years old.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Identify rare, protected or endangered species found on the golf course; Understand legal responsibilities for landscape protection and special area designations, if applicable	See also N1.1.1. During the discussion with the head greenkeeper, it became clear that his team is well aware of the presence of rare species. This is also mentioned in their management document. Management of the course and the surrounding nature is well described in this document. Furthermore, external experts have also made suggestions in relation to course management to improve/protect biodiversity.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	The polder, on which the golf course is now situated, was constructed in 1873. Until the construction of the golf course, this land had only been used as farmland. Therefore, no archaeological, historical or cultural designations are to be expected on the site.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the golf course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Monitor patterns of play to identify underutilised areas of turfgrass	Over more than 50% of in total 84ha is maintained as nature area. Over the years, this has resulted in a relatively high and interesting biodiversity. It was mentioned by the GEO-cie that a further naturalisation (i.e. increase in surface area) is not applicable.
N1.3 Actively create and manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to create and manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Prioritise native species of varying size and structure when planting Prioritise native trees and shrubs when planting Prioritise native aquatic species of varying size and structure when planting	See points mentioned above. Mowing buffers are in action, and advice is given by external experts to improve the quality of waterbodies and forests.

		Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species	Follow local best practice to protect or attract endangered, protected or rare species found on site	See points mentioned above. It was discussed that, based on the advice of external ecologists, in some cases improvements could be made by mowing more extensively near borders of bushes and water bodies. CIP: Please pay more attention to extensive mowing over the coming years.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turfgrass and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for the climate	Species present on greens, fairways and tees are suitable for the environmental conditions (soil and weather).
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition	No specific international requirement, however, identify course management and agronomic activities and look for continual improvements	Standard practices, like e.g. hollow tining and sand dressing are in action to keep the conditions such that invasion of “unwanted” species and/or diseases are reduced to minimum. Invasion of Poa Annua occurs on several greens.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Test and monitor soil pH; Follow legal requirements when timing fertiliser applications Ensure staff are fully qualified to use fertilisers Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	Soil analyses are in use. Only greens and tees are fertilized. Over the years, fertilization rates for greens have gone down from over 100 kg N/ha/year to approx. 40 kg N/ha/year. This may further improve the playing quality and may also contribute to lower nutrient concentrations in soil and surface waters and possibly resulting in an even more biodiverse area in the longer term than it is now already.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Change hole locations frequently	All standard practises, like e.g. sharpening mowing blades, and regularly removing surface moisture are in action to prevent diseases. From 2023 onwards, no fungicides have been used. Herbicides were only sparsely used in 2024 and according to legislation. In 2025 pesticides were not used at all.

N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Identify and track pest and disease hotspots, including sensitive areas Scout the course daily for early signs and symptoms Accurately diagnose to determine the cause of weeds, pests and diseases	Over the years, as on any golf course, pests and diseases may pop up, despite all precautionary measures. Greens are checked daily for any upcoming diseases etc. See also N2.2.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use legally registered and approved products; Prefer products for the specific weed, pest or disease; Follow legal requirements; Ensure staff are fully qualified to use pesticides; Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	All products used are registered, and only legalised products are used.
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 ; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer areas next to water bodies and wetlands; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer zones in and around ecologically sensitive areas	An emergency spill response plan is present at the green keep location; and as was discussed, no-spray zones are in action near water bodies and nature areas.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	All actions in the clubhouse with respect to pollution are according to legislation. As such pollution risks are minimal.

	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Wash machinery over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Mix and load pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	During our visit to the maintenance facility, this was discussed with the head greenkeeper. As far as I could judge all is according to legislation, e.g. washing of machines on impermeable leak-free surface.
	N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances List of hazardous substances, made available to authorised staff; Product and material data safety sheets; Well ventilated concrete or metal building; Impermeable, leak-free flooring; Sufficient storage capacity; Spill containment kits; Secondary containment e.g., bunds or drip trays; Emergency wash area, as per local requirements (body shower and / or eye wash station); Hazardous substances safely collected by a registered company or body ; Follow any additional legal requirements	Drip trays were present where legally necessary. All actions and activities are well documented by the greenkeep organisation in their maintenance document.
	N3.2.2 Legal compliance in the storage and handling of fuels and gases	Tank secured to a horizontal, flat, non-combustible surface; Secondary containment of fuel in the event of spills e.g. bunds and drip trays; Inspection of storage tank(s) at least quarterly, if required; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area	As mentioned by the head greenkeeper, storage and handling of fuels and gases and the description of it are okay.

N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage, treatment and discharge	Impermeable, leak-free surface; Treatment as per local requirements (oil, grease and / or clipping separation; Formal discharge agreement, if applicable	Conforms to legislation. Washing of machinery is on an impermeable floor and as indicated by the head greenkeeper. Oil and grease are separated before wastewater goes into the mains sewer.
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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	Select appropriate grass species for the climate e.g., drought and disease tolerance; Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces; Prioritise native, drought tolerant species for landscaping and planting	As mentioned above, grass species are appropriate for the environmental conditions at Houtrak. Recently, a new irrigation system was installed, and the latest annual irrigation rates showed a decrease of around 50%.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Schedule irrigation based on informed assessment of soil moisture and weather forecasts; Evaluate new irrigation technologies e.g., central control, precision sprinklers etc.; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Adjust sprinklers to playing surfaces only	See also R1.1. The greenkeep team uses weather data (forecasts) to further maximise water use efficiency.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record water consumption (bills, flow meter etc.); Encourage water conservation practices amongst players and staff	Until now, no actions have been undertaken with respect to water use in buildings. CIP: Please further enhance efforts to use water more efficiently in buildings e.g., tracking consumption and encouraging conservation practices amongst players and staff.

R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Water abstraction permit, if required; Report water consumption to environment agency, if required	N.A.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in golf course maintenance	Naturalise non-playing areas to reduce mowing and other energy intensive inputs	The playing area is now at is optimum according the GEO-cie. Further measures are taken by the greenkeep team via e.g. introduction of electric vehicles / mowing machines. There has also been a recent installation of 142 solar panels to further reduce energy consumption.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record energy consumption (bills, meters etc.)	Almost all lightning in the clubhouse now consists of LED lighting; see also R2.1.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Understand the energy mix of your electricity supplier; Explore possible greener energy providers	The energy supplier delivers (partly) green energy. The percentage of green energy is not given.
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	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to reduce the demand for materials and look for continual improvements	Not discussed.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	It was mentioned that local products are favoured as much as possible.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Put in place a recycling separation system, according to local rules and availability; Clear, simple and visible bin signage;	Waste stream separation is according to local legislation. CIP: Please ensure that there is accurate monitoring, recording and reporting of waste data each year.

		Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Authorised waste collector for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste, if required	Business as usual. All actions/activities with respect to waste are according to the local rules.

COMMUNITY			
<u>C1 Health & Wellbeing</u>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C1.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities	Plans in place to respond to incidents and emergencies	The caddy master acts according to safety protocols and warns e.g. in case of bad/dangerous weather. vVsual tree assessments are performed to ensure safe passages for golfers in tree-rich areas.
C1.2 Be open and inclusive	C1.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Membership policies free from discrimination across age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnic background	The GEO-cie indicated that everybody is welcome at Houtrak, irrespective of gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, age, sexual orientation. We did not further discuss this issue.
C1.3 Employ fairly, safely and provide career opportunities	C1.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Adopt an equal opportunity recruitment and hiring policy; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for hiring and employment; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for worker safety	New (part-time) caddie masters are trained on a regular basis. The staff working in the restaurant are trained/managed and hired by the restaurant manager.
<u>C2 Outreach & Inclusion</u>			
C2.1 Diversify access and provide multifunctionality	C2.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility	No specific international requirement, however, identify	The yearly bird watching day is open for the public. Bridge groups are active, and non-golf members are welcome to join.

		multifunctional activities and look for continual improvements	
C2.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C2.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to support volunteering and charity and look for continual improvements	Yearly several golf and non-golf related charity activities are undertaken.
C2.3 Establish active community partnerships	C2.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	No specific international requirement, however, identify partnerships and community activities and look for continual improvements	Clinics are organized for non-golfers.
C3 Communications & Advocacy			
C3.1 Engage staff and golfers	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Involve staff and committees in sustainability efforts; Involve golfers in sustainability efforts; Post sustainability information in the clubhouse and / or on the golf course	It was mentioned that the club informs members about activities in relation to e.g. safety, sustainability.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Share at least 3 Highlights on sustainable.golf	CIP: Please contact local nature organisations more frequently with respect to biodiversity etc.
C3.3 Follow a journey of continuous improvement	C3.3.1 Measures to help track, review and improve sustainability and climate action	Put measures in place to ensure that OnCourse can be updated annually	We discussed and this could be improved. A new GEO-team is in action. They will update their OnCourse documents and data now more frequently.

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