



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report

CAFRE Greenmount Campus

Prepared by independent verifier Maurice Bergin

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028



“The golf facility, whilst limited in scale, is presented very well. The staff work hard to keep it in excellent condition as it is such an important piece of the Golf Ireland training and coaching programmes, as well as being a key training facility for future greenkeepers. There is a very strong sustainability ethos with respect to fauna and flora, and it was particularly delightful to observe fallen trees left to add to the biodiversity throughout the course area. This is a course that receives the most detailed and intensive scrutiny of any course as it is visited by greenkeepers and professional golfers constantly. It stands up well to this test and I look forward to seeing further development over the course in their sustainability journey.”

Maurice Bergin
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that CAFRE Greenmount Campus 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.

CAFRE Greenmount Campus 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, CAFRE Greenmount Campus should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, CAFRE Greenmount Campus 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	Excellent knowledge, with a comprehensive Biodiversity Audit completed in 2025.
	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	This course is Government owned and managed. As such, there is a very strong awareness of regulatory requirements including special designations etc. As the course has a water catchment area that enters Lough Neagh there are regular water quality assessments undertaken. There are no designated areas on the course itself.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	Not applicable.
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	The course is not open to the public and has limited actual playing, so there is limited wear and tear. The course is maintained to deliver a proper practice facility for Golf Ireland, but there are still many areas left for nature. CIP: Please conduct a bunker review and consider removing bunkers that receive little to no play. This will increase grassy areas and reduce the maintenance and sand requirement.
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	The course and adjacent pond area are well managed, with many areas left uncut to maximise biodiversity. Many areas have been expanded to provide additional habitat for fauna and flora and this is a continuing practice.

		Prioritise native aquatic species of varying size and structure when planting Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	For instance, several small areas are managed as meadow by reduced annual cutting or leaving uncut. They have also added trees to enhance age structure and engage in woodland management. CCIP: The pond liner has failed, preventing full water retention. Please replace the pond liner and reinstate it as an educational and playing feature, making sure to ensure appropriate health and safety. This should include (1) a 1m out-of-bounds safety zone marked with white stakes or paint; (2) three lifebuoys; (3) and regular briefings on pond safety. CIP: Please also consider allowing grass at the pond edges to grow long and act as a natural barrier. You could also consider enlarging the pond to extend onto the fairway as a visible hazard on Hole 1. CIP: Please consider planting the gaps in the trees lining the holes. This will help to create unbroken fauna corridors.
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	The course has conducted a Biodiversity Audit in 2020/5. They also have species lists and monitor these regularly.
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	Throughout this review, it is to be noted that course management is actively approved, directed and monitored through Golf Ireland, as it is the Golf Ireland Ulster Coaching Academy. As such, the greenkeeping team have limited ability to experiment with new turfgrass etc. as it is dictated by Golf Ireland The turfgrass used is as per the list in the members folder.
	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	Regular testing is carried out. Reports are available.
	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	Discussed and reviewed all machinery on site. The course has a relatively new GPS controlled sprayer unit which minimises the use of chemicals

		Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	
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	CAFRE aims to operate on a best practice basis and maintains equipment to a very high standard.
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	CAFRE deals with all the usual challenges and actively manages any invasive species, weeds, pests as environmentally responsibly as possible. Low chemical usage is at the forefront of their approach
	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	Inventory in place. This is soon to move online through an App. PPE is available. Limited access to chemicals, which are locked away. A new safe was delivered recently
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are	Document procedures for emergency spill responses ;	Reviewed and in place.

	minimised from golf course operations	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	Primary pollution risk is diesel from machinery, but this is well maintained. A potential move to HVO would alleviate this risk further (see R2.2.1 below). The Greenmount Campus is within the catchment area of Lough Neagh which is currently suffering from pollution – mainly identified from farming practices. AFBI conduct monthly water testing on behalf of DAERA but the Golf Course has no access to this data/information. CIP: Please request access to the water testing data from AFBI / DAERA and, subject to any increased levels of pollution in the water as it passes through Greenmount towards Lough Neagh, develop a plan to reduce this as soon as possible.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Not applicable.
	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	Existing machinery wash area is c. 1km away, so no relevant risk. This is a modern state-of-art unit with concrete flooring and a bio-treatment unit that eats oils, etc. All organic output goes for composting. Chemical area is located off course also has proper drainage in place.
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;	Lists in place. CCIP: Please ensure all Safety Data Sheets are available at the chemical storage area and in the main office. These should be readily accessible if required. An emergency eye wash facility was installed in the chemical storage / dilution area, following an immediate improvement Point identified during verification. CCIP: Please introduce an annual review of chemical/fertiliser use and staff safety protocols. CIP: Please consider monthly KPI tracking for fertiliser and chemical use.

		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	
	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	In compliance, with key card access and control.
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	Not applicable. State-of-the-art, with oil/grease separation and composting of grass residues.

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;	Good practice in operation, with sprinklers for greens only.

		Prioritise native, drought tolerant species for landscaping and planting	
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	Good practice in place, with moisture readings taken and water applied only as required.
	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	Minimal water use as there is no real clubhouse. It is a driving range with offices.
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	Confirmed for the whole site.
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	CAFRE aware of the potential to naturalise non-playing areas, but is constrained by Golf Ireland coaching requirements. Highlight: Robotic lawn mowers and ball collectors already in use on driving range, with plans for expansion. Productivity gains free staff to focus on higher-quality course presentation. The current machine shed is c. 1 km from the course, requiring extensive fuel and time for every operation. Staff rest and changing facilities are also located well away from the course reducing productivity. It is estimated that 50% of total Diesel usage is spent getting from the existing machinery shed to the course – c. 3,600 litres of Diesel (farm) at c. £62/L.

			CIP: Please explore the feasibility of relocating the machinery shed and staff facilities (rest rooms, canteen, offices, showers) to the existing sand area adjacent to the golf course. If feasible, the any new shed roof should be designed to maximise solar PV capacity. CIP: Consider piloting HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) use in 1-2 diesel machines. If successful, try to transition the entire diesel fleet where mechanically feasible. An HVO storage tank could be also installed on site.
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.)	Clubhouse gas consumption appears quite high for the minimal activity involved. CIP: Please install smart electricity and gas meters with hourly monitoring capability. CIP: Please audit LPG consumption and controls to address excessive usage. Usage was declared as 6,286 Litres or 80,461 kWh with an expected cost of c. €8,000. If we allow 50% for DHW (probably excessive) leaving 50% for heating, over a 30 week heating period for a 5-day week – a 200 M² poorly insulated building would use c. 120 kWh/M²/pa – the clubhouse is using at least 200 kWh/M²/pa CIP: Please consider monthly KPI tracking for energy consumption.
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	Not applicable, as contract is for whole campus. CIP: Please explore the feasibility of switching to a 100% renewable electricity supplier (managed at college level). CIP: Please conduct a feasibility study for a 9kW solar PV system, which will be sufficient to cover clubhouse demand annually. A small wind turbine (supplementary) could also be explored. If feasible, ensure PV export surplus credits are assigned to the clubhouse account.
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	No improvement identified.

R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Part of campus management approach. CIP: Please consider a procurement rule stipulating no fossil-fuel replacements for equipment.
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; Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	Minimal waste. Mainly from 3 rd party golf shop on site Planning to install 3 bin system by end of 2025 for the limited visitor numbers. CIP: Please install a dedicated waste separation station at the Academy similar to the new one installed on the Main Campus. CIP: Please consider monthly KPI racking for waste generation and separation. CIP: Please consider a 'no waste golf course policy', with no bins on the course and all players encouraged to return waste to the separation area.
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	Confirmed.

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	CAFRE Greenmount Golf Academy is a leading educational and training facility for future greenkeepers, course managers, and hospitality professionals. Full processes in place.

			Observed all areas as being safe. Staff facilities above adequate
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	Not applicable as no membership and no public access.
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	As per CAFRE rules and regulations.
<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 multifunctional activities and look for continual improvements	Not applicable.
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	Not applicable.
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	BIGGA First Green project with local schoolchildren.
<u>C3 Communications & Advocacy</u>			
C3.1 Engage staff and golfers	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and	Involve staff and committees in sustainability efforts;	Recommended to add signage

	understanding amongst members and visitors	Involve golfers in sustainability efforts; Post sustainability information in the clubhouse and / or on the golf course	There is no signage anywhere informing course users of sustainability initiatives, such as habitat and particularly specimen trees. CCIP: Please add signage about sustainability activities on the golf course, with references to the fauna and flora on the site (e.g., selective signage and potentially the use of QR codes to allow golfers to source additional information).
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	CCIP as per C3.1.1 above.
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	CAFRE Greenmount Golf Academy is well-positioned to act as a national leader in sustainable golf course management education. The Academy already demonstrates best practice in robotic technology and environmental wash-down facilities. Management see this process as their initial step to become more sustainable. And, with the recommended improvements in safety, waste management, decarbonisation, and infrastructure, it can become a benchmark site for sustainable golf operations in Ireland and the UK. CIP: Please treat data collection and reporting as a quality management and environmental management process.

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