



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Golf de Rigenée

Prepared by independent verifier: Isabel Dobbelaere

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023
Recertification due: 2026

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Golf de Rigenée is a testament to sustainable practice, incorporating elements such as new technologies like MAYA data software to manage the health of the course. They use drought tolerant grasses, renewed irrigation, a turf reduction programme and strategies to reduce single-use plastics. The greenkeeping team takes its responsibility for the environment on and around the course very seriously. They are already future proof with the use of solar panels and the switch to electric equipment, as well as the implementation of a communication strategy e.g., events and publications for golfers and the wider community.”

Isabel Dobbelaere

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golf de Rigenée 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.

Golf de Rigenée 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, Golf de Rigenée should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golf de Rigenée 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
Manager, Data and Reporting, 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 – that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at www.sustainable.golf

Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at www.isealliance.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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Golf de Rigenée is an 18-hole course located in Villers-La-Ville in the south of Brussels. The course was designed by Paul Rolin and opened in 1982. The terrain of more than 60 ha was transformed from agricultural land.

	landscape value of the site		The open landscape was maintained (wide fairways). The knowledge on biodiversity is still growing. Registrations of fauna and flora are reported (document 'La fauna sur notre parcours'). They have their own nursery and a planting plan of 30 plants per year of several species of trees that adapt to the surrounding landscape. The geoportal of Wallonie (https://geoportail.wallonie.be) maps the designated habitats. Within 500 m in the northwest of the course there are native forests of high biological interest like NATURA2000. There is a nursery for plants and trees, containing species found in the native forests.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	The open and wide course reflects the former agricultural land. No archaeological, historical or cultural designation are present or known by the course.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Some rough areas have been naturalised with grasslands and wildflower meadows. The nursery for plants enforces the natural habitat.
	N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Some rough areas have been naturalised with grasslands and wildflower meadows. The nursery for plants enforces the natural habitat. The MAYA data software (a start-up for 2 years) tracks diseases, use of irrigation needs and mowing assistance.
	N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	The course works with an organisation that, on several occasions, has rescued birds that have fallen from their nests on the route. They can then grow up sheltered from potential threats and are released on their route. Referring to two occasions with Great Horned Owls (Hibou Moyen-Duc).

			A map is available where they identify geese and a big population of wild geese every year (population 200 individual species) nearby the lakes. Nesting boxes (25 trees) are placed in the area. Finally the course provides habitat for numerous rabbits (5 habitats with population between 100 and 200 individual animals).
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		They take care of the owls that they find and help to rescue them.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	The head greenkeeper keeps searching and testing the most suitable turf varieties. Fairways are mostly Lolium perenne (80%) accompanied by poa annua (20%). Greens are 50% Lolium perenne and 50% poa annua. For the tees we see 60% Agrostis stolonifera/palustris, 20% Agrostis tenuis/capillaris and 20% poa annua. With the use of the Maya data software program much data is covered to predict the risks of diseases. pH of soil is tested regularly.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		The club made the decision to use only bio phytoproducts when necessary. This coincided with a decision to increase the mechanical maintenance operations. Every year 80 tons of sand is used for soil aeration and topdressing.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Regular soil testing is carried out. pH test every month.

	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Mower cylinders and knives are sharpened regularly by an external company. Machines are washed every time after they have been used. Dew moisture and leaves are removed to keep the turf as dry as possible. Standard good practices (daily inspections, local weeding etc) are used to reduce herbicide use as much as possible.
	N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	Diseases are closely monitored (MAYA data software), and when problems are noticed, local corrective actions are taken. The use of pesticides is kept to a minimum (bio phytoproducts) and efforts for prevention are prioritized.
		N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf .	Only legislated chemicals are used. The use of phytosanitary products has been reduced to a minimum. The applications are made by trained and qualified employees using the necessary security measures. Ecological conditions and weather are considered before the application is carried out. Leftover products are diluted and sprayed on the course before cleaning the tank. A spill procedure is available. CCIP: Please ensure that recent datasheets of the products are available in the storage area.
	N3 Pollution Prevention			
	N3.1 Prevent pollution	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution	Document procedures for emergency spill responses; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas;	A spill procedure and intervention instruction is available (' <i>Procédure en cas de Déversément</i> ').

	across the entire site	risks are minimised from golf course operations	Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	The club respects the security perimeters established by the federal law in humid and natural areas.
		N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Chemical products are safeguarded. Access is served to authorised personnel only. Contracts for disposal of hazardous waste from the facility are established with external local companies that are specialists in waste management. Waste from oils spills is treated by Oilco and empty bottles or packaging from phytoproducts are handed in to Agrirecover. CCIP: Please procure a safety closet if storing inflammable products that are over 50 litres.
		N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	In the workshop drums with oils for machinery maintenance have their corresponding anti-spill containment system. CIP: Please consider procuring extra containment systems to prevent spills when new deliveries exceed the normal storage amount.
	N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff; Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building; Sufficient storage capacity; Impermeable flooring; Spill containment kits present; Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	The amount of chemical products is small. All greenkeepers are trained in first aid and emergency response procedures. Fire extinguishers are placed in locations with fire risks. They are inspected annually. CCIP: Although there are a limited amount of products, please provide detailed instructions on safe use in the storage area. CCIP: Please conduct a periodic inspection of the underground fuel tank (10.000 litres). CCIP: Please update the record of hazardous substances.

			CCIP: Please ensure that GBMs and other chemical agents are stored in their original packaging with the original label.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Wastewater is disposed of in the sewer. The liquid-proof floor is inspected. Grass, sand, oil and grease are separated from the water before disposal. The grass clippings are immediately spread out again.

RESOURCES

R1 Water

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	To face the climate challenges the clubs invested in MAYA for data collection and evaluation. The prediction of disease and meteo registration are part of the program to seek drought intolerance and the correct timing of irrigation. Only greens and tees are irrigated. The club is preparing an important project for more self-sufficiency in irrigation water, collecting the water from the rain together with the lakes within a retention system (highest lake filled with water from the lowest lake).
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Conduct regular irrigation performance checks; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Ensure effective application of water to target areas; Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	The clubs uses the stratus 2 programme from Rain Bird. This programme is linked to an onsite weather station and works with different types of electronic switches, automatically switching off the sprinkler system if it detects precipitation. The head greenkeeper is responsible for the irrigation of the course. He can overrule the programme, deciding when to irrigate or not using alarm setting points. The irrigation system

			was renovated in 2023 for better control of the individual sprinklers and nozzles. The sprinklers are renewed every 10 years.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Every year the use of potable water is registered with a water meter.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	In the near future more water from the lower lakes will be sent to the higher lakes for the irrigation system.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Every year the terrain committee inspects the course together with the greenkeeping team to establish more areas with less managed turf.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	The transformation to LED is still going. The use of diesel fuel will decrease because of more electrical machinery for the course maintenance. They use electric buggies. The solar panels (44.000 kWh) can deliver 1/3rd of the electricity needed. The amount of solar panels was restricted by the grid.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	Roofs with solar panels for onsite electricity production. The installation was limited by the electricity grid. They use electric buggies (no fossil fuel). Finally, the club decided to make the transition to full electrical equipment (plan 3-5 years). I.e. Bel Robotic mowers are implemented (2 last year and 6 this season). New technologies are discovered and tested to further implement the electrification transformation plan.

R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	Undertake a review of materials consumed	The club works with a waste management company for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation. They are composting all the branches and pruning debris, using the material to level some areas of the property land.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from recycled, recyclable and certified materials	Local distributors are used, and some furniture of the golf course has been built by local companies and the maintenance team itself. As with most restaurants nowadays, local products are preferred. The club has declared a sustainable purchasing policy. CIP: Please include hazardous substances in the purchasing policy. This will help to identify with less environmental impacts and health risks.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	The club works with a waste management company for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation. No bins on the course. All waste bins for use of the members are located at the clubhouse. The club encourages the use of second-hand equipment (see purchasing policy). CIP: Please try to provide separate waste containers in the greenkeeping area (plastic packaging, aerosol etc.).

R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	The club works with a waste management company for recycling. All waste is stored according to legislation.
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COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		The restaurant is fully open to visitors who can use the facilities. The head greenkeeper organizes visits for greenkeeping students and a program with a local school is implemented to bring young new players to the club.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		More than 120 volunteers of the 900 members are strongly involved in events. During summer, the greenkeeping team is complemented with students selected from the members to help maintain the course.
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Create a 'sustainability working group'	The organisation of the "Open days" reaches 150 children every year. The introduction is also for gym teachers to familiarise them with the sport of golf.
C2 Golfers & Employees			

C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Although there are 14 electric buggies available most of the players walk the whole course. The club takes care of its employees and offers uniforms and all the necessary safety equipment for the correct and safe performance of daily tasks. Staff have golfing privileges and can participate in competitions. Defibrillators are installed in the clubhouse. Staff are trained and informed every year.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Golf de Rigenée is a golf course open to members and visitors, as well as restaurant users.
C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Greenkeeping staff receive regular education on pesticide handling, habitat management, safety, and waste administration. Working clothes, employee locker rooms, a lunchroom, personal protection equipment, and first aid are available.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	The club truly promotes awareness within the employee community with respect to energy and safety aspects. The club communicates its environmental activities to the members using the website, social media, newsletter, events and internal notice boards.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	Golf de Rigenée is a private club of members who are properly informed of all activities and actions carried out in the club. The nest boxes are placed by volunteers.

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