



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Puula Golf

Prepared by independent verifier Kari Mattila

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Puula Golf is a good example of an organisation that quietly gets on with doing the right things when it comes to environmental responsibility. In fact, this approach is so embedded that activities such as engaging local pupils and students in course work were almost overlooked because they are seen as ‘no big deal’. The greenkeeping team are skilled professionals who understand how to manage costs and water use while maintaining a high-quality course. There are also innovative solutions in place, such as the system for collecting balls on the range, which supports reuse and recycling principles. Course staff are continually looking for the next small improvement and are also involving players in that process.

The golf course is a strong example of sustainable practice, incorporating measures such as drought tolerant grasses, irrigation with TSE, a turf reduction programme and efforts to reduce single use plastics. The greenkeeping team takes its responsibility for the environment on and around the course very seriously. I look forward to seeing the results of the renewable energy project, along with the development and implementation of a communication plan, including events and publications for golfers and the wider community.”

Kari Mattila

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Puula Golf 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.

Puula Golf 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, Puula Golf should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Puula Golf 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 – 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 landscape value of the site	General knowledge of the wildlife and habitats on the site	The staff showed good understanding of the nature and landscape values of the site.
	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	The staff are aware of general guidelines for protection. They have evaluated and discussed protection needs within the course area and even beyond it, especially that of incoming surface water. Action for protection are applicable.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	The site is built on an area where there are no archaeological, historical nor cultural designations.
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	There is an ongoing evaluation and discussion of the opportunities for naturalisation
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 Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	The site is built and managed in a way which supports wildlife and biodiversity.

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	There are no protected or rare species that would be under any harm or risk due to the site and its management.
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	As described in the course description, the grass species are chosen according to the local climate. On the course tour there were practically no signs of problems with the turfgrass.
	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	The course is managed in a manner which mitigates the needs for biostimulants etc. Composting is done according to local legislation.
	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	The use of fertilisers is done according to regulations. The person responsible for the machinery and spreading of fertilisers has taken mandatory training. Equipment is well maintained and follows the regulations.
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	Maintenance is done using mechanical solutions as much as possible. There is a fairly small team and also many of the seasonal employees are there for more than one season. They are using the philosophy "it's sharp to work with sharp tools".
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	Well balanced water and fertiliser usage has helped to mitigate the need for chemicals. Area is monitored daily and, partly due to the shape of the area, there are very few natural hotspots. These are discussed and actions are taken, or the situation is followed up, when needed.

	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	The storage and usage of chemicals is done according to the legislation. The storage room is locked and only authorised people use them.
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	There is a clear emergency and spillage response procedure implemented. There are protective buffer zones in place, and the design of the water hazards also helps manage risk. With a series of ponds positioned along the downhill slope, followed by a settling area before water moves onward, any potential leakage can be contained and controlled before it spreads further.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Wastewater system is integrated in the municipal system. Hazardous waste is stored appropriately and in a practical manner. An improvement point was the implementation of a system to record hazardous waste removal. In Finland, hazardous waste can be delivered to designated municipally operated receiving facilities, but formal receipts are not issued on delivery. In response, the course has now introduced an in house logging system to keep a record of all hazardous waste transfers.
	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;	Washing and mixing / loading procedures and sites are built, and work is done according to local requirements. This includes storage and operational sites, including impermeability where needed.

		Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	
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	Use of hazardous materials is minimised. The storage area is clear and protected. Required supporting documents and equipment are presented. First aid skills and equipment are maintained.
	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	The local fire department visits the site every now and then. They also review the storage of flammable substances. The site has proper tanks, leak protection pools and other required protection materials. Fire extinguishers are on site and they are yearly checked.
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	Wastewater is directly discharged to municipal system. No local tanks. Responsibility and monitoring of the wastewater system is on the municipality. Washbay meets the local requirements.

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	Water availability is not an issue in Finland. Extra irrigation is more of ensuring healthy grass and mitigation of fertiliser and pesticides usage, which means saving money. Hence the condition of the area is monitored daily, and irrigation is used on true need only. During the site tour it became clear that the site personnel has been very successful in maintaining good balance.
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	Irrigation system is monitored and updates are done on need to basis. There is long experience and "hand-over" of knowledge to new employees. Nozzles / sprinklers are monitored and updated when needed.
	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	As mentioned before, the availability of water is not an issue. The mitigation of water usage has (in general) in some areas of the country led to the need of wastewater organisation to add water to the system to ensure the system functionality. Water usage in clubhouse is followed up.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Water abstraction permit, if required;	No permit required. No reporting required.

		Report water consumption to environment agency, if required	
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	There is an ongoing evaluation of which areas are non-playing or where at least mowing can be reduced. Use of branch material on site to create branch piles and other ecologically valuable structural elements. This reduces the cost of haulage and disposal fees.
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.)	Energy usage is monitored. Mitigation measures are discussed and evaluated, e.g. conversion to led lightning. General awareness is looked after with the course environmental policy, which is placed on the public areas and shared with personnel.
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	In Finland 95% of electricity is produced with non-fossil resources. About 60% is renewable. A choice for greener energy is possible, but due to the seasonality, the existing situation (summer time) is in practise already green.
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	Reuse and recycling are the norm. The course manages recycling as much as possible in the area. Players are encouraged to recycle and hence there are now general waste bins on the course.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Purchase practices are already sustainability positive. I.e. materials are bought from local providers and producers when available to mitigate transportation impacts.
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;	Weight measurement of waste is in practice not possible due to shared waste collection. The waste collector does not provide kg's collected. CCIP: Please establish a procedure to estimate and track weight of waste e.g., the Waste Calculator available on OnCourse.

		Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	Bins for recycling are in place.
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	Waste collectors are chosen by authorities through public tender process. They are monitored by municipality and other authorities.

COMMUNITY			
C1 Health & Wellbeing			
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	Evacuation and rescue plans are following the local legislation. First aid skills meet the needs. Course is compact and accessible from multiple directions, would there be need (ie. for ambulance to reach a specific spot)
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	There are no limitations nor restrictions based on any person related issue. Inclusivity is not a policy; it is an integrated norm.
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	Safety and protection are followed up as part of everyday life. Machinery is in proper condition and safety gears are available. This is also used as the norm. There is a clear mentor – actor daily induction process. Recruitment happens as in any small community, candidates come and ask for a job. Professional development, e.g. vocational training is possible through a public education system.

<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	There are opportunities for non-golfers to come and explore golfing. In off-season time, there is an opportunity for people to walk and ie. pick up mushrooms on site.
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	There is collaboration between the course and the local community. Ie. local students / pupils have participated in building and placing artificial bird nest.
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	As described above.
<u>C3 Communications & Advocacy</u>			
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	Environmental policy is the foundation. CCIP: Please explore effective ways to engage and communicate with staff, golfers and the wider community on sustainability actions and improvements.
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	This may be the most challenging part in Finland. The culture of "don't make noise of your achievements" is mitigating interest of celebration. The course will though make the achievement visible and use it as part of their marketing.
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	Small, practical steps are the right way forward, with a clear understanding that the course must operate within the public framework. As the new CEO gains a full season of experience, further opportunities for future development are likely to become clearer. One of the next steps will be to implement a system and process for measuring surface water.

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