

GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report
DGC De Gelpenberg

Prepared by independent verifier Ewout Sala

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2026
Recertification due: 2031

GEO Foundation
Sustainability in and through golf

“The golf course is an excellent example of sustainable management, incorporating measures such as drought-resistant grass species, an extensive irrigation system controlled through central management software, and the introduction of a new spot sprayer to reduce the use of plant protection products.

The maintenance team, together with the course committee, takes its responsibility for protecting nature on and around the course very seriously. This commitment is reflected in the challenging playing areas, where a flock of sheep can often be found acting as natural grazers.

The club’s approach to sustainability also extends to various aspects of the clubhouse and its surroundings, including the introduction of waste separation and the decision to stop providing plastic bags in the pro shop.”

Ewout Sala
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that DGC De Gelpenberg 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.

DGC De Gelpenberg 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, DGC De Gelpenberg should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, DGC De Gelpenberg 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**

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	A nature management plan identifying the golf course habitat types is in place. It is used effectively in course management. For example, by expanding the heathland habitat. Cuttings from mown heathland areas are used to help establish new heather. Interviews with the head greenkeeper and members of the course committee demonstrated a very high level of knowledge and expertise in naturalistic design.
	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	Implementation of elements from the nature management plan is scheduled and recorded, with future actions planned in documents such as the 'Heathland Plan 2026' and in progress reports on the course vision plan. During the site walk, many good and clear examples of completed habitat design projects were observed. Sheep grazing is also one of the management measures used across the course's natural rough. The experience has been positive, and the sheep will remain for the foreseeable future. This is also reviewed annually. Flora and fauna survey documentation is available. Through the combined use of the nature management plan, the greenkeeper's knowledge and the enthusiastic committees, the natural character of De Gelpenberg has ample scope to develop and contribute to sustainable management.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	There is a clear understanding of the municipal provisions relating to the applicable 'Archaeology 3' values. The team understands that this means a permit is required for works on the course.

			Common juniper (Juniperus communis) has significant cultural and historical value and is present at De Gelpenberg. It therefore forms part of the heathland restoration being carried out on the course. No other cultural or historical features are present on the golf course.
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	Wherever possible, efforts are made to naturalise unused playing areas.
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	New heather is planted only in areas that need some assistance. Any planting, such as heather, uses native species. The tree plan was discussed, and native species are also selected within this plan.
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 recently completed flora and fauna survey was discussed. One recommendation was highlighted: retaining areas of old heather for the common lizard. The team was fully aware of the recommendations. **CIP: Ensure that the recommendations from the flora and fauna survey are brought to the appropriate people's attention and implemented where possible.**
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	The greenkeeping team, contracted through Vos Golf and Sport, pays very close attention to course maintenance, based on a fertilisation maintenance plan and annual soil testing. Grass species are suited to the prevailing climate; this was discussed and confirmed in the records reviewed.

			A trial is currently under way using hard fescue (Festuca brevipila), which is more drought tolerant.
	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 increase in nitrogen use on the greens was discussed. This applies to the greens and approaches, where slightly higher nitrogen applications allow faster control of regrowth.
	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	Fertiliser and soil-nutrition practices are specifically managed to prevent fungal development, reducing the need for plant-protection products.
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	Vos is responsible for machinery maintenance, including sharpening mower blades. The use of robotic mowers on parts of the course is currently being considered.
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	There is a clear understanding of the need to minimise the use of products. A major step forward is the use of a spot sprayer, which appears to have reduced the use of plant-protection products by around 80%. **HIGHLIGHT:** Use of the spot sprayer has significantly reduced the use of plant-protection products.
	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;	The head greenkeeper (Lars) is responsible for applying products; his spraying licence was reviewed. Lars attends an advanced course each year with fellow greenkeepers.

		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	
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	Increasing use of electric mowing units substantially reduces the risk of pollution from hydraulic oil. Documentation covering the response to an oil spill and similar incidents was reviewed.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Wastewater and grease-separator service contracts were reviewed.
	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	The maintenance shed was visited during the site walk. The wash area has a leak-proof floor, which is inspected by an authorised body.
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;	A list of hazardous substances is available. Various substance-storage areas were inspected during the site walk. Everything is stored in accordance with legal requirements, including products in a cabinet with a spill tray and fuels above secondary containment.

		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	
	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 diesel tank is double-walled and is inspected by an authorised body.
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	See N3.1.2. Rainwater is largely collected in the site's own surface-water bodies.

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;	Grass species are, and continue to be, selected as appropriately as possible for the current climate, including today's dry summers.

		Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces; Prioritise native, drought tolerant species for landscaping and planting	The new irrigation system is targeted to the areas where it is needed. A drought-tolerance trial with hard fescue is under way.
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	The new irrigation system is being used effectively, with additional sprinklers ensuring that only the required playing areas are irrigated. This is managed in conjunction with moisture measurements and the management system.
	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	Water-saving shower taps and shower heads have been installed.
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	Discussed: the golf course has its own water source, which is used for irrigation.
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 2025 sustainability report was reviewed; the measures it contains have either been implemented or are in progress. Improvements to the external lighting are currently being implemented.
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.)	Two heaters in the clubhouse have been replaced with one high-efficiency heater. Solar panels are installed and provide a substantial proportion of the energy used on site.

			The driving range is now equipped with an electric robotic mower and a ball collector.
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	SEFE supplies the energy.
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	The course is actively seeking to reduce material use wherever possible. For example, the tag provided to course participants was made of plastic. A paper version was trialled, but unfortunately it did not work well either. This process will now be digitised.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	**R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices**	Favour responsible, lower impact products	This is also discussed with the catering operator and recorded in a letter of intent. For example, sandwiches for golfers to take onto the course are provided in paper bags.
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.	The course actively separates its waste into three streams: paper, glass and general waste. These are also collected separately.
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-management contract with Renewi B.V. to OnCourse. It was reviewed digitally.

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	The emergency response plans were reviewed, with particular focus on the greenkeeping team. The course's designated emergency responders are known and complete the required training annually. The emergency number is printed on the scorecard. The course has one Handicart for members with reduced mobility.
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	Discussed: everyone is welcome. New members first receive instruction, including guidance on important course etiquette.
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	Not discussed directly. However, the golf course is an approved training provider for relevant courses.

C2 Outreach & Inclusion

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	Meeting rooms are available to sponsors and members.
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	Many volunteer groups are active and undertake a range of tasks on the course, including bird surveys and many other course-related activities.

	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	Many partnerships and community activities take place at the golf course, for example: Collaboration with the nature conservation organisation Drents Landschap and a partnership with Geopark de Hondsrug. Excursions are organised for schools, and visitors from the neighbouring Landal holiday park receive a discount at the golf course.
	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	During the season, the course organises informal competitions in which younger and older players, as well as beginners, are supported by more experienced golfers. At De Gelpenberg, the greenkeepers also play once a month with volunteers from the course committee.
	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	The GEO working group is highly engaged in this work.
	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	The GEO working group is highly engaged in this work. A GEO reference is present on the website, but it will be given a more prominent position.

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