



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report

De Hooge Rotterdamsche

Prepared by independent verifier Guido Hamelink

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2026
Recertification due: 2029



“De Hooge Rotterdamsche has embedded sustainability in the organisation by making it part of “business as usual”. The club manager, facilities manager and head greenkeeper each contribute to this within their own role and area of responsibility, with one shared objective in mind: to make one of the most intensively played golf courses in the Netherlands valuable and engaging for both people and nature.”

*Guido Hamelink
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that De Hooge Rotterdamsche 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.

De Hooge Rotterdamsche 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, De Hooge Rotterdamsche should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, De Hooge Rotterdamsche 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	The facility has a clear landscape context within the Hoge and Lage Bergsche Bos recreational/nature area, with ecological grassland, scrub/shrub vegetation, woodland and open water. During the verification discussion the club demonstrated active knowledge of habitats, rough management, bird life and neighbouring nature areas. Collaboration with Rotta and use of species observations/records support the site understanding. Continue to keep habitat maps, biodiversity records and observed species data current in OnCourse/GLFR.
	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 club is aware of its duty of care for protected species and stated that roughs and banks are not mown during the breeding season without checks; staff walk ahead and inspect long vegetation before cutting. Historical species information and recent observation-app data were referenced. CIP: Please translate this practical awareness into an up-to-date ecological work protocol covering breeding-season restrictions, protected-species checks, mowing of roughs/banks and contractor instructions under current Dutch legislation.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	The site has a known historical landscape context linked to peat extraction, reclamation and former mill locations. No evidence was found of legally protected cultural-heritage designations on the course. The criterion is considered met, provided future groundworks continue to check whether archaeological or heritage obligations apply.
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 has actively reduced intensively managed turf by allowing substantial out-of-play rough areas to grow longer, selectively choosing locations where play is least affected. The club also uses player/course-use data from Golfer to identify places where grass can be left longer because they are rarely used. CIP: Please formalise this evidence-based naturalisation approach with mowing maps, play-pattern data and annual review of low-use turf 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	The club has created and managed habitat through longer roughs/biozones, seeded flower zones, insect hotels made from reused roof material, nest boxes and ongoing tree planting based partly on earlier planting plans. Rotta advised on bird-box placement, including limiting owl boxes and adding a kestrel box. The club intends to expand biozones where compatible with golf. CIP: Please document current habitat projects with maps, photos, species records and before/after descriptions in OnCourse/GLFR.
		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	
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	Practical species measures include numerous bird boxes, a dedicated owl/kestrel approach agreed with Rotta, a bird-species poster in the clubhouse and planned monitoring of nest-box use. The club also facilitates member engagement through bird courses and exclusive nature visits with local partners. CIP: Please create a concise priority-species action list linking target species, nest boxes, monitoring moments, mowing restrictions and responsible persons.
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 current agronomic strategy is guided by specialist advice from Maurice Evers and includes monitoring grass composition, reducing annual meadow grass, overseeding mainly with bent grasses and considering red fescue where suitable. The club recognises that the greens are not uniform, are influenced by older construction and water quality, and therefore require site-specific turf decisions. The organization confirms intensive soil and turf work: hollow coring, thatch reduction, regular aeration/injection, soil-profile checks, moisture measurements and specialist advice. Staff acknowledged that thatch had become a blind spot and are now using data and external agronomic review to adjust nitrogen, water and renovation practices. CIP: Please retain soil-profile records, thatch measurements, moisture data and intervention logs as verification evidence.
	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	
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout	Test and monitor soil pH; Follow legal requirements when timing fertiliser applications	

	the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Ensure staff are fully qualified to use fertilisers Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	CIP: Please ensure current calibration, staff qualification/PPE records and nutrient applications are demonstrably recorded and available during verification.
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	The historical management approach prioritized cultural and mechanical practices before chemical control, including aeration, dew/moisture control, thatch management and proper irrigation. This matches the criterion.
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	The club attempted chemical-free management for several (3) years, including trials with biological/bacterial products and a split nursery-green comparison. Severe disease pressure, including dollar spot and anthracnose, caused major playing-quality and membership impacts, after which the club returned to using authorised products only when genuinely necessary. This shows learning, but also a need for strong decision records. CIP: Please record each chemical intervention with diagnosis, location, threshold/need, alternatives tried and product justification.
	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	A current overview of products used and application quantities was provided, supporting responsible tracking of chemical inputs. However, no current sprayer/operator licence was seen during verification. CCIP: Please ensure that there is a valid sprayer licence(s), current list of authorised products, safety data sheets, calibration records, PPE availability and hazardous-waste disposal evidence in place.

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	Historical information describes minimised fertiliser and pesticide use near open water, vegetative buffers and pollution prevention through careful management. CCIP: Please develop a more current emergency spill response plan, ensuring that there is regular staff training and awareness. CIP: Please develop a map of buffer zones.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Historical evidence indicates wastewater from clubhouse/buildings discharged to sewer and waste streams were separated. CCIP: Please retain current discharge arrangements and hazardous-substance documentation for clubhouse operations, especially cleaning/catering products and oil/fat waste.
	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	A recent investment of more than €10,000 in oil/grease and wash-water handling upgraded to legal standards. Because the maintenance site has no direct sewer connection, wash water is filtered, collected in a septic/holding tank and collected by a local certified partner for discharge to sewer. Staff also reduce water use by first blowing machinery clean rather than washing everything. CIP: Please upload current evidence of the wash-water system, certified collection/discharge arrangement, separator/filter maintenance and impermeable wash/mix-load area to the OnCourse Documents Library.
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;	Hazardous-substance storage and handling were assessed on site by the verifier and photographed as evidence. The observed arrangements were considered sufficient for current certification. CIP: Please retain the photographic evidence together with the hazardous-substances register, SDS folder, inspection records and authorised disposal records for ongoing compliance.

		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	Historical evidence records fuel/oil use and hazardous storage, but current tank condition and inspection evidence were not found in the retrieved sources. CCIP: Please implement a formal tank inspection regime, ensuring that the bunding/drip trays, fire extinguisher and fuel/gas storage are compliant.
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	There is no direct sewer connection for the maintenance area and that wash water is filtered, routed to a septic/holding tank and collected by a local certified partner for discharge to sewer. This is a concrete current control measure. CIP: Please retain collection invoices, discharge confirmation, maintenance records and a simple schematic of the wastewater route.

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;	Historical management used fescue/red-fescue grass choices, limited irrigation focus and reduced water need through agronomic choices. The course uses the natural setting and habitat areas to reduce intensively irrigated turf.

		Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces; 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	Current practice has moved from broad, timer-based irrigation to smarter, app-supported and locally targeted irrigation. The club uses moisture measurements per green and recently installed Toro Lynx software/control upgrades, while staff are being trained to use the system properly. Irrigation is deliberately reduced to find the lower boundary without losing turf quality. CIP: Please retain moisture readings, irrigation schedules, staff training evidence and annual water-use trends.
	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	Historical evidence shows annual registration of water use and planned water-saving measures in showers/catering areas. CIP: Please maintain annual utility data and communicate conservation practices visibly.
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	The club states that it does not use mains water for irrigation and has tested irrigation-water quality. Elevated salt/sodium levels and a pH of approximately 7.8 is stated. CIP: Please confirm current abstraction/permit or water-board requirements, retain water-quality analyses, and document whether treatment of saline irrigation water is technically and financially feasible.
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	Naturalised roughs reduce mowing, and the club has invested in electric robotic mowers, including machines covering approximately 42,000 m²/4.2 ha, plus an electric ball collector under test that may reduce diesel-tractor use by several hours per week. Further electrification is planned where the hilly terrain and technical constraints allow.

			CIP: Please quantify savings through mower areas, machine hours, fuel use and electricity consumption.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record energy consumption (bills, meters etc.)	Practical building-efficiency measures have been taken: air-conditioning used for heating/cooling in several rooms, replacement of gas terrace heaters by digitally controlled infrared heating, investigation of insulation and glazing upgrades, and recognition that the existing buildings constrain rapid transition to heat pumps. CIP: Please keep building-energy measures, feasibility assessments and annual energy data together in the action log.
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	Renewable-energy feasibility has been actively explored. The clubhouse roof has technical limitations for solar panels, but the new driving-range building is identified as the main opportunity and an offer for approximately 100 solar panels is outstanding. The club also installed infrastructure for 12 EV charging points, with 6-8 currently active. CIP: Please document the PV decision/business case and electricity mix, and retain EV charging-use data where available.
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	Historical practice shows attention to reducing inputs through careful fertiliser and chemical use and reuse of green organic waste. CIP: Please improve stock control and material audit records for sand, topdressing, chemicals, cleaning products and catering materials.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Historical purchasing criteria explicitly valued durability, energy efficiency, recyclability, pollution risk, packaging, disposability and local produce. CCIP: Please create a formal sustainable procurement policy for the club, catering and contractors.
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;	Historical evidence describes separate waste streams and recycling/reuse where possible, including green organic waste. CCIP: Please develop a way to monitor and record waste weights by stream and improve visible bin signage where needed.

		Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Authorised waste collector for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste, if required	Historical evidence states hazardous and specialist waste was handled by waste processors. CIP: Please keep current contracts/invoices and licences/evidence from authorised collectors available for general, green and hazardous waste.

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	A safe playing environment and emergency readiness are part of the operational setup. Historical evidence refers to emergency duties, first-aid knowledge and annual evaluation/refresher training. CIP: Please retain current risk assessment/BHV/emergency plan and incident-log evidence.
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	No evidence of exclusionary policy was found. As this criterion is policy-based, the club should retain its membership/visitor terms and equal-access statement as evidence. CIP: Please include an explicit non-discrimination clause in membership/visitor policy if not already present.
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	The organisation has professionalised from informal/volunteer-led sustainability work to operational ownership by management and greenkeeping. Staff training includes chainsaw/advanced saw training, VTA knowledge, Toro Lynx irrigation training, specialist agronomic coaching and practical learning from conferences and peer clubs. CIP: Please retain current training matrix, certificates, PPE/induction records and safety documentation.

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	The facility is multifunctional: it is a golf course within a public recreational landscape, with brasserie access, walking/recreational surroundings, practice facilities, TrackMan-enabled driving range and planned short practice holes to attract beginners, children and older golfers. Membership options are differentiated by age, time of play and family/student categories, and the club must receive a minimum proportion of visitors. CIP: Please describe current access, visitor use and practice-facility improvements explicitly using the Notes feature in OnCourse.
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	The organization confirms active cooperation with volunteers and community/nature organizations, especially Rotta, which supports bird-box placement, nature knowledge, bird courses and exclusive local nature visits for members. The club also works with a nearby MBO horticultural school six times per year for practical sports-field management days. CIP: Please document these initiatives as current volunteering/education/community contributions.
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	Current partnerships include Rotta/Natuur- en Vogelwacht, local neighbours and recreational businesses, the local horticultural school, other golf courses, NGF/GEO contacts and specialist advisors. The club also maintains contact with the recreational landowner/authority and responds to boundary/tree-management issues. CIP: Please update the stakeholder list with current contacts, activities and examples of mutual benefit.
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	The club recognizes that members and visitors do not automatically see the sustainability work and is now communicating more actively through the website, on-site information and visible projects such as insect hotels, bird boxes and a bird-species poster. Staff and members are involved through courses, nature walks and practical education. CIP: Please refresh sustainability/nature communication on site and online.

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 club has strong current stories suitable for sustainable.golf Highlights: the NGF barefoot-path/nature event with approximately 130 registrations, Rotta bird and habitat cooperation, smart irrigation and water-quality management, electrification/robot mowing, and data-driven course management.
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 club has moved from a low-key, partly volunteer-led GEO approach to embedded operational management supported by Golfer/OnCourse, specialist advice and named staff responsibility. The organization shows strong continuous improvement in data logging, irrigation, electrification, habitat management and communication. CIP: Please establish an annual OnCourse/Golfer update routine with named responsibility, evidence checklist, data exports and follow-up of CIPs before the next recertification.

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