



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Fife Golf Trust

Prepared by independent verifier Stuart Rennie

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2030

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Fife Golf Trust manage and maintain their facilities with environmental sustainability at the forefront of all their practices. To be awarded ‘Best Sustainability Project’ at the Scottish Tourism Awards and also for the ‘Impact and Innovation Award’ by Scottish Golf says it all. The full team at Fife Golf Trust should be commended for their continued efforts to champion across all areas of the OnCourse programme with impactful highlights across Nature, Resources and Community. ‘Nature’ has seen enhanced wetland/grassland habitats being created at Glenrothes and other sites. Building a new maintenance facility at Glenrothes has all been implemented using local ‘Resources’ and ‘Community’ sees many inclusive programmes such as bringing the local school kids and dementia group together.”

Stuart Rennie
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Fife Golf Trust 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.

Fife Golf Trust 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, Fife Golf Trust should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Fife Golf Trust 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.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	Fife Golf Trust has a solid understanding of the nature and landscape across the 7 courses that they manage on behalf of the council. Since the last certification a designated Management & Maintenance Officer has been put in place (Ecologist) who has mapped and produced management plans for all facilities alongside David the Golf Courses Manager.
	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	There are limited designations which are fully understood. Lochore falls within the Lochore Meadows Country Park and the Lomond Hills Regional Park. The Golf Courses Manager has been actively recording more varied birds present across the sites which is a result of enhanced management practices.
	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 good understanding of all sites, but no 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	On this visit we concentrated on Glenrothes. Glenrothes has been transformed from a monotoned wall to wall cut grass golf course to a much more diverse varied landscape. Significant areas of grassland management are now left to naturalise, a significant wetland project has been undertaken to naturalise old straight ditches and tree management and replanting is being carried out across all sites. Significantly less cut grass and more managed rough grasslands across all sites.
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	A number of projects have been championed across the sites. • 10,000 native trees planted • 1 km of new hedgerows creating vital habitat corridors • 17 hectares of species-rich grassland introduced to support pollinators and improve soil health

		Prioritise native aquatic species of varying size and structure when planting Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	- Seven new wetlands and five ponds constructed to enhance water environments - Naturalisation of freshwater ditches to improve water quality and support aquatic species - Removal of fencing to improve wildlife movement across the landscape
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	Woodland management plans have been put in place across all sites. Priority native tree species are being managed and non-natives removed. Records of Moths at two separate facilities are being surveyed as well and birds, bats and amphibians.
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	All sites are managed and maintained to work with the native grasses present on each site.
	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	Testing is carried out with agronomical advice from Grogreen who make data driven decisions through analysis and testing.
	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	Yes as above. Testing and analysis drives decision making. Staff have relevant qualifications to work with fertilisers.
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	Yes this is standard practice.

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	Chemical application tends to be the last resort. Spot treat problem greens October onward when disease thresholds are higher, and recovery is less. Don't spray June/September.
	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	Standard practice. All staff who spray are qualified.
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	Only trained staff spray. There are no specific maps for no spray areas but buffers are maintained adjacent to wetlands/watercourses.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Yes standard practice.

	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	Some of the maintenance facilities were inherited from the previous Fife Council Grounds Maintenance and are dated, however the staff have a system of blowing all grass debris off machinery and wash downs are less frequent as a result and there are no cleaning products used. The new facility at Glenrothes has a dedicated wash bay facility which has a silt trap, grease trap and oil separator and was supported and signed off by SEPA. Any future builds would follow the same or similar design, or a waste2water system.
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	Chemical stored under COSHH regulations at Glenrothes and distributed to other courses as required.
	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	All fuels, albeit very low volumes are stored according to compliance. Bunded diesel tanks on concrete bases at all venues, lockable petrol stores, and oils are all stored on bunds. All facilities are fire safety compliant and have annual safety checks completed by Fife Council.

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	Staff are instructed to blow machinery down with battery blowers, which is more sustainable and wash downs are not always necessary. Any future wash bay facilities will be done in accordance with SEPA compliance with the relevant separation traps.
--	---	--	---

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	Target essential areas only. Would like to put irrigation heads into a number of facilities if the funds became available.
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 Irrigation system has been upgraded at Glenrothes. Use of Pogo to test moisture and a full wetting agent programme is in place for greens. Fife Golf Trust embrace science and don't have a one size fits all approach. They have a strict wetting agent programme, which is not only tailored to each site, but is modified according to certain Greens which either hold or shed water differently. A retention wetting agent is applied to more exposed sites where they want to hold more moisture and apply a penetrant wetting agent to the sites where they need to ensure moisture percolates through the profile better. This approach ensures that Fife Golf Trust get the most out of any irrigation applications and helps limit how much water us required.

			CIP: Please explore more sustainable water sources alongside upgraded automatic irrigation systems.
	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	Buildings other than greens sheds are not part of the submission. Outsourced.
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	No water abstraction permits. Mains water. Of the 7 Courses Fife Golf Trust have 1 Course drawing from a Loch, 1 drawing from a River, 1 fed from a newly installed borehole, and the remaining 4 are fed from mains. They have installed a brand-new system at Lochore this year and the only 2 courses that don't have an automatic system are Scoonie and Glenrothes. They simply have a ring main with hose points.
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	GPS used for spraying. Overall the Fife Golf Trust do not have huge budgets therefore there is a drive to run sustainable facilities with an ethos to re-use absolutely every byproduct from the management and maintenance processes. This year Fife Golf Tryst have invested in excess of £2.6M in a brand-new fleet of machinery, with the emphasis on the cleanest option available to market. This investment saw them transition to 63% fully Electric machinery, 11% Hybrid, 15% Diesel, 11% Petrol contributing to a 70% reduction in carbon outputs and a 65% reduction in fuel and maintenance costs. This commitment will have a significant positive impact in Fife Councils carbon targets assisting towards achieving NetZero status. CIP: Please try to utilise more hybrid & electric machinery across the board.
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.)	Alongside the electrification of the machinery, Fife Golf Trust invested in EV road vehicles, where 60% of these are fully Electric, and are investigating installation of EV charging points at our venues.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Understand the energy mix of your electricity supplier;	Solar panels have been installed at the new maintenance facilities as part of the newly constructed building.

		Explore possible greener energy providers	
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 new green facilities at Glenrothes were built using local suppliers. Generally, locally sourced, re used or recycled would be the first option.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Yes.
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.	Standard local authority practice.
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	Yes, as above.

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	Plans in place to respond to incidents and emergencies	There is a Disaster Plan for emergencies in place.

	health from golf and facility activities		
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	Fife Golf Trust is inclusive for all.
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	Yes – Standard local authority practices.
<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 various community driven programmes across all sites such as: Park Golf Schools Programmes Supporting Older Adults and Care Homes Inter-generational success with school kids and dementia group Partnerships Kids play new 6-hole facility at Dunnikier for free. Club volunteers heavily involved with the design and build. A new Himalaya putting green has been built at Lochore which is accessible by all.
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	Volunteer groups helped with the wetland planting. And as above programmes
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	Partnership Working at the Core. Collaboration has been key to the programme's success. Fife Golf Trust provides the venue, operational support and equipment.

			- Dunnikier Park Community Golf leads delivery and community outreach. - Additional support from Active Fife, Fife Voluntary Action, NHS Fife, local schools and the R&A has enabled the model to grow. This partnership approach has already supported the creation of a nine-hole Park Golf course at Craigtoun Park in St Andrews, officially opened by the Provost of Fife in 2024.
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	Yes at all facilities there are notice boards and good relationships between fife trust and the clubs.
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	Fife Golf Trust have created fantastic awareness on their website to promote sustainability and all the practices and measures that they have in place along with the success stories. Some environmental highlights have been recognised in the form of awards: - Best Sustainability Project — Scottish Golf Tourism Awards - Impact and Innovation Award — Scottish Golf Awards - Commendations from VIBES Scottish Environment Business Awards - Commendations from the RSPB for habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement
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 Golf Courses Manager has put measures in place to record data annually. They strive for improvement which all helps with future investment projects.

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