



GEO Certified® Report Golfbaan Het Rijk van Nijmegen

Prepared by independent verifier Guido Hamelink

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2030

“In 2025, Golfbaan Het Rijk van Nijmegen, spanning 150 hectares, will remain one of the largest and most versatile golf courses in the Netherlands. Considerable attention is given to optimisation and sustainability, including the renovation of the irrigation system and the electrification and robotisation of the machinery fleet. The aim is to further reduce the use of pesticides and raw materials and to professionalise management.

As an area for improvement, I see the importance of transforming the grass species composition on the greens to more sustainable varieties that have better disease resistance and require fewer fertilisers and other additives. This not only contributes to a further reduction in the use of resources but also to the robustness and future resilience of the course.

Alongside ecological measures, social sustainability is becoming increasingly important. Het Rijk van Nijmegen actively seeks cooperation with local authorities, residents, businesses, and charities. Through joint projects and social initiatives, the bond with the local community is strengthened.”

Guido Hamelink
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfbaan Het Rijk van Nijmegen 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.

Golfbaan Het Rijk van Nijmegen 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, Golfbaan Het Rijk van Nijmegen should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfbaan Het Rijk van Nijmegen 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	Het Rijk van Nijmegen manages a large area of approximately 150 hectares with a diversity of site conditions. A base map of the golf course is available. CIP: Please consider further subdivision of, for example, the “rough” into more diverse zones so that more location-specific objectives can be set and management can be adjusted accordingly. CIP: Please create a plan and agreements for the management of areas that fall outside the contractor’s maintenance contract. These areas are particularly important for plant and animal species.
	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	Protected species are present on the golf course, including the badger. In 2020, a new ecological work protocol was established. Based on this, the best management timings and precautionary measures are chosen, such as preliminary rounds and the correct driving routes. Tree safety was last assessed in 2023. CCIP: Please undertake an administrative reassessment of tree safety in 2026. CCIP: Please update the ecological work protocols.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	Diverse old tree-avenue structures are managed, but above all, the soil structure/geomorphology is a valuable component. During renovation works, this aspect forms part of permit applications. The historical events of the Second World War also receive attention.
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	CIP: In addition to CIP N1.1.1, please consider converting the areas with snowberry into other native vegetation.

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	For species such as the badger, various breeding bird species and the sand lizard, attention is paid to management and design. Coordination on this matter also takes place with a shepherd. CIP: Please have an expert (ecological adviser) review the mowing management of the natural rough. Set objectives and then determine the best management measures (grazing, mowing and removal, timing and frequency) accordingly.
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	For the badger: 5 kilometres of hedgerows and several hectares of species-rich grassland, tunnels to enable dispersal. Badger activity has been monitored using wildlife cameras. 12 hectares have been grazed for several years, enhancing the structure and diversity of the planting.
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 diversity in soil composition (USGA/Dutch greens) resulting from different construction periods and methods makes it challenging to achieve a uniform quality across the course. The average proportion of annual meadow grass is approximately 50% in 2025. This represents an increase of 10% since 2020. Although a great deal of attention is paid to high-quality grass management, the effects on grass species composition and disease pressure still lag behind. CIP: In 2020, I recommended introducing other species into the greens alongside (creeping) bentgrass. I would like to reiterate this advice now, especially given the pressure on playing quality and the increasing strain on groundwater use for irrigation. Please develop a concrete action plan to reduce annual meadow grass to a maximum of 20% by 2030.
	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	Focus on aeration and soil improvements are part of the head greenkeeper's approach. By changing the contract form from input-driven to output-driven, the contractor is given greater freedom and responsibility to guarantee quality.

	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	Organic fertilisers have been trialled in recent years, with efforts focused both on reducing the overall quantity applied and on the use of organic 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	Structured maintenance, less disturbance. That is part of the approach. Rolling the greens and, towards autumn, allowing the soil to rest in good time are components of the strategy.
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	By focusing on the vitality of the turf, removing dew, and encouraging disease-resistant grasses, the development of diseases and pests is avoided as much as possible. Keeping the turf dense used to be a major challenge, but thanks to a significant investment, the system has been modernised to include more than 2,000 sector sprinklers. The final zone will be renovated in the coming period.
	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	Use of only authorised pesticides by employees holding a spraying licence and using a certified field sprayer. CIP: Please make a further focus on the minimisation and reduction of plant protection products.

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	Risks of environmental pollution are primarily mitigated by limiting the presence of hazardous substances. For example, biodegradable machine oil is used. As the workshop is also used for major machine maintenance, it is equipped in accordance with requirements: an impermeable floor indoors, storage of oils and greases on drip trays, etc. A map is available showing buffer zones around water features.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	A grease trap for capturing fats from catering wastewater is in place, along with records of emptying carried out by a licensed waste contractor.
	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 petrol, oil and grease separator for collecting wastewater is present at the workshop, as well as receipts for the emptying of the tanks by an authorised waste processor.
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;	Overview of hazardous substances present and their location. The plant protection products cabinet is compliant, as is the diesel tank. Oil is stored on 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	Overview of hazardous substances present and their location. The plant protection products cabinet is compliant, as is the diesel tank. Oil is stored on drip trays.
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	The inspection report for the greenkeeping wash bay has been submitted.

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	Irrigation of greens, fairways and tees using groundwater. There is a buffer at hole 1 east. Groundwater consumption has decreased on average by approximately 15% over the past few years. If this trend continues (and is not due to weather conditions), it will be the result of the renovation of the irrigation system. Consumption figures are reported annually to the province of Gelderland.

			CIP: Please develop a scenario plan for if groundwater use is no longer permitted, including a plan for a water storage facility.
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	Soil moisture is measured prior to irrigation.
	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	So far, little attention has been paid to tap water consumption. CIP: Please develop a plan to reduce tap water consumption.
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	Consumption figures are reported annually to the province of Gelderland.
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	Modernisation: High-efficiency boiler installed New energy-efficient dishwasher Fire safety provisions updated (renewed as required by insurance) No batteries are charged in the lockers any more
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.)	As per R2.3.1 below.
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	New energy supplier who also provides insight into energy usage.

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	More and more local suppliers are being utilized. Everything that can be sourced locally is done so, except for agreements made with the government.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Suppliers are encouraged to offer sustainable alternatives. When purchasing new equipment (such as the recently acquired dishwasher and boiler), energy-efficient and long-life appliances are given priority.
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.	In the coming years, the aim is to separate waste generated from the course. Special attention will be given to packaging materials used in course catering: no plastic packaging, or as little as possible. CIP: Please develop a plan to separate by waste stream, i.e., separate PMD (Plastic, Metal, and Drink cartons).
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	A portion of the leaves is processed in the woods. Grass is stored and removed several times a year.

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	An emergency response plan has been drawn up. Annual emergency response (BHV) assessment.

			Vitality budget – encouraging employees to cycle to work by introducing an attractive cycling scheme. Fitness subscription, fruit at work, and training from Good Habitx. Provision of several internship placements at MBO and HBO level.
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	Active involvement of primary schools: ten times a year, groups 7 or 8 are invited by the golf club. There is a presentation about golf, followed by a visit to the driving range. During these sessions, information is also given about course management. This is important for raising awareness and introduces pupils to the profession of greenkeeping. There are also separate initiatives for students from Nijmegen to further engage them.
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	Het Rijk distinguishes itself in the Dutch golf industry as one of the largest employers. In line with its vision, Het Rijk also operates a professionally managed organisation that offers opportunities for staff to progress in their careers.
<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	The golf course is crossed by two public paths/roads. Members who, due to old age, no longer play golf are invited to remain involved with the golf club. Every year, afternoons are organised for elderly people who are lonely, and during the winter months there are weekly bridge activities. In this way, social cohesion is strengthened.
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	Sponsoring of local initiatives. Contacts with the municipality and other local parties. Agreements with local entrepreneurs regarding supplies.
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	Sponsoring Children's Holiday Work – offering children from Groesbeek an enjoyable and active holiday week. Each year, afternoons (clinics three times a year) are organised for parents of ill children (Tante Lenie).

			Bridge in the clubhouse for members and non-members (weekly during the winter months). Charity events for Ronald McDonald House. The regional walking tour, with around 250 walkers, crosses 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	Three information boards highlight cultural history and natural values. CIP: Please try to organise an annual open day for members to observe the management and maintenance of the golf course.
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	Suppliers are encouraged to propose sustainable alternatives. An obvious choice is the local and sustainable coffee brand Peeze.
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	Periodic reports on various themes (course maintenance, waste, and water) are submitted to the management of Het Rijk golf courses. In addition, this is the third GEO audit that has been conducted on the golf course. CIP: Please develop a clear, practical work plan with objectives and actions for the period 2025-2030.

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