



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Kokkolan Golf

Prepared by independent verifier Pentti Viluksela

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“The Kokkola Golf team have achieved excellent results with their environmental and sustainability activities. The course’s natural values have been well maintained and developed, e.g. by supporting bird nesting, managing the forests and protecting the groundwater area. Energy and water audits are leading to major resource efficiency improvements. The club plays a dynamic role in the wider community, which is demonstrated by active junior golf, school collaboration and para-golf programmes, and by a broad and diverse partnership network. I look forward to seeing the updated nature survey, results of the energy projects, and expanded sustainability communication.”

Pentti Viluksela
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Kokkolan Golf has successfully achieved GEO Certified® status for its outstanding work to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

GEO Certified® is the most respected certification for golf, based on a credibly and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Kokkolan Golf has:

1. Met the required certification criteria for sustainable golf operations
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd. (autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation)

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved all mandatory criteria; and with specific Continual Improvement Points (CIP) set for the future and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Kokkolan Golf should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Kokkolan Golf can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the independent verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Carole Kerrey
Director, Certification and Credibility,
GEO Certification Ltd.



Verification and Certification

Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – 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	A survey of the bird species on the course has been done (BirdLife bird count), but there are no documents from the survey. CCIP: Please update and document the bird species survey. Expand to include other animal and plant species. The forest management plan is updated regularly in collaboration with the landowner, the City of Kokkola.
	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	No protected species found on the golf course. Highlight: A swan family lives in the area, and their nesting and wellbeing are safeguarded by appropriate course maintenance and play arrangements.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	There are no official designations on site. Old stone fences located on the course have been restored by the golf club.
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	Golfers' routes are monitored, and areas outside play have been naturalised, e.g. meadows adjacent to fairways 3, 4, 5.
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	The forested areas of the course are managed together with the landowner, the City of Kokkola. The forest management plan is updated regularly. There is a buffer zone around water bodies for mowing and fertilisation. Roughs are not fertilised at all.

		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	Highlight: Fifty bird boxes have been installed on the course to support the local bird species
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 soil of the Gulf of Bothnia coastal area is challenging for grass growth (pH, clay content). Grass species selection has been guided by earlier extensive tests with different species. On the greens, the dominant grasses are annual bluegrass and creeping bentgrass. Impermeable plastic covers are used to protect the greens from winter damage.
	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	Soil samples are taken and analysed as needed. Biostimulants are used, and compost has also been tested. The irrigation water is rich in iron. The fairways are limed every three years. The soil is aerated by coring, especially in the autumn.
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Test and monitor soil pH; Follow legal requirements when timing fertiliser applications Ensure staff are fully qualified to use fertilisers Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	The pH value of the soil is monitored. Sprayer calibration is carried out regularly. The course manager is licensed to handle chemicals. Protective equipment is available and in use. A new sprayer is being acquired.

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	Course maintenance follows IPM principles, favouring mechanical methods such as sharpening mower blades, removal of surface moisture, and rotation of hole locations. Blade sharpening is also offered to partner organisations.
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	Shaded and north-facing greens are most vulnerable to diseases. Moss appears in certain places. Air circulation on the greens is improved by selective thinning of the surrounding forest, together with the city. Plant protection products are used only as a last resort.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use legally registered and approved products; Prefer products for the specific weed, pest or disease; Follow legal requirements; Ensure staff are fully qualified to use pesticides; Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	The chemicals storage is adequate. A list of chemicals and safety data sheets are available. Sprayed chemical quantities are optimised and waste minimised through planning and experience. Sprayer calibration is carried out regularly. The course manager is licensed to handle chemicals. Protective equipment is available and in use. A new sprayer is being acquired.
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	An action plan for chemical spills is up to date. A rescue plan has been drawn up but needs updating. There are QR codes on the course which provide information, e.g. about assembly points in emergencies. CCIP: Please update the rescue plan to cover the clubhouse, maintenance facilities, staff and players.

			The golf course is located in the Patamäki groundwater area, whose water quality monitoring project involves 19 parties. The golf course has no monitoring obligations but participates voluntarily. There are two sampling points in the golf course area, from which water samples are taken once a year.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Clubhouse wastewater is discharged into the municipal sewer system. Staff take hazardous waste to the municipal waste management service (Ab Ekorosk Oy). The service is free of charge. Chemicals are stored in an adequate storage room with a concrete floor and a raised threshold.
	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	Wastewater from the maintenance facility is discharged into the municipal sewer system. The washing area has a concrete floor, and a floor drain with oil separation. Handling of chemicals is done on a concrete surface. Machines are often cleaned with compressed air instead of washing with water.
	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 ;	Chemical list OK. First aid training is organised regularly for staff, next time in spring 2026. First aid supplies can be found in the clubhouse and maintenance facility. There is also a defibrillator in the clubhouse. CCIP: Please ensure that an eye wash bottle is available and clearly marked in the maintenance facilities. There are fire extinguishers and spill management materials in the maintenance facilities, and the staff facilities have adequate showers.

		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 fuel tank has a double-walled structure to prevent leaks. The authorities do not inspect the fuel tank, but the staff regularly check it visually and functionally.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage, treatment and discharge	Impermeable, leak-free surface; Treatment as per local requirements (oil, grease and / or clipping separation); Formal discharge agreement, if applicable	Wastewater is discharged into the municipal sewer system. The washing area has a concrete floor, and there is oil/clippings separation in the floor drain.

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	The club has carried out extensive tests of different grass species to find the most suitable for the local soil and climate conditions. Irrigation is targeted only at the greens and tee boxes. Fairways are not irrigated.
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;	The irrigation system is checked at the start of the season in spring and emptied in autumn. Maintenance and repairs are carried out as needed. The pumping station has recently been renewed.

		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 amount and coverage of irrigation is controlled with sector sprinklers and by variable size nozzles. Irrigation is adjusted according to weather and soil conditions.
	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	A water audit has been done, and water consumption is actively followed. The annual water consumption has been reduced by approx. 200 m³ by installing automatic showers and taps and new drinking water taps.
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	Irrigation water is drawn from a groundwater basin located within the course area. No water abstraction permit is required, and there are no requirements to report water consumption.
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	Areas outside play have been identified and converted into natural meadows.
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.)	Highlight: An energy audit has been carried out, and based on it, plans are being made to replace oil heating with an air-to-water heat pump.
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	CIP: Please investigate the environmentally friendly options offered by the current electricity supplier. Highlight: Based on the energy audit, plans are being made to install solar panels on the roof of the maintenance hall.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on	No specific international requirement, however, identify	Printed cardboard scorecards have largely been replaced by digital ones (apps).

	necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	activities to reduce the demand for materials and look for continual improvements	Sand is obtained from a nearby area, and the transport distance is very short.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	The club restaurant uses plenty of local produce (e.g. meat, vegetables).
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 amounts of different waste fractions are calculated based on reports from the waste management company. Bins are properly marked both in the maintenance facilities and clubhouse. Three-compartment waste bins are used on the course; their number has been reduced, but they are placed optimally along the player routes.
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 is arranged according to local regulations and in collaboration with local authorised service providers.

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	Employees have access to occupational health services, and seasonal workers are covered by municipal health care. A comprehensive risk assessment was carried out in 2024, and it is reviewed and updated twice a year.

			Player safety is ensured e.g. with protective nets.
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	Membership is open to all. Women are represented in the board. Highlight: The club organises activities for para-golfers throughout the year.
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 occupational safety authority carries out regular inspections. New employees are given practical, personal orientation supplemented by an induction folder. This coming summer, greenkeepers will test a new way of giving golfers permission to play using a signal light fitted on the maintenance equipment, thus reducing the risk of accidents.
<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 clubhouse is also being used outside the golfing season (e.g. private events, golf simulator studio). When snow conditions allow, the course hosts Kokkola's only "skiing with dog" track. The golf club collaborates with other sports clubs (e.g. disc golf, bowling, horse riding) in various ways.
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 club organises open events for all (e.g. Easter bonfire), and charity events (e.g. 24h for junior golf). Members actively participate in volunteer work (e.g. course maintenance, installation of green covers).
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	Highlight - 2,500 schoolchildren visit the golf course and receive sports instruction every spring and autumn. Most of them arrive by walking or cycling. Some of the golf course ponds provide opportunity for fishing. There is a cycling track along the edge of the course. The golf club has about 80 local partners.

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 board, course manager, and managing director are planning and implementing sustainability activities. CIP: Please consider involving external parties (players, partners, etc.) in the sustainability work. The club communicates sustainability matters via its social media channels. CCIP: Please broaden the communication about sustainability actions using e.g. local media, website, signs on the 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	Three highlights have been published on the <i>sustainable.golf</i> website. Possible future highlights have been identified.
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 board supervises the sustainability activities, and the Course Manager and Managing Director are responsible for entering OnCourse data.

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