



GEO Certified® Report

Nizels Golf & Country Club

Prepared by independent verifier Tony Hanson

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

Nizels Golf and Country Club is making thoughtful, steady strides in sustainability—enhancing wildlife habitats, managing water and energy smarter with tools like soil sensors and solar panels, and engaging the local community through events and charity work. It's clear the club's committed to doing things responsibly and improving year on year.

*Tony Hanson
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Nizels Golf & Country Club 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.

Nizels Golf & Country Club 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, Nizels Golf & Country Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Nizels Golf & Country Club 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 – that 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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	The club maintains a comprehensive biodiversity strategy with seasonal naturalist surveys. Habitat types include woodland, wetland, and grassland. These have been mapped, with monitoring planned for amphibians next year.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	No designated or protected species identified on site. During the course walk habitats that are likely to accommodate a range of species were discussed. A Dormouse survey is being undertaken on habitat adjacent to the rail line running alongside the course. CIP: Please encourage members to record species seen during play in a “Spotter” book in the Clubhouse.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Archaeological screenings found no listed heritage assets; however, there are protocols to pause works and consult archaeological authorities if unexpected finds occur.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Turf-reduction schemes are in progress to optimise the areas of closely managed amenity grass. Wear patterns and informal observations to inform adjustments to areas in play.

	N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	Active habitat enhancement includes extensive areas of rough unimproved grassland between holes. Observed and discussed woodland and grassland management and naturalisation creating natural corridors.
	N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		Targeted conservation measures include installation of an insect hotel and bird boxes. Additional Bug Hotels are planned.
N2 Turfgrass				
	N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for climate	Turf species are primarily cool-season grasses, suited to the local climate, supplemented by drought-tolerant fescues to support sustainable maintenance. Discussed issues around water availability and the need to continue reviewing turf species and cultural practices to minimise need.
		N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Soil health is maintained via regular aeration, thatching, and organic amendments, part of the annual care programme.
		N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Fertiliser applications are based on annual soil tests, with precise application records documenting types and rates. Applications are undertaken to maintain surfaces to a standard.
	N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Equipment is reviewed and maintained by in house staff, helping to reduce turf stress. Integrated Pest Management is used: mechanical weeding and pest monitoring guide targeted treatments only when needed.

N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Establish patterns and levels of risk for pests and diseases; Scout the course daily for early signs of pests and disease; Accurate pest and disease identification; Map and track pest and disease hotspots; Establish pest and disease thresholds	Chemical use is strictly controlled, recorded in detail, and applied only in response to confirmed assessed risks based on experience and prevailing conditions. Staff observe for signs of pests and diseases to allow early intervention.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use only legally registered and approved products; Ensure staff are fully qualified and licenced to use pesticides; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Use appropriate protective equipment; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of turf .	Only trained, qualified staff apply chemicals using PPE and calibrated sprayers, with secure storage and safety measures following COSHH rules. Observed and discussed applicator licenses and training. Mixes are accurate, with little excess.
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; Maintain mowing buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Maintain spraying and spreading buffer zones around water and all ecologically sensitive areas; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	Pollution controls include buffer zones around water, emergency spill kits on-site, and staff training in prevention protocols. The Pollution Incident Response Plan is currently being updated The discussions confirmed a good knowledge of the site, system and pollution controls. Pollution Incident Response Plan was updated in June 2025, observed and discussed.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Observed and discussed hazardous material storage All hazardous waste is securely stored and collected by licensed contractors, with regular inspections and annual compliance reviews. No Wastewater Discharge License is required.

	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	The Wash Bay is impermeable and fitted with a Clearwater closed loop treatment system. Pesticide preparation is undertaken on the wash pad to keep chemicals isolated and contained in the event of a spill. Containers are triple rinsed and retained for collection and disposal by a Licensed Water Contractor.
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	Maintain a register of hazardous materials available to authorised staff; Safe storage in secure and ventilated concrete or metal building; Sufficient storage capacity; Impermeable flooring; Spill containment kits present; Emergency wash area; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area; Secondary containment for fuel, either externally constructed, or integrally manufactured; Regular inspection of storage tanks	Fuel, oil, and chemicals are stored in compliance with HSE and EA standards. Spill response plans are in place. Stock and application records are maintained Bunded fuel tank and cabinets were observed and discussed. First aid and wash station were observed and discussed.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	No discharge license is required for golf operation, although discharge for other operations on site is Licensed. Observed and discussed the wash bay as outlined previously.

RESOURCES

R1 Water

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
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R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Discussed turf management and species during the course walk, as detailed previously. Irrigation is confined to high-priority areas (greens, tees, premium fairways), while drought-tolerant fescues elsewhere reduce overall water demand. Soil moisture sensors have improved irrigation efficiency.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Conduct regular irrigation performance checks; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Ensure effective application of water to target areas; Ensure irrigation schedules are informed by weather patterns and soil moisture analysis	Soil moisture levels are continuously monitored using sensors, ensuring irrigation is responsive and efficient. Irrigation equipment is regularly maintained through a combination of external and internal resource. Kent in the UK, is one of the most water-stressed areas in the Country. The Club is aware of the issues faced around water resilience. CCIP: Please review the potential for rainwater harvesting as a source of irrigation water.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Clubhouse water audits in late 2024 led to the installation of low-flow taps and dual-flush toilets, reducing water use. Water meter readings are checked regularly to ensure accuracy and identify areas of use and potential leaks.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	The abstraction remains within the limits of a valid permit, with abstraction monitored and logged regularly.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Turf areas under active management have been reduced where possible, cutting energy inputs related to mowing and maintenance.

			Discussed naturalisation, although there is little scope to reduce areas in play further.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Energy consumption is tracked monthly. Recent upgrades to LED lighting and enhanced HVAC systems have significantly improved efficiency.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	A solar PV system supports clubhouse electricity needs. Performance is under review for potential expansion.
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	Undertake a review of materials consumed	Waste totals and destinations are tracked A procurement policy ensures items are only purchased when essential and prioritises reusable, durable, and locally-sourced materials where possible.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	Adopt a sustainable, or ethical / environmental purchasing policy to maximise the use of locally sourced goods and goods made from recycled, recyclable and certified materials	The club's policy encourages sourcing from suppliers with verified environmental credentials, supporting sustainable procurement practices. Local suppliers are encouraged, largely for local produce and services.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Waste is segregated into multiple streams The Club has general, recyclables, green waste which has increased recycling rates.

R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	All waste removal contracts are held with licensed providers; contractor documentation is reviewed annually to ensure compliance.
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COMMUNITY			
C1 Outreach			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality	C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility		The venue hosts a range of inclusive health and golf activities.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Members and staff support local charities through annual fundraising golf days and themed community events.
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	Create a 'sustainability working group'	Sustainability is featured in internal team meetings and external communications, including newsletters and social media, reinforcing the club's green commitment.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		Coaching programmes tailored to all age groups emphasise fitness and wellbeing.

C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The club offers flexible membership options to attract juniors, seniors, and families, promoting inclusivity and community access.
C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Employment practices fully adhere to UK law. Staff are trained in health and safety, and personal development is supported through documented training pathways.
C3 Communications			
C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	Sustainability efforts—such as the recycling system and GEO certification—are communicated to members via noticeboards, newsletters, and online platforms.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	The club is an active member of a regional sustainable business network since 2023 and delivers educational workshops in collaboration with local schools twice annually on habitat creation and recycling.

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