



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Linna Golf

Prepared by independent verifier Sanni Sjoblom

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2024
Recertification due: 2027

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“It is evident that Linna Golf is eager to step up and develop sustainability in every aspect. They have already been able to cut down spending on fertilizers and irrigation water. The materials spending and waste generation has reduced, and recycling has taken a leap forward. The employees are happy and excited about the new vision that the club has.”

*Sanni Sjoblom
(GEO accredited independent verifier)*



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Linna 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.

Linna 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, Linna Golf should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Linna 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 – 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.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	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Basic map of the course confirmed. Aerial imaging is taken for the district planning. Nature survey is made by Finnish Consulting Group. The surveys especially take into account rare and endangered species that are present in the region. Those were not spotted in this particular area. The state of the ponds, as well as inlets and outlets, at Linna Golf are studied with Lake Katumajärvi protection association. Soil is typical to the region in Finland. Moraine and clay are good at maintaining cuticle layers of water. The dominant tree is spruce. Along the course, meadows have been increased. Old storage and compost areas are used for that. CIP: Please take photos to help communications on the nature and meadows around the site.
	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 special, rare or endangered species are found in the region. Bats, flying squirrels and some rare plants (pulsatilla patens) are studied but not found.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	The courtyard of the clubhouse is protected. When renovations are done, the Finnish Heritage Agency is consulted.
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	The golf club has the goal to naturalize the course as much as possible. For example, maintained roughs will be naturalized.

			The routes of the play areas are monitored, mostly visually. In the case that golfers were seen to be cutting through some areas, pathways were properly built to reduce the risk of disruption.
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	Flourishing meadows have been increased and will continue to expand. Native species are planted. Bee and butterfly meadows and 150 birdhouses for small birds have been set up. This contributed to the general development of nature. Something beautiful is being made from existing stones. The new greenskeeper has many goals and objectives to develop the course in a more sustainable direction. Insect hotels are built. Suitable perennials are planted in rocky areas e.g., next to the bridge. CCIP: 1 ha has just been naturalised to support lower maintenance. Please explore further projects to increase the naturalized areas over the next three years.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		There are no protected species. Woodlands are maintained lightly to let the light and the air move on the course.
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	The new greenskeeper develops and tests different turf species. Festucas are preferred on the peripheries. Argostis stolonifera on greens. They are very dense and grow well. They have had good winter resistance. CIP: Please continue the process to decrease the percentage of poa annua, as perennials are preferred. The goal is to get all the fairways to the same condition.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Greens: Sanding, aeration, cut outs of soil, bushing. Fairways. Pegging, bushing (20-30 cm deep) CIP: Please consider building testing greens.

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Soil tests are taken once a year. For example, six greens are studied. Decisions are based on the analysis and visual scouting. Hot spots are monitored.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Sanding has been decreased from 30,000 – 10,000 Greenkeeping materials are used on the peripheries of the course. Topcutting and pegging is used. Sharpening of blades. Moisture removal is not needed. Greens are cut usually every second day. Every second day they are rolled. The goal is to regulate the growth of the turf. The volume of clippings has been decreased. Nitrogen applications have also decreased.
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	Diseases are forecasted. Pesticides are used according to the guidelines. Soil maintenance has improved. Hotspot monitoring.
	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 .	The greenkeeper keeps an accurate diary of the observations on the course. Spraying is done by the licensed person. The protective gear was observed. Sprayers are calibrated and inspected. The spraying van is new. Used machines are often preferred. Waste has decreased 20 x compared to 1-2 years ago. Clippings are composted on the periphery. Pesticide waste is down to zero. Cans are recycled.

			CCIP: Please improve bookkeeping of pesticide use, training and education.
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.	In case of hydraulic oil leaks the machine is shut down immediately and taken to maintenance. Oil separation wells. Absorbent materials. Pesticide sprayers are accurate and have windshields. Spraying volumes are low. Snow cover is sanded, but pesticides are sprayed only after the melting of the snow. Granular fertilizers are used if the area of fertilization is large. Greens are fertilized with a sprayer. Weather conditions are followed. CCIP: Please explore the feasibility of mapping buffer zones and any no-spray, no-spread areas.
	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	Licensed contractor collects the hazardous waste. Wastewater from the maintenance hall is discharged to a container. It is emptied by a local operator. Hazardous materials are currently stored in a locked container, which is going to be renovated soon. CIP: Please explore ways to improve the storage of hazardous materials.
	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	Washing bay is paved with concrete. Washing water is led to a well and absorption field. Separation well is emptied on a regular basis. Mixing is done inside the machinery hall. There are good water taps.

			Applicators are rinsed in the beginning and at the end of the process. Nozzles are washed if needed. Leftovers are spread on the roughs. CIP: Please explore ways to improve the storage for sand.
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	The registry of hazardous materials (safety data sheets) is stored in the same space with the hazardous materials. Right now the hazardous materials are stored in temporary storage, while the new storage is ready. Spill containment kits are present in the maintenance hall, as well as fire extinguishers. These are inspected on a regular basis. Fuel containers are double hulled. CIP: Please optimise the new storage for the hazardous wastes.
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)	Clubhouse is connected to the municipal wastewater system. Wastewater from the maintenance hall is led to on site wastewater system where the water is sand filtered. Washing area has separation wells for sand and oil. After the separation well, the water is led to the wastewater treatment system on site.

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	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	Water use is observed. Soil moisture is inspected manually. A soil scout is used. Roughs are not irrigated.

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 scout. Irrigation system is used by the greenskeeper and one more employee. Rainbird is used. Irrigation system is sectoral. Weather forecasts are used. Irrigation at nights. WhatsApp group for fast information CIP: Please try to fix the wells and renew the sprinklers.
	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	Water is monitored with meter. Water usage is unlimited. Irrigation volumes are low. Toilets are water saving.
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	Not needed.
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	Discussed above: Roughs are on very low maintenance. Ongoing naturalization.
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	Utility bills. Earth heating system at clubhouse. Maintenance hall has heat pumps.
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	CIP: Please consider electric machinery and electrifying the entire mowing operation when the necessary infrastructure is available e.g., when the planned development starts. Please also study the feasibility of other possible renewals.

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	Clubhouse: Cardboard, paper, biowaste Maintenance hall: mixed waste, cardboard is taken to clubhouse. Hazardous waste separated.
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	Restaurant is a separate business. Edible mushrooms picked from the course are used at the restaurant. Nordic / Scandinavian fertilizers.
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	All the organic waste generated on the golf course is recycled at the course. Labelled bins ok. Bottles are collected.
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	Confirmed.

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		Swimming during the summer. Housing development on the golf club's area.

			Castle of Vanaja has recreational possibilities such as sup. Cooperation with City of Hämeenlinna and Vanaja Castle. Vanaja Castle uses the services of the golf club. Anyone can pick the berries and mushrooms. Dog walkers are allowed on the golf course and on the maintenance roads around the year. CIP: Please explore the possibility to plan and make ski tracks with the city.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Not discussed.
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'	Co-operation with City of Hämeenlinna and Vanajanlinna Castle. There is also a nearby slippery driving track Kervinen which is an important co-operator. Community relations are important. The Katumajärvi protection association is important. Club is funding the Katumajärvi Association. The sustainability working group consists of the managing director and the greenskeeper. Generally, topics related to sustainability are discussed in weekly meetings and meetings of the chair group. CIP: Please continue to develop the plans, processes and workings of sustainability working group.
C2 Golfers & Employees			
C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		The club offers cooperation with companies and businesses. This brings width to the base of golfers.
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	There are about 300 shareholders. The largest are Vanajanlinna and Hattula Golf. The sports club has 350 members, and around 100 playing rights are rented out per year. You can also play with a one-time fee. There are many corporate events. There are 22,000 players per year, with 1/4 being members of the facility.

			The number of members that live locally is small (150). The income is based on business cooperation and tourism.
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	Everyone gets to play. Employment is offered regardless of age, gender, or skin colour. There are, among others, Thai and Ukrainian workers.
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	Service Manager Karita is responsible for marketing communication and information dissemination. The interests of the shareholders are aimed to be upheld. 17,000 customers in the registry. Communication occurs 4 times a year. Email, website, social media, and digital media. Once a year, Linnan Sanomat-newspaper is distributed throughout the entire Kanta-Häme region.
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	Sustainability is communicated through the actions. They make a big deal out of things when they really feel they are worthy of it. Whenever something is done, it is reported. 12 electric car charging points generate revenue. BMW.

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