



**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

# **GEO Certified<sup>®</sup> Report Golfclub de Haar**

Prepared by independent verifier: Paul van Kan

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2023  
Recertification due: 2028



*"In the Netherlands, you regularly find that golf courses have a recognisable identity appropriate for the region. This is very much the case with Golfclub de Haar. Uniquely, the course has been laid out within the Zuiderpark of De Haar Castle, designed in 1905 by the famous landscape architect Copijn. You will find unusual tree species such as carya, fern beech and swamp cypress. Stone flora is also characteristic and encouraged. The first 9 holes of Golfclub De Haar have been located around the large pond, called 'the river' by Copijn, since 1974. The course's expansion from 9 to 18 holes began in late 2018. The new and old holes have been completely rebuilt according to the latest technical insights on water management and soil development. What makes the expansion to 18 holes so special is that the redesign has been used to carefully and respectfully restore the old design: sightlines have been reopened, clumps of trees and lanes have been restored. Felled trees have been compensated in the expansion areas by planting native species. These expansion areas have an identity all of their own, in keeping with the open river landscape of the Old Rhine basin.*

*Both golfers and walkers can enjoy this beautiful landscape; a circular walk has been laid out along the edges of the park with viewpoints inwards and outwards. Information for walkers and players is cleverly done - subtly designed but at the same time clear. Furniture on the course is also almost invisibly present.*

*Greenkeeping also deserves compliments. The holes are kept in good condition without the use of pesticides. The street grass level is very low. When removing weeds, the league committees are ready prioritising manual management. Leaf and grass clippings are turned into compost on site (which may be used as an ingredient for fertiliser in the future). As the course measures 74 hectares, there is plenty of room for wildlife, such as crested newts, storks and (virtually) the entire spectrum of woodpeckers. In collaboration with ecologists, including from Natuurmonumenten, the special habitat requirements of these species are closely monitored and determine design and management. Several things are still on the wish list after the expansion. As far as I am concerned, the focus can be on further reducing energy consumption (clubhouse, machinery, mowing management) and on communicating the unique landscape and nature values to interested parties inside and outside the association."*

**Paul van Kan**  
(GEO accredited independent verifier)



# Introduction

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GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfclub de Haar 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.

Golfclub de Haar 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, Golfclub de Haar should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfclub de Haar 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  
Manager, Data and Reporting, GEO  
Certification Ltd.



# Verification and Certification

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## 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](http://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](http://www.isealalliance.org)



# Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitats &amp; Biodiversity</li> <li>• Turfgrass management</li> <li>• Pollution prevention</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships &amp; Outreach</li> <li>• Golfing &amp; Employment</li> <li>• Advocacy &amp; Communications</li> </ul>

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	Nature makes up large part of the total area of 74 ha (Natuurmonumenten).

			<p>There is a broad inventory by an external ecologist. All species groups were identified for 2016-2018, with an update in 2019.</p> <p>There was a breeding bird survey in 2023. Notable species include stork, raven, and all forms of woodpecker.</p> <p><b>CIP: Please update the monitoring of all species groups, preferably every three years. This is due to the legal validity of flora and fauna inventory data.</b></p>
	<b>N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species</b>	<p>Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site</p>	<p>Forest compensation recovery plan in 2018. Partly internal, partly external compensation.</p> <p>The golf course (park section) is part of NNN and subject to the Nature Conservation Act.</p> <p>Biotope map present in management plan.</p> <p>Permits for felling trees applied for and obtained. Biotope for tawny owl and crested newt.</p> <p>Trees under VTA (biennially or more often if necessary).</p>
	<b>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</b>	<p>Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site</p>	<p>De Haar estate is a cultural-historical monument. The golf course is situated in 'Zuiderpark'. This was grown over in 2015 with cultural-historical and experiential value greatly reduced. However, with respect for the original design (Copijn 1906), a renovation in 2018 restored as much as possible.</p> <p>This included the 'pretzel', lanes, sightlines and clumps; and many unusual tree species including redwood and fern beech. Furniture and signage were also incorporated extremely sparingly and subtly. An old orchard was restored with young planting (regional varieties). These extensions fit in with the surrounding open landscape and character of the golf course.</p>
<b>N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course</b>	<b>N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass</b>	<p>Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play</p>	<p>New pools created, and existing pool enlarged. These are tailored to the crested newt biotope.</p> <p>In wintering grounds, there is no felling in winter.</p> <p>There is more light in woods and forest edges after felling. After this, 600 trees and shrubs will be replanted.</p> <p>There is lots of extra space for nature after expansion, especially flowery grassland.</p>

<p><b>N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife</b></p>	<p><b>N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf</b></p>	<p>Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping</p>	<p>Management and restoration (felling and replanting) takes place based on a sound management plan (2019).</p> <p>Management by greenkeeping under supervision of (permanent) ecologist in collaboration with NM.</p> <p>Old beeches protected from sunlight during restoration of forest sections.</p> <p>Management per section in 6-year cycle, thus phased in space and time.</p> <p>Sine mowing and phased mowing of flowery grassland (e.g. holes 14 and 15).</p> <p><b>CIP: Please consider supplementing species lists of new plantings with a few species with rich gestation (pollen and nectar), including spruce and grey willow.</b></p>
<p><b>N1.4 Conserve key species</b></p>	<p><b>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</b></p>		<p>Plenty of species-specific measures: stork trees, many nesting boxes, bat boxes, pools, branch rills, wood piles, standing and lying dead wood.</p> <p>Duty of care well ensured by cooperation between ecologist and green keeper (mowing times, cleaning).</p> <p>Man-made flora and forest flora. This is threatened by overpowering maple trees. There are to be cleared or removed with brushcutter.</p>
<p><b>N2 Turfgrass</b></p>			
<p><b>N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health</b></p>	<p><b>N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors</b></p>	<p>Select appropriate grass species for climate</p>	<p>The club are striving for image and technical quality with B+ level (Greenkeeping Manual).</p> <p>NIB check 4x per year to assess whether targets are met.</p> <p>Festuca rubra (80% on greens, 50% on fairway and playrough) adapted to conditions</p> <p>Mainly lolium species on tees.</p> <p>Street grass nil and no bottleneck.</p>
	<p><b>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</b></p>		<p>Gypsum on fairways to improve the structure of heavy clay and thus drainage capacity.</p>

	<b>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</b>	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Annual fertilisation plan by external consultant.  Buffer zones of 5 m meet legal standard.
<b>N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance</b>	<b>N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management</b>	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	weeds are mainly daisy and plantain.  Manual removal (league teams adopt holes and help with this).  Weed harrow used to pull up grass and disadvantage weeds.  Dew on greens is checked daily and removed where necessary.  External inspections with resulting recommendations (e.g., control by promoting natural enemies, especially starlings).
<b>N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly</b>	<b>N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues</b>	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	Greenkeeping team does not use pesticides.  IPM not applicable (although IPM forms are filled in).
	<b>N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions</b>	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 .	N/A (but licences present)
<b>N3 Pollution Prevention</b>			
<b>N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site</b>	<b>N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations</b>	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;	Protocol hydraulic oil and spills present.  Buffer zones of 5m width



		Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	
	<b>N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations</b>	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	Connection to sewer. Oil and grease separators present and frequently cleaned. Cleaning company certified. No chlorinated or other damaging agents.
	<b>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations</b>	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	Liquid-proof floors on shed, tank and washing area (inspection in 2021). Statement for liquid-tight facility issued after approval of repair (2021). <b>CIP: Ensure annual visual inspection of the floor and file the findings. Checklists are available for this purpose.</b>
<b>N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances</b>	<b>N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances</b>	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	greenkeeping outsourced to HGM since 2021 (HGM is committed to GEO). Everything stored in accordance with regulations (municipal environmental inspection in 2020). Double-walled diesel tank inspected. Site complies with law (2023).
<b>N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water</b>	<b>N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage and discharge licences</b>	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	All grey water drainage connected to sewer. Oil and grease traps before discharge to sewer. These are frequently cleaned. No sanitary facilities on the track.

## 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	Sprinkling of fairways to 'grow in' new holes explains additional water consumption in 2019 and 2020. After the 'grow in' only greens and tees will be 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	Groundwater irrigation from 2 new wells and pumps (from 2018).  Irrigation is computer-controlled with extensive monitoring capabilities.  Sprinklers are adjusted to the playing areas, so no wastage.
	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	Sustainability analysis (2019) from which advice on energy and water consumption is given.  Water-saving measures. No major adjustments pending new construction.
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	No major adjustments pending new construction.  Monitoring sprinkler water quality (2018, 2019).
<b>R2 Energy</b>			
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	Slow-growing grasses reduce mowing frequency and hence energy consumption.  Machines run on diesel or electric only (no petrol).
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	Sustainability analysis (2019) shows advice on energy and water consumption.  Insulation present, but no major investment pending new construction.  Most other advice followed: everything is LED lit, timers, sensors, appliances HR++.  Central heating on natural gas, but consumption figures lower than average.

			Driving range is not lit.
<b>R2.3 Source energy responsibly</b>	<b>R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy</b>	Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	<p>Purchase green energy and supplier is greening supply.</p> <p>No own generation of solar energy (roof is unfeasible as trees mean lower efficiency).</p> <p>Various electric machines (greens mower, leaf blowers, robotic mower on DR) reducing fossil energy consumption.</p>
<b>R3 Materials</b>			
<b>R3.1 Reduce materials demand</b>	<b>R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives</b>	Undertake a review of materials consumed	<p>Specific machines not purchased. These come from the main contractor's office (HGM).</p> <p>Major maintenance and grinding by the contractor.</p>
<b>R3.2 Purchase responsibly</b>	<b>R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy</b>	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	<p>Procurement of greenkeeping is done centrally by HGM. They take sustainability into account.</p> <p>Catering leased and has its own purchasing policy.</p> <p>Own purchasing by club very limited.</p> <p>CIP: Please encourage the hospitality industry that services the club to buy sustainable and organic. Please also inform and motivate members about this.</p>
<b>R3.3 Reuse and recycle</b>	<b>R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity</b>	Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	<p>Separation of glass, pmd, paper and residual waste in separate containers.</p> <p>No waste bins on the course. Waste from players is collected centrally at the clubhouse.</p> <p>PET bottles collected separately by members for recycling.</p> <p>Chemical waste, including waste oil, is disposed of by the green contractor.</p> <p>Wood from felling goes either to the contractor or is sold to members;</p> <p>Leaves and clippings from greens and tees are composted internally from 2022.</p>

			<p>5 recycling bins for grass clippings on the course (grass clippings from rough and fairway remain)</p> <p><b>CIP: Please investigate the most sustainable way of using in-house compost. Using this as a fertiliser on in-house grounds is the best solution. Alternatives are selling to members / entrepreneurs or donating to the local community. Please also ensure that storage is legally approved.</b></p>
<b>R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance</b>	<b>R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations</b>	Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste	<p>Renewi is the local waste processor.</p> <p>Waste is collected separately.</p> <p>Quantities of waste estimated on number of empties and content of containers.</p>

<b>COMMUNITY</b>			
<b>C1 Outreach</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>C1.1 Diversify access and provide multi-functionality</b>	<b>C1.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility</b>		<p>Private clubhouse accessible to members, as well as during symposia and meetings.</p> <p>3 types of paths, each with its own purpose: management, golf, walking. Marked circular walk along the edges, with viewpoints and clear explanations.</p> <p><b>CIP: Please consider organising an open day for stakeholders, local residents and interested parties with, for example, a walk and lectures on trees and Copijn's design.</b></p>
<b>C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity</b>	<b>C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes</b>		130 volunteers do thousands of hours including for: green maintenance, weed-picking, fence-closing, willow pollarding, beautification, maintenance, and inspection of bird and bat boxes.

<p><b>C1.3 Establish active community partnerships</b></p>	<p><b>C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups</b></p>	<p>Create a 'sustainability working group'</p>	<p>Landowner Natuurmonumenten agreed with the 2018 design. There is a mutual understanding.</p> <p>The club have built up a good relationship with neighbours since the preparation of the extension;</p> <p>There is maximum consideration for neighbours (e.g. electric leaf blowers, holes near houses always mowed last).</p> <p>Agreements with water board on internal water management (self-management via weirs possible).</p> <p>Cooperation with a large number of green organisations: IVN, KNNV, bird working group, SBB, NM and ecological consultant.</p>
<p><b>C2 Golfers &amp; Employees</b></p>			
<p><b>C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing</b></p>	<p><b>C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities</b></p>		<p>Signs with clear safety conditions everywhere along open hiking trails. 5 shelters equipped with lightning rods</p> <p><b>CIP: Please continue to work on the emergency plan, equipped with a register of handling and evaluation of incidents. In the meantime, a protocol is in place.</b></p>
<p><b>C2.2 Be open and inclusive</b></p>	<p><b>C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors</p>	<p>Open association, but mainly club members play on the course.</p> <p>As a non-member it is possible to take golf lessons.</p>
<p><b>C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development</b></p>	<p>Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health &amp; safety etc</p>	<p>Interns, work experience and placements.</p> <p>Golf club is an accredited trainer for greenkeepers.</p> <p>Fire extinguishers and fire safety checks by the fire brigade.</p>
<p><b>C3 Communications</b></p>			
<p><b>C3.1 Engage golfers and members</b></p>	<p><b>C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors</b></p>	<p>Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements</p>	<p>Signs at special trees.</p> <p>Birding days for members.</p> <p>Newsletters with items on nature and sustainability.</p>

			<b>CIP: Please involve staff and committees more in GEO by regularly informing them about sustainability efforts, especially how and why.</b>
<b>C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability</b>	<b>C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community</b>	Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	GEO is listed on the website. Business involved through sponsorship. <b>CIP: Please give more attention to GEO on the website and also exploit other media. Please consider a short summary of the GEO report, results achieved, future plans, and nice photos.</b>

## 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](http://www.sustainable.golf)