



GEO Certified[®]

GEO Certified[®] Report Golf Club De Hoge Kleij

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Adrie van der Werf

Certified by GEO Foundation: August 2021
Valid until: August 2026

GEO Certified[®]

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Golfclub De Hoge Kleij has an active and knowledgeable sustainability team, further supported by the club’s nature conservation team. All their activities related to sustainability are comprehensively summarized in a single document, while specific subjects are dealt with in great detail. A single ‘policy’ document like his could serve as an example for other clubs in an efficient and visible way.”

Adrie van der Werf

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golf Club De Hoge Kleij 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.

Golf Club De Hoge Kleij 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 set for the future, Golf Club De Hoge Kleij should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golf Club De Hoge Kleij 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

Richard Allison
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Energy • Materials
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Landscape types, habitats, species diversity and history have been well described. During our course visit the team demonstrated good knowledge on this subject.

	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	In 2020 a range of flora and fauna groups were analysed by both the members of the Nature committee of the Hoge Kleij and the external nature organization KNNV. All results have been described in a well written document. As discussed in this document, nature values are high and recommendations are given to further increase biodiversity. We discussed the presence of protected and endangered species, and Hoge Kleij clearly demonstrated knowledge on the subject, and showed proudness on the biodiversity in and around their course. In total ~1000 different species were recorded in the year 2020, several of them protected/endangered. In a separate document, code of conduct with respect to course management in relation to biodiversity has been described. During our discussions, the head greenkeeper demonstrated knowledge on this subject. We discussed the presence of protected species and how to deal with maintenance in relation to specific laws like e.g. "Wet natuurbescherming". All these aspects are also described in their "Ecologisch Werkprotocol"
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Cultural heritage and landscape history are well documented in several reports, this was not further discussed.
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	One of their goals is to further increase the amount of heather. Several locations seem to be promising. To my opinion, the course and the surrounding nature areas are in a perfect balance. The team mentioned that they are content with the present situation and little changes are foreseen.
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	See points mentioned above. A list of improvement points for the coming years, including associated costs is given in their Duurzaamheidsrapportage Golfclub De Hoge Kleij (Sustainability report 2021)
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		See points above. Suggestions are given in their report on species diversity. Special attention is given to the elimination of non-native species
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 head greenkeeper showed several locations where Poa annua was present on their fairways. In general, a quick inspection showed that Poa annua was not such a big problem as on many other courses in The Netherlands. Hand-weeding of Poa is now being practised on greens.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Standard practices to maintain a healthy soil are applied, and were discussed with the highly knowledgeable head greenkeeper
	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	We shortly discussed this item and reported data on annual NPK application rates are appropriate for the conditions and the club's expectations with respect to quality. They indicated that further reduction in nutrient application rates are not foreseen at the moment.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	All actions described in the GEO management section were confirmed during our discussion
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	Like many other courses, Golfclub De Hoge Kleij is aware of the up-coming changes in legislation with respect to the use of pesticides. Only very little amounts are presently being used. The team further mentioned that (indirect) damage by larvae eating birds and badgers just needs to be accepted.
	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	Applicators are fully licensed, and all equipment is according to legislation
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.	Buffer zones are present, and this was shown during our course visit.
	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	All according to legislation
	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	All according to legislation, e.g. impermeable washing-floor present. All actions with respect reduced environmental risks have been described in a document and is agreed upon by both the club and the course maintenance 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	All according to legislation and inspected during course visit.
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)	All according to legislation; wastewater: oil/grease separated before entering the main sewer

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	Soil moisture sensors in combination with weather forecast and personal expertise (and of course local knowledge) are used for the determination of irrigation rates.
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	In 2020 approx. 22,000 m ³ of surface water was used for roughly 3.5 ha (greens and tees; fairways seldomly irrigated), this is far within the limit set by the Waterboard. The club could further analyse how to reduce irrigation rates without losing quality. Of course, the extremely dry and hot weather conditions in 2019-2020 are part of the relatively high irrigation rates in these years.
	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	Depending on the COVID situation coming months, the club will recently start renovating the clubhouse. It was mentioned that standard water saving equipment is part of this renovation.
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 local Waterboard is informed on the irrigation equipment (pumps) and the club has information on maximum allowable pump and irrigation rates as set by the Waterboard.

R2 Energy

R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	N/A. See N1.2 above
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	consumed in course maintenance		
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	Recently an energy audit was performed and suggestions for more efficient energy use have been made. These will go into action at the start of renovation of the clubhouse. Then also solar cells will be installed on the roof of the clubhouse.
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	Renewable energy is standard, and recently solar cells were installed on the roofs of the driving range and greenkeeping location, that cover ~15% of their total annual kWh use.
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	The restaurant manager showed me around and we discussed shortly this subject. The club has data on type and amount of collected/recycled waste; Purchasing policy is such that food waste is minimized
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 has a good overview of local suppliers, and local purchasing is stimulated by the club and was confirmed by the manager
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	An overview of collected waste is well described and confirmed. Separated waste is collected by the responsible processors. Green waste from the course is stored in containers and is regularly 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	The club is compliant with all waste management regulations

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		Several local golf tournaments are organized for both members and non-members
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Members are involved in several charity activities
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'	<p>A large-scale biodiversity survey was performed by the local nature organization KNNV, and a 80 pages document was delivered recently.</p> <p>At the start of this cooperation, all ins- and outs of surveying a golf course were intensively discussed.</p> <p>The sustainability team of golfclub De Hoge Kleij is occupied by 6 club members, including the course manager and the head greenkeeper. In this they showed good competence on all sustainability themes and each member has its own experience strongly contributing to the team as a whole.</p>

C2 Golfers & Employees

C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		
C2.2 Be open and inclusive	C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Membership is open for everybody

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	Confirmed
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	No special attention/communication is given to e.g. their nature conservation activities. This is, as I understood, part of their club strategy.
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	As above, there are opportunities to undertake this and assist a multiplier effect through different businesses and channels. As a member's club the focus is understandably on the members, but the club could consider how to get the message out that it is more than just a golf facility, which it most certainly is.

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