



**GEO Certified**<sup>®</sup>

# GEO Certified<sup>®</sup> Report Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Bob Taylor

Certified by GEO Foundation: May 2020

Valid until: May 2025

**GEO Certified**<sup>®</sup>

 **GEO  
Foundation**  
Sustainability in and through golf

*“Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club preserves a remnant of local geomorphology, a natural landscape that was once much more widespread through the middle of the expanding towns of Lytham and St Annes. The low to moderately high dune systems support a rich, unique dune flora that other wildlife depends upon, something the club proudly recognises and protects. A traditional club in many ways, Royal Lytham & St Annes is highly proactive making great strides in energy and water management, and waste and supply chain resourcing through close working relationships with preferred partners. The unofficial mantra at the club is ‘working for a better tomorrow’ and this is evident on any visit.”*

*Bob Taylor*

*GEO accredited Independent Verifier*



## Introduction

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GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf 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.

Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf 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 set for the future, Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf 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

Richard Allison  
Manager, GEO Certified Facilities



# 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	Surveys verified = mammals, birds invertebrates, reptiles. Comprehensive species listings 2019. Mapping of the site has been undertaken through the Biological Heritage Site mapping process.

			The club awaits production of a new 2020 Ecological Management Plan to further direct course management.
	<b>N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species</b>	Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	No statutory designations are in place though the club recognises the importance of the biological Heritage site (BHS) status. This outlines management objectives for the fixed dune grassland and associated habitats which is followed by the club. The R&A also provides recommendations annually.
	<b>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</b>	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	Encompassed within the BHS citation and recommendations for management to which the club are aware and fully comply. BHS citation available for review.
<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>	Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Routinely mapped as a result of golf play. No direct mapping undertaken but fairway widths are set and remain largely unchanged as a result of the numerous events played.
<b>N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife</b>	<b>N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf</b>	Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	The club follows The R&A ecology guidelines and the recommendations provided through the BHS citation. A management plan to further direct ecological management is in production.
<b>N1.4 Conserve key species</b>	<b>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</b>		The club recognises dune heath and the fixed dune grassland as the priority habitats, Creeping willow, Salix sp and Calluna are species of immediate note. Grassland management is directed and appropriate with recognition of the varied habitat interests.
<b>N2 Turfgrass</b>			
<b>N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health</b>	<b>N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors</b>	Select appropriate grass species for climate	Greens support bent-fescue with poa mix. Being an Open Championship venue the greenstaff are highly knowledgeable in turfgrass selection and management and are working annually for sward transition.
	<b>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</b>		Good cultural practices such as aeration, sanding, judicious irrigation, and feeding implemented. All alongside routine soil and turf health analysis
	<b>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</b>	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	ETL are the preferred soils testing facility. Documentation available to confirm practice and results, all of which is used to advise and fine tune turf management.

<b>N2.2 Prioritise cultural management</b>	<b>N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management</b>	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	As above though we also covered keeping mower blades sharp, heights of cut, grass seed selection and the judicious use of iron and seaweed. All acknowledged best practices
<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	The greenstaff are very aware of wear and disease hotspots and monitor regularly. The use of directed irrigation is serving well in this respect. Scouting is routine and historic hot spots are clearly mapped.
	<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	All chemicals are logged and recorded. They are stored securely in a bunded, purpose-built facility offering signage, ventilation and ease of access. All greenstaff licensed for use and staff are inducted and receive periodic updates. Spill kits in place. Importantly the club uses latest nozzle technologies to ensure target chemical use.
<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; Create a map / aerial visual reproduction, drawing etc of the course showing buffer zones and no-spray, no-spread areas.	Spill kits, notices in place and course manager (Paul Smith) ensures periodic updates to staff. Paul also ensures machinery inspections and adheres to regular servicing of equipment.
	<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	Licences and protocols in place all managed by Sodexo. I was shown a large folder perfectly set out and indexed that covers Sodexo's working practices and this is available to view. It is the point of reference for Sodexo and the club.
	<b>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are</b>	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and	Wastewater washdown facilities in place with activity pad ensuring no loss to environment. Used also for mixing of products and washing. Spill kits as above, notices in mess room with signage,

	<b>minimised from maintenance facility operations</b>	fertilisers over an impermeable surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	full access maintained around wash areas (see also above). Fire extinguishers are serviced under contract annually. Fuel tanks and storage bunded (double skin), petrol tank too is bunded and out from any buildings.  Above tanks are monitored periodically by the greenstaff.
<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	Products as cited within maintained and frequently updated log.  All products stored and used as per legislative and best practice guidance  Storage is appropriate with space, ventilation, signage, bunded facility.  Locally positioned emergency spill kit and fire extinguishers.  The club offers good staff training opportunities.  All washdown is captured through a class 2 interceptor  <b>CIP</b> we discussed reedbeds and more modern waste water modifications. The club will assess feasibility of these over the next year.
<b>N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water</b>	<b>N3.3.1 Appropriate waste water usage and discharge licences</b>	Wastewater discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	Class 2 oil water interceptor with filter for grass clippings. <b>CIP</b> consider reed bed and or other facility (as above).



## 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	The water use at the facility is monitored via 10 separate meters (zoned) each logging facility, including course use. Irrigation is required to cover the numerous tournaments held each year and the associated renovations.
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	The club has installed a modern, fully automated irrigation system for targeted watering. They work to a service contract monitoring the whole system. Turf Pogo used to monitor turf and soil moisture. System software provides flexibility and control. Weather station in place and used daily. Training is ensured to all greenkeeping staff. Sprinkler maintenance carried out annually by MJ Abbot. The club works to reposition or replace all heads covering non-essential surfaces, walkways etc.
	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	10 water meters log total water use. Current abstraction from vertical wells = 32,000m <sup>3</sup> . The club recognises poor drawdown capabilities and efficient use and are in 2020 exploring horizontal abstraction which would offer more efficient storage and use. This is well underway and likely to be in place well in advance of the next verification review. Internal records were viewed but difficult to interpret given the number of separate meters. <b>CIP</b> work with water co. to improve billing and monitoring. Water saving measure discussed last review are in place.
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	Permit is in place for 32,000m <sup>3</sup> , formerly reduced (last review 2015) to 27,000m <sup>3</sup> due to lack of use. Recent drought pressures have resulted in net increase over the period in review. Horizontal borehole will improve storage and efficiency so reducing total burden.

### R2 Energy

<b>R2.1 Reduce energy demand</b>	<b>R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance</b>	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	The club follows R&A guidance regarding turf management which includes minimal fairway and other in play areas and maximum rough. The club encourage 1 band of semi rough only, carries with single cut walkways. The balance between in and out of play areas is considered annually as part of the ecological survey and monitoring provided through The R&A.  All lighting within maintenance facility is LED
<b>R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency</b>	<b>R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings</b>	Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Royal Lytham works to an agreed plan provided through INENCO (utility consultancy) which covers use and opportunities for savings and efficiencies. Since the last review several improvements have been made, including more efficient lighting, motion sensors, energy saving key cards for Dormy building. The transition programme is ongoing in accord with the energy management plan. Total use was noted around 16,000kwh per annum.
<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	The club is carrying out a feasibility study around the use of solar power to particularly enable an electric fleet of course mowers. The club is also exploring micro solar generation as a replacement for the clubhouse roof. 5x charging points are being installed in the car park and will be available from end June 2020. The heating boilers are serviced annually though the club is looking at gradual change over to induction from current situation (gas in kitchens).
<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	All organic wastes are 100% reused/recycled in construction working. Sand is purchased on a need basis (top dressing and bunker replacement) and waste sand is reused and or composted.
<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	Foods are sourced locally or in accord with Sodexo policy. Sodexo is responsible for waste efficiencies and collection.

<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	Sodexo is the contracted professional body taking responsibility on behalf of the club for cleaning, catering and all associated waste operations. I viewed a full and comprehensive file of Sodexo policies and working practices that are adhered to by Sodexo and which are rolled out to the club. Paper and card are all collected and recycled. The greenstaff use Greenacres for their waste removal includes oils/chemicals/tyres/batteries.  The club has expanded their knowledge through communications with other exemplar clubs including Dundonald Links.
<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	Sodexo and Greenacre credentials viewed and fully acceptable.  Staff of the golf club receive periodic training and updates by Sodexo. Sodexo follow the 'Better Tomorrow Plan' which is an initiative geared to reducing wastes and providing for a greener environment.

<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>		The golf club is a major revenue generator for the town. It is a club that keeps a quiet and low profile, as such it limits on site education and or other access opportunities. Importantly the club does support charitable causes as indicated below.  The Lytham trophy is an annual event provided free of charge to the public.
<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>		The greenstaff have completed a sponsored 3 peaks hill climbing walk for prostate cancer charity. The club also offers events for charities each year.

<b>C1.3 Establish active community partnerships</b>	<b>C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups</b>	Create a 'sustainability working group'	The club works with Fylde Borough Council (local authority) with regard to event management. This brings in considerable revenue for the town. The club do not have a formal sustainability group as such, but are advised on all energy and waste opportunities through Inenco and Sodexo. The R&A also offers specialist course and club advice. Sustainability best practices are intuitive and demonstrated routinely.
<b>C2 Golfers &amp; Employees</b>			
<b>C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing</b>	<b>C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities</b>		The club is open year round offering health benefits to all that choose to play. A short course is also available for year round play. Social events are encouraged and these are particularly favoured by the elderly.
<b>C2.2 Be open and inclusive</b>	<b>C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies</b>	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Royal Lytham & St Annes is an equal opportunities club for governance and for opportunities. It is a club that has been proactive in recruiting female members and has been successful in this respect. Visitors of all ages and gender are encouraged. Full accessibility is provided for all.
<b>C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities</b>	<b>C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development</b>	Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	The club works with their partners following all relevant guidance, legislation and best practice. Induction and training is provide holistically by Sodexo, while the course manager provides training to staff.
<b>C3 Communications</b>			
<b>C3.1 Engage golfers and members</b>	<b>C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors</b>	Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	The club provides a subtle need only approach to outside communication. The club this year are looking to enter the Golf Environment Awards which may offer reason to involve local media groups. Most communications are through the greens committee only
<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	It is the club's preference not to seek public attention, preferring instead to continue working with local suppliers without reputational or social engagement.  The club relies heavily on its partners Sodexo for all local supplier reach It is the charitable events that offer greatest insight into the club's workings.

## 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)