



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report The International, Amsterdam

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Adrie van der Werf

Certified by GEO Foundation: September 2019
Valid until: September 2024

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

The International has paid lots of attention to both maintenance practises within the course and to its nature surroundings. Up to date techniques are used to minimize pollution, and special attention has been given to minimize energy use, not only via the installation of LED lightning but also via the installation of solar cells which produce > 100.000 kWh per year. Also, The International demonstrated a clear internal communication to employees with respect to sustainability issues.

Adrie van der Werf

GEO accredited Independent Verifier



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that The International 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.

The International 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, The International should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, The International 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	(Course management) Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity	In 2018 a quick scan was performed (and well documented) of vegetation types present on the 80ha golf course "The International" and based on the ecologist's experience and observations during the visit possible presence of rare and/or protected species was determined. No

		surveys	endangered/protected species (fish, amphibians, plants, mammals, butterflies) were observed. As mentioned in the report, the International should come up with a more detailed survey of species groups. I suggest that The International starts with these surveys by 2020.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	(Course management) Understand legal responsibilities for protected landscapes and species; Record and monitor protected, endangered, or rare species found on the site	See N1.1.1 At the time of verification The International did not have a VTA (tree safety certificate). However, steps are in place to ensure this is addressed before the end of 2019.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	(Course management) Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	No archaeological, historical or cultural designation are present (or known) on the course. The course was recently built on a former "sand-win location".
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	(Course / club management) Observe, track and / or monitor golfer play	Beyond doubt, The International is one of those clubs with a strict mowing regime of the playing areas. Narrow fairways, and semi-roughs of only several meters in width. During my site visit this confirmed, and clearly sufficient surface area for further nature development is available.
N1.3 Actively manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	(Course management) Regularly review and follow a habitat management plan; Prioritise native species when planting and landscaping	See N1.1.1 Only native plant species have been planted on the undulating dune like landscape. Recently, gorse has been planted (which was unfortunately partly destroyed due to the hot summers last two years), which will further increase the look and feel of this course.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species		See N1.3.1 Possible measures to further improve conservation activities well documented in their "survey document".
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turf and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	(Course management) Select appropriate grass species for climate	Grass species (Lolium spp for fairways and Agrostis varieties for greens) are suitable for the present Dutch climate. At the moment no transition projects are necessary. Coverage of Poa annua on their greens is less than 25%, and the head greenkeeper is keen on keeping this percentage as low as possible (restricted fertilization scheme).
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		The highly skilled head greenkeeper convinced me that soil management practises are appropriate for this course (standard practises as on most courses in The Netherlands)

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	(Course management) Soil tests and nutrient analysis	Instead of granular fertilisers, The International uses liquid fertilizers every two weeks to avoid over-fertilization as much as possible. They apply less than 100kg N per ha per year, and in 2019 only 50kg N were used until my visit.
N2.2 Prioritise cultural management	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	(Course management) Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Standard good practises (daily inspections, hand weeding etc) are used to reduce herbicide use as much as possible. Last herbicide application was in 2017/2018, in 2019 no herbicides were used, and during our discussion the head greenkeeper expected not to use any in 2019. They have a “grass nursery”, damaged areas can be replaced by healthy swards from the nursery.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	(Course management) 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	See N2.2.1
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	(Course management) 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 present (a handful only) are registered and legally stored and disposed if necessary. All chemicals are registered centrally by the HGM group. Only legislated chemicals are used.
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	(Course management) 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.	Mowing zones around waterbodies are maintained where possible, also a no-spraying zones around waterbodies are present. To avoid soil contamination as much as possible, The International, uses hybrid mowing machines, and so avoiding oil spill (as is with the traditional mowing machines).
	N3.1.2 Practical	(Club management) Ensure all hazardous	All waste is disposed legally, oil grease separator is present and “waste

	measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required standards and systems for hazardous waste and waste water discharge	water” is discharged directly to the main sewers.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	(Course management) 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	See N3.1.2 The recently built maintenance facility was according to legislation, i.e. storage of oils, impermeable floors etc. Also handling of hazardous materials is according to legislation.
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	(Course management) 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 chemicals going in & out are registered centrally by the HGM group. All fuel tanks are installed according to legislation. See N3 further above
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate waste water usage and discharge licences	(Course management) Waste water discharge licence; Appropriate treatment of machinery wash water (impermeable surface, oil / grease / clipping separation)	See further N3.1.2 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	(Course management) Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	The International only irrigates when necessary (surface water from the adjacent stream) based on the head greenkeeper's experience in combination with soil moisture analysis
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	(Course management) 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	See R1.1.1 The playing areas are equipped with a modern irrigation system allowing efficient irrigation.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	(Club management) Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Surface water use is recorded. The use in 2018 seemed rather high (~150.000 m3), but as explained by the head greenkeeper this was not only due to the extreme hot 2018 summer but mainly due to fact that two large ponds need to be filled every 2 days with an additional 10-15 cm water table as they freely drain back to the supplying adjacent channel.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	(Course / club management) Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance	(Course management) Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	Based on external advice, The International switched from more traditional energy consuming lighting to LED lighting already some years ago. Furthermore, the roof was recently equipped with solar cells. Most recent data show an energy delivery of these solar cells of

			105.000 kWh per year. Coming years the club hopes to fully equipped with LEDs.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	(Club management) Audit energy use regularly; Regularly review bills; Categorise and track energy consumption	Clearly, The International, is fully aware of its “energy-use” responsibilities. Coming years also the energy use of the clubhouse facilities will be given extra attention. E.g. minimise energy use of refrigerators in colder periods.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	(Club management) Determine potential sources of renewable energy in the area and on-site, through renewable energy providers	See above
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	(Club management) Undertake a review of materials consumed	All waste is stored according to legislation; large packaging is preferred, potable water is further filtered for in-restaurant consumption in re-used glass bottles, and so reduce the amount of plastic bottles
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Practical use of an ethical / environmental purchasing policy	(Club management) 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	As with most restaurants nowadays, local products are preferred as long as it is economically viable.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	(Club management) Demonstrate waste separation, reuse and recycling; Track how much waste goes to landfill, or is reused / recycled	Waste is stored in large containers which are collected several times a year by the certified recycling contractor; plastic and other waste is not separated, paper and green waste is. Plastic and other waste are separated in the recycling contractor’s factory.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	(Club management) Use authorised waste and recycling contractor for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste;	See above Grass clippings were stored on an impervious floor until last year next to the maintenance facilities. However, the head greenkeeper mentioned that storage resulted in extreme regular invasion of flies in and around the facility and therefore it was decided to move the storage to the course. We discussed this, and now the clippings will be stored again on the impervious floor, as is required by law.

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		Depending on the purpose, local communities are offered the opportunity to make use of the clubhouse, e.g. for fund raising purposes.
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		
C1.3 Establish active community partnerships	C1.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	(Club management) Create a 'sustainability working group'	A sustainability working group has been established dealing with all facets of golf course management and has come into action by 2019. First goals have been documented
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	(Club management) Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	Confirmed
C2.3 Employ fairly and safely, and provide career opportunities	C2.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	(Club management) Follow all relevant national legislation and best practice for employment, health & safety etc	Volunteers are offered courses on health & safety practises, the new club manager is very keen on managing this aspect, as is already demonstrated by the purchase health equipment (in case of emergency, like e.g. heart attack)
C3 Communications			

C3.1 Engage golfers and members	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	(Club management) Provide information on the facility's sustainability commitments, actions, or achievements	The club manager truly promotes awareness within the employee community with respect to e.g. energy and water use, safety aspects. The club could think about promoting sustainability activities via their website, which is not done so far.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	(Club management) Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement	See above

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