GEO Certified® Report
Golfclub Zeegersloot

Prepared by independent verifier Adrie van der Werf

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2022
Valid until: 2027

"The club demonstrated a very positive attitude towards sustainability issues and nowadays more and more attention is being paid to nature development. They not only promote the introduction of native species, but also try to combat the non-native invasive species like e.g. the Red Swamp Crayfish."

Adrie van der Werf
(GEO accredited independent verifier)

Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Golfclub Zeegersloot 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 Zeegersloot 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, Golfclub Zeegersloot should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Golfclub Zeegersloot 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

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**

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

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• Partnerships & Outreach • Golfing & Employment • Advocacy & Communications

Included below are the observations made by the Independent Verifier against each item in the Standard.

NATURE

N1 Habitats and Biodiversity

Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	**N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site**	Map all habitats and vegetation types on the site; Regularly update landscape / biodiversity surveys	Habitats and landscapes have been described in a well-documented report on management of nature areas and actions to be taken to improve the value of these areas (2018 report by an external ecologist). During the course visit in late November 2022 several activities were still

			ongoing, some successful others not. It was discussed that unsuccessful trials will not be continued, and that the club will concentrate on the successful ones.
	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	The sites were observed during the visit and their ecological work protocol was discussed. In this protocol, management and code of conduct have been described with respect to course management in relation to presence of protected species according to the "Wet Natuurbescherming". This protocol also mentions specifically that any presence of protected species according to this law will be analysed soon. It was discussed with the management that a list of protected species will be delivered by 2023.
	N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	n.a.
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	It was discussed that over the years the ratio between playing area and nature areas has reached an optimum, and that a further reduction of playing surface area would negatively impact the golf game for their members and visitors.
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	The last few years several actions have been taken to further improve the nature value of the course by e.g., sowing species rich native seed mixtures. Actions are now undertaken to minimise the presence of non-native species, e.g., the Red Swamp Crayfish
N1.4 Conserve key species	**N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority 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	This was briefly discussed; the focus is mainly to keep the presence of *Poa annua* on greens as low as possible and that of the desired species (*Agrostis* varieties) as high as possible. Irrigation and fertilization rates are applied according to experience and seem appropriate for the desired species.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition		Not specifically discussed, but standard practices are in action e.g., hollow tining

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis	Fertilizer use is based mainly on experience of the greenkeeping team, and annual rates reported seem appropriate for the soil and grasses present
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	**N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management**	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding	Standard practises are being applied, and it was mentioned that application of chemicals has almost been reduced to zero. Hardly any chemicals were present in their secured chemical storage cabinet.
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	The greenkeeping team clearly indicated that chemicals are only used when necessary, and visual control of hot spots is part of their daily routine. During my visit no or only very few pest and disease hot spots were observed.
	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 .	All products are registered, stored, and handled properly, and licenses are available
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.	Emergency plan is available; the greenkeeping team is aware of the environmental risks of the use of chemicals in relation to both human health and nature. Buffer zones are action i.e., ~5 meters from water bodies, and no chemicals/fertilizers are used within this range.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are	Ensure all hazardous materials are safely and securely stored; Ensure compliance with all required	All materials are safely stored, and wastewater discharge is conducted according to legislation. Annual inspections by the local/national authorities are documented and available.

	minimised from clubhouse operations	standards and systems for hazardous waste and wastewater discharge	
	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 liquids/fuels are stored according to legislation and annual inspections by the local authorities are being performed and are registered, as was seen during my visit of the greenkeeping location. Also grass clippings are stored and handled legally
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	See 3.1.3
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)	See sections 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	This is business as usual for many courses, and also holds for Zeegersloot. It not only saves water and energy (and money), but it also reduces the risk of e.g., fungal diseases recently.

	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	Until my visit, total water inlet for irrigation was not registered. Recently, the manager confirmed that meters were now installed.
		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	As far as I could judge, all necessary actions are taken to minimise water use in the clubhouse
	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	Permits are available
	R2 Energy			
	R2.1 Reduce energy demand	**R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy consumed in course maintenance**	Minimise areas of managed turf to reduce mowing, irrigation, and turf inputs	As discussed above, the ratio of managed course surface area and nature is more or less optimised, this also holds for the inputs; the newly installed irrigation rate meters may potentially further reduce water inputs
	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	Energy audits are in action, almost all lightning now consists out of LED; recently the clubhouse was insulated to avoid excessive heat loss.
	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	Recently, solar panels were installed on the driving range, and depending on the financial situation more will be installed in the near future
	R3 Materials			
	R3.1 Reduce materials demand	**R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including**	Undertake a review of materials consumed	This was not discussed, but it was mentioned that waste is separated into glass and paper and kitchen waste. Also, large containers near the clubhouse are present to dispose PET bottles

	opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives		
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	Meat is purchased locally, and a range of local food products are on the menu
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	See above
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	available

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		
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		A range of activities (internal competitions) are organised to support local and national charity organisations (e.g., Pink Ribbon)

	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'	The club is in good contact with local authorities (e.g., waterboard) and nature organisations (e.g., IVN)
	C2 Golfers & Employees			
	C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	**C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities**		Not discussed
	C2.2 Be open and inclusive	**C2.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies**	Demonstrate inclusive policies for members and visitors	The club's representative clearly indicated that Zeegersloot is an open, inclusive club
	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	This is common good for many clubs, especially nowadays as it is getting more difficult to attract new employees. This was not discussed extensively
	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	It was mentioned that the club regularly communicates via social media on activities/charities. A nice review on the results of the birdwatching day in 2022 is published on their website. A local nature organisation (IVN) also contributed to this event.
	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	Many of the activities mentioned in the above paragraphs are communicated either internally or externally. The outreach of these actions are unknown as was mentioned during the discussions.

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