



**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**

# **GEO Certified<sup>®</sup> Report Ganton Golf Club**

Prepared by Independent Verifier, Tony Hanson

Certified by GEO Foundation: June 2021  
Valid until: June 2024

**GEO Certified<sup>®</sup>**



**GEO  
Foundation**  
Sustainability in and through golf

*“Ganton Golf Club has undertaken some fantastic work including habitat creation, reduction in amenity grass areas, recycling initiatives, and utilisation of technology to reduce resource consumption. Much of the discussions were forward looking indicating the ambition and drive to develop this natural and challenging golf course, and ensure it remains a valuable ecological and community asset.”*

*Tony Hanson*

*GEO accredited Independent Verifier*



## Introduction

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GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Ganton 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.

Ganton 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 (CIPs) set for the future, Ganton Golf Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Ganton 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	Detailed images and hole-by-hole management plan discussed.

			<p>Survey documents and management discussed in light of the engagement with various external wildlife and environment groups.</p> <p>Habitat images and ongoing project enhancements information was discussed highlighting the care and sympathetic management style of the course</p>
	<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	There are no legal designations or protections on site.
	<b>N1.1.3 Understanding and respect for cultural heritage</b>	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site	There are no archaeological, historic or cultural designations on site
<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	<p>The managed amenity grass provides a balance of playability and golfing challenge</p> <p>Fairways are shaped to provide the dual benefit of reduced requirement for management in terms of time and inputs, together with a more aesthetically pleasing and challenging course.</p> <p>The estimate is that over the last 5 years the naturalised area of the course has increased in the region of 3 hectares.</p>
<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	<p>The habitat management encourages naturalised species and protects and enhances their habitats where possible.</p> <p>An update of the management plan is being undertaken currently.</p> <p>CIP Continue the management programme and the engagement with BIGGA, community and Charity wildlife stakeholders.</p>
<b>N1.4 Conserve key species</b>	<b>N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species</b>		The club undertakes a range of conservation projects including buffer zones and habitat creation including sandscapes and waste areas.
<b>N2 Turfgrass</b>			

<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>Turf species have been reviewed and adjusted the sward to include Bents and Fescues with a programme designed to reduce the requirements for inputs, while maintaining the desired playing characteristics.</p> <p>Through a combination of management knowledge and external consultancy, the correct combination of quality playing surface, and resilience to wear, drought, pests and disease is being cultivated.</p> <p>Course management will continue to monitor the sward and adjust as necessary.</p>
	<p><b>N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition</b></p>		<p>The turf management programme provides the basis for good soil and turf health including moisture removal, slitting, coring and topdressing.</p>
	<p><b>N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation</b></p>	<p>Undertake soil tests and nutrient analysis</p>	<p>Soil nutrient levels are tested to ensure applications are balanced and required.</p> <p>Discussions outlined the sympathetic management creating the required quality of turf grass and playing surface.</p> <p>The monitoring of pests and disease inform decisions on the use of all inputs.</p> <p>Screen shots of the turf management “apps” have been provided to confirm the knowledge-based approach.</p>
<p><b>N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance</b></p>	<p><b>N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management</b></p>	<p>Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Hand weeding</p>	<p>Equipment maintenance and efficiency including an almost competitive and rewarded system of operator inspection and fault reporting.</p> <p>Standard physical management includes observation, moisture removal and hand weeding wherever possible.</p>
<p><b>N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly</b></p>	<p><b>N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues</b></p>	<p>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;</p>	<p>Course management planning is based on the accumulation of knowledge, observation and technology.</p> <p>The ease of use of their system allows the acquisition of data providing greater understanding of the site.</p>

		Establish pest and disease thresholds	The assessment of data allows the club to understand the potential risks and to make early interventions maintaining turf quality and reducing the requirements for chemical inputs.
	<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	Chemical logs and stocks were reviewed along with staff qualifications and training records.  GPS technology is used to ensure application to the correct areas, spray dosing calibration and automatic shut of for areas marked as “No spray zones”  PPE, wash stations and spill prevention kits are available at key locations.
<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.	The club and course management teams have a detailed understanding of the facility along with the risks around their storage of hazardous materials.  Spill kits are in place and stock levels are recorded and mapped.  Spray buffer zones are maintained automatically via the GPS mapping system used to reduce the risks of fugitive escape of potential pollutants to the wider environment.  CIP Formalise the existing incident response documents – In line with the Pollution Prevention Guideline – 21.
	<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	The licenced waste contractor retained by the club also collects hazardous materials from the hospitality and office areas of operation and include whole site management.  CIP Discuss recycling opportunities including waste UCO for biofuels.
	<b>N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from</b>	Ensure wash areas are on impermeable, leak-free surfaces; Mixing and loading of pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable surface;	Licenses discussed and confirmed.  Hazardous materials storage complies with current regulations with the required bunding and containment.

	<b>maintenance facility operations</b>	Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	CIP Investigate the installation of oil/fuel tank level alarms to reduce the risk of leaks going undetected.
<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	Documentation, records and infrastructure confirmed and outlined above.  The maintenance buildings have been upgraded recently and the relocation of some elements of the course management operations are in the process of relocating.  Storage tanks are proprietary with integral bunds.  Curbs have been designed to provide additional containment.  The evidence, information and discussions provide confidence that the facility will be of the highest standard.
<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)	Discharge licenses confirmed.  Washdown areas discussed and confirmed as compliant.

<b>RESOURCES</b>			
<b>R1 Water</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Mandatory Practices</b>	<b>Verifier Notes</b>
<b>R1.1 Minimise water demand</b>	<b>R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water</b>	Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces only	The club monitors weather forecasts and soil moisture to determine irrigation requirement.  Irrigation coverage is monitored and the system is regularly serviced to ensure efficiency.

<b>R1.2 Maximise water efficiency</b>	<b>R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course</b>	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 invested in moisture monitoring equipment.  Moisture monitoring is recorded and available on mobile “app”.  The irrigation system is computer controlled with recent updates to pipework and sprinkler heads.
	<b>R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings</b>	Audit water use regularly; Review bills frequently and look for irregularities; Encourage water-saving practices amongst staff and visitors; Categorise and track water consumption	Water bills are reviewed to check volumes consumed and to identify extraordinary consumption that may indicate leaks.  Records are maintained as part of the accounting function.  Stakeholders are encouraged to reduce consumption.  CIP Implement a method of data capture and management for key resources (water, energy, waste) across the whole facility.
<b>R1.3 Source water responsibly</b>	<b>R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water</b>	Ensure appropriate water abstraction permit and reporting, as required	Water is currently sourced from mains public supply  CIP Review and advise on the potential for alternative sources of water supply – Explore opportunities for rainwater harvesting for certification renewal (2024).
<b>R2 Energy</b>			
<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 has reduced the area of managed amenity turf by around 3 hectares, reducing operational costs without impacting course quality or player enjoyment.  The increased area of naturalised habitat increases the Natural Capital Value of the site along with improved course interest and aesthetics.
<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	Energy bills are reviewed regularly to monitor consumption and allow patterns to be identified to assess future consumption.  Heating is minimised and lighting has been upgraded to LED.

<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	Potential opportunities may be considered in the future.  CIP Review renewable opportunities for certification renewal (2024).
<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	Waste coming to site is reviewed and reduced via bulk purchasing where possible. Waste is separated and the hierarchy applied to reduce the amount directed to landfill.  Coloured bins are provided to increase separation, waste quality and value.  CIP Continue the process of reviewing the potential to increase waste separation on course by players
<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	Waste and environmental policies were discussed and confirmed.  The use of recycled sand provides excellent resource circularity.
<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	Waste is reviewed as part of the operational cost base and discussions on potential reduction and improved recycling rates are ongoing.
<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	Waste contractors are licenced and transfer documents retained.

# 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		The club has an open and inclusive membership and guest policy.  Community use of the facilities are encouraged
C1.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C1.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes		Staff are encouraged to engage with local and national charities to volunteer and raise funds.
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'	Sustainability meetings held and were discussed.

## C2 Golfers & Employees

C2.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C2.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities		The club is aware of the physical and mental health benefits provided by golf and promote and celebrate them.
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 has an open and inclusive policy
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	Staff receive induction training and are encouraged to continue their learning internally and externally.

## 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	Communications pathways include meetings, course walks, notice boards, newsletter and social media are all used. Discussions and suggestions are encouraged
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<p><b>C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability</b></p>	<p><b>C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community</b></p>	<p>Provide evidence of external communications and community engagement</p>	<p>External stakeholders are engaged and encouraged to contribute and benefit from the club's activities.</p> <p>Local wildlife groups are encouraged, and course walks arranged.</p>
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## 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)