



Planning the pathway to net zero

International non-profit, GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf, hosts a virtual event to explore how golf can collectively drive for more climate action

On Thursday, 11 November, representatives from golf and beyond came together at Scotland's Climate Ambition Zone in Glasgow to discuss several important issues around the sport and climate action.

After opening remarks from Paul Bush OBE, Director of Events at Visit Scotland and Jonathan Smith, Executive Director, GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf, event host David Garrido from Sky Sports teed off the discussion. In-studio guests joined virtual speakers from all areas of the game, including facilities, tournaments, developments and golf tourism.

The opening panel session sparked a wide-ranging discussion with Richard Holland, Director, Operations and Network Development with international NGO Wetlands International, Hugh Salway, Head of Markets with the Gold Standard and Kelli Jerome, Executive Director at GEO Foundation, joined virtually by Sam Barratt, Chief of the Youth, Education and Advocacy Unit in UNEP's Ecosystems Division, Julie Duffus, Sustainability Senior Manager at the IOC from Lausanne, and, from Oslo, Suzann Pettersen, professional golfer and Sustainable Golf Champion who memorably holed the winning putt in the 2019 Solheim Cup at Gleneagles.

This conversation covered several critical topics focused on how golf and society can come together to take meaningful action. Whether that's protecting ecosystems and habitats in general, encouraging more athletes to get involved in advocacy or just doing one thing in your role to get the momentum started.

Suzann Pettersen spoke about her commitment to sustainability since retiring from the game, "I feel I've got an important role here. Sport is such a great arena to raise awareness. We inspire and influence so many millions of people every day."

You can watch the entire Driving for Net Zero event below.

***Video link for embedding - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWwpumQQ-fY>**

The following session focused on climate action by grassroots facilities at GEO Certified clubs in England, Finland and New Zealand with Jason O'Malley, Managing Director at Woburn Golf

Club, Janne Lehto, Course Manager at Hirsala Golf Club and Spencer Cooper, Superintendent at Remuera Golf Club sharing insights into their journeys to reduce carbon emissions.

The large virtual audience then heard from golf tournaments and tours. This session began with comments from Alex Armas, CEO of the Ladies European Tour, and Mollie Marcoux Samaan, Commissioner of the LPGA Tour and how they are working together on shared goals. Philip Russell, Assistant Director of Sustainability at The R&A, outlined many practical examples of how the organization embraced sustainable tournament staging through initiatives such as The Open Water and increasing renewable energy use on-site.

Lee Spivak, Managing Principal, Sports and Entertainment at WM, sponsors of the WM Phoenix Open, shared a glimpse into the principles and practices which have resulted in the event becoming the first-ever to achieve GEO Certified status five times.

Further contributions came from Ben Cowen, Chief Tournament Business Officer of the European Tour and Chris Chandler, Head of Sports at Dow, who runs the Dow Great Lakes Bay Invitational on the LPGA - also a GEO Certified tournament in the US.

The penultimate session honed in on manufacturing, tourism and golf development. This included Toro's Andy Brown discussing electric mowers and sustainable irrigation. Jeremy Slessor at European Golf Design highlighted the importance of sustainable golf developments and their path to net zero, and Peter Walton, Founder and Chief Executive of IAGTO, provided insights into the world of golf tourism and carbon emissions.

A final discussion between Maggie Kim, CEO, The Gold Standard and GEO Foundation's Jonathan Smith explored the importance of credible carbon mitigation. It showcased some of the sustainable golf tools available to the sport to help individuals and organizations take climate action.

Jonathan Smith, Executive Director, GEO Foundation, said: "The team at GEO Foundation were pleased to be able to pull this important conversation together - to enable such a large audience to hear the perspectives from within and outside golf. We'd like to thank the Scottish Government, all speakers and the audience, plus those that have helped promote and share the event. Now we look to the post-COP26 landscape to see what we can do best with partners and programme participants to help accelerate climate action in and through golf."

About GEO Foundation For Sustainable Golf

GEO Foundation is the international not-for-profit dedicated to advancing sustainability in and through golf. Its goal is to work collaboratively to help the sport embrace environmental and social issues and become widely acclaimed for its role in fostering nature, conserving resources, taking climate action and strengthening communities. In addition to its strategic support through partnerships with associations, GEO assures the OnCourse® programmes for

grassroots golf facilities, new developments and tournaments, each of which can lead to the internationally accredited, endorsed and independently verified GEO Certified® label.

www.sustainable.golf