



## Pioneering the next generation of golf courses

*October 30, 2015*

Forget what you think you know about golf. Imagine acres of an unproductive turfgrass monoculture traded for fertile farmlands yielding fruits and vegetables, a course that is fully organic, where hundreds of grazing sheep help our lawnmowers and where water recycled through wetlands is reused for irrigation. In December 2015, Belle Mont Farm on Kittitian Hill, a new sustainable luxury destination on the island of St. Kitts, will transform the golf experience with the launch of Irie Fields, the world's first Golf Environment Organization (GEO) Certified® Development, and only fully organic, edible golf course in the world.

The prestigious GEO certification recognizes Founder Val Kempadoo's vision to put sustainability into the very heart of the game of golf – from selecting a suitable site and planting the right grass, to sourcing more than 97 percent of construction materials from the island of St. Kitts. In addition to boasting a stunning world-class course of tournament standards, Irie Fields maximizes the land's farming opportunities, transforming an unproductive 200-acre environment, typical for golf courses, into a productive ecosystem through the planting and production of fruit and vegetables, smart water management, and sustainable maintenance practices. Irie Fields' design and purpose is greater than being "green" – the forward-thinking development, aligned with Kittitian Hill's commitment to cultural, economic, social and ecological well-being of its local community, has planted the roots for the future of golf.

"We are delighted to be able to recognize the outstanding commitment and contribution from the development team at Irie Fields," said Jonathan Smith, Chief Executive of GEO. "With a constant focus on sustainability throughout the project, it's fantastic to see how the initial vision for an ecologically rich, resource efficient and community integrated golf course has become reality."

Created by legendary Welsh professional golfer-turned-golf-course-designer, Ian Woosnam, this Par 71, 18-hole course is at the forefront of 21<sup>st</sup> century golf developments in terms of design and social value, and was carefully constructed to achieve the GEO recognition. Set within a 400-acre tropical farm, Irie Fields boasts views of the islands of St. Barths, Saba and St. Eustatius, and features an array of fruit trees, including mango, avocado, banana, guava, pineapple and passion fruit. Originally a sugar cane field, the course has now been converted into a mosaic of turfgrass, native habitats and the first-ever edible landscape on a golf course. These developments have significantly boosted biodiversity levels and pollution prevention benefits, and the course is the first in the world to pioneer the use of organic products in a location using warm-season grasses. The "Edible Landscape" concept is an innovative, imaginative, and pioneering initiative that has enabled true multi-purpose farming use of 65 acres on the non-golfing areas of the course. Chemicals, synthetic pesticides and fertilizers were avoided during construction, making the creation of the course 100 percent organic from start to finish. Herds of native sheep are brought in daily to graze the fairways, keeping Irie Fields groomed and delectable year-round.

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*UMV: 15,000*

*PR Value: £2,500*

The project was independently GEO-verified at key stages throughout development which is important for credible assurance and following the OnCourse® Developments Program, which has positioned Irie Fields to make long-term efficiency savings while maintaining a high quality golf environment. The golf course embraces its natural landscape, incorporating bunkers, doglegs and orchards, creating challenging, yet exciting natural obstacles at every turn. Architects carefully navigated and worked around the original landscape. No trees were cut down, and all limbs and trimmings were composted or chipped.

"Irie Fields is designed to welcome golfers of all levels," said Woosnam. "With its hilly terrain, multiple ravines and gently undulating fairways, the mountainside course is as unpredictable as it is beautiful. The prevailing winds may offer challenges for the beginner; however, the tropical scenery and stunning views alone will make the course an enticing experience."

"Visitors to Irie Fields may sample a first course from the 5<sup>th</sup> hole and continue to sample fresh, local fruits throughout their game," said Yahsonn Tafari, Organic Farmer for Belle Mont Farm on Kittitian Hill. "It is my responsibility not only to oversee the foraging and harvesting for all produce on property, but also to develop relations with local farmers and agro-processors. And so, I know our Hotel offers some the freshest organic fruits and vegetables grown in the Caribbean."

'Irie' is Rastafarian for "to be at peace and harmony with yourself and where you are," and Irie Fields personifies just that. Regarding its community benefits, more than 95 percent of the workforce to complete the course development was recruited from St. Kitts itself. "On-Island" sourcing for construction materials was made first priority by development teams in terms of staffing and sourcing materials. Local caddies from the Kittitian Hill Golf Academy will offer expert tips and guidance for players from novice to professional, as well as share knowledge of the fruits and produce grown around Irie Fields.

"We are thrilled to receive recognition as a pioneering golf course in sustainable development, and further showcase Kittitian Hill's foundational commitment to the St. Kitts community, ecology and culture," said Carlos Salazar, General Manager of Belle Mont Farm on Kittitian Hill. "We look forward to hosting international and local players alike at our award-winning course, as well as professional tournaments in the future."

Irie Fields has been one of a small number of new developments working towards the new GEO Certified® Developments recognition, with each undergoing independent verification at key stages in the planning, design and construction of the courses to ensure sustainability has been considered at the heart of the full development process. Irie Fields has been the first development to complete all stages and become certified. GEO also administers the globally coveted GEO Certified® recognition for existing golf facilities, and courses with this eco-label include PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens and Le Golf National located near Versailles on the outskirts of the French capital, Paris.

*Nightly rates start from 1,046 GBP for a Guesthouse King with Pool, accommodating two people on a full-board basis with return airport transfers.*

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