

Council Supporting Paper – Para Sailing Classification Rules

Agenda Item: Para Sailing Classification process – Provisional Ratification

Submitted by: Para World Sailing Committee

Decision required: Council is requested to endorse the continued programme of implementation, testing, research and consultation with respect to the Para Sailing Classification Rules, ahead of final adoption in January 2027.

1. Purpose

This paper provides Council with an update on World Sailing's implementation of the IPC 2025 Classification Code.

Classification is the backbone of Paralympic sport. It underpins fair and equitable competition, protects sporting integrity and gives athletes confidence that results are determined by sporting excellence rather than the degree of impairment.

A robust, transparent and IPC Classification Code-compliant classification system is therefore fundamental not only to World Sailing's responsibilities as an International Federation, but also to the sport's ambition to return to the Paralympic Games.

The decision requested from Council should be understood in that context.

Council is not being asked to approve a final set of Rules. The Rules remain under development and will continue to evolve through consultation, research, practical testing and feedback.

Council is being asked to endorse the direction of travel and enable World Sailing to continue the planned implementation programme towards final adoption in January 2027.

2. Strategic importance

Implementation of the IPC 2025 Classification Code is one of the most significant pieces of work currently underway within Para Inclusive Sailing.

During World Sailing's previous Paralympic campaign, classification was identified as an area requiring improvement. The organisation has taken that feedback seriously and has used the introduction of the IPC 2025 Classification Code as an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of its classification framework, governance and operational processes.

This work is directly relevant to World Sailing's Paralympic ambitions.

Demonstrating a modern, credible, transparent and Code-compliant classification system is not simply an administrative exercise. It demonstrates that World Sailing understands and is prepared to fulfil the responsibilities of an International Federation within the Paralympic Movement.

A failure to progress this work would therefore have implications beyond classification itself. At a time when World Sailing is working to demonstrate its readiness for a return to the Paralympic programme, it is important that the

organisation can evidence both progress and organisational commitment in an area so fundamental to Paralympic sport.

3. Classification is a shared organisational responsibility

A central principle of the IPC 2025 Classification Code is that classification cannot sit solely with individual classifiers or the classification function.

It is an organisational responsibility.

World Sailing has approached implementation accordingly. The International Classification Sub-Committee, International Classifiers and World Sailing Executive Office have worked collaboratively to develop the new framework. Considerable technical expertise, operational experience and staff resource have been committed to the process.

The work undertaken to date includes review of the Rules and associated processes, consideration of consultation feedback, engagement with the IPC, live testing and continued development of the wider classification framework.

The commitment of the classification community should be recognised. Members of the International Classification Sub-Committee and World Sailing's International Classifiers are contributing substantial professional expertise and time alongside the work of the Executive Office to ensure that the system is practical, credible and fit for the future.

Council's support is an important part of that same shared organisational responsibility.

4. Consultation, testing and development

The draft Classification Rules were published in June 2026, commencing the first formal consultation period with athletes, classifiers, Member National Authorities and the wider sailing community.

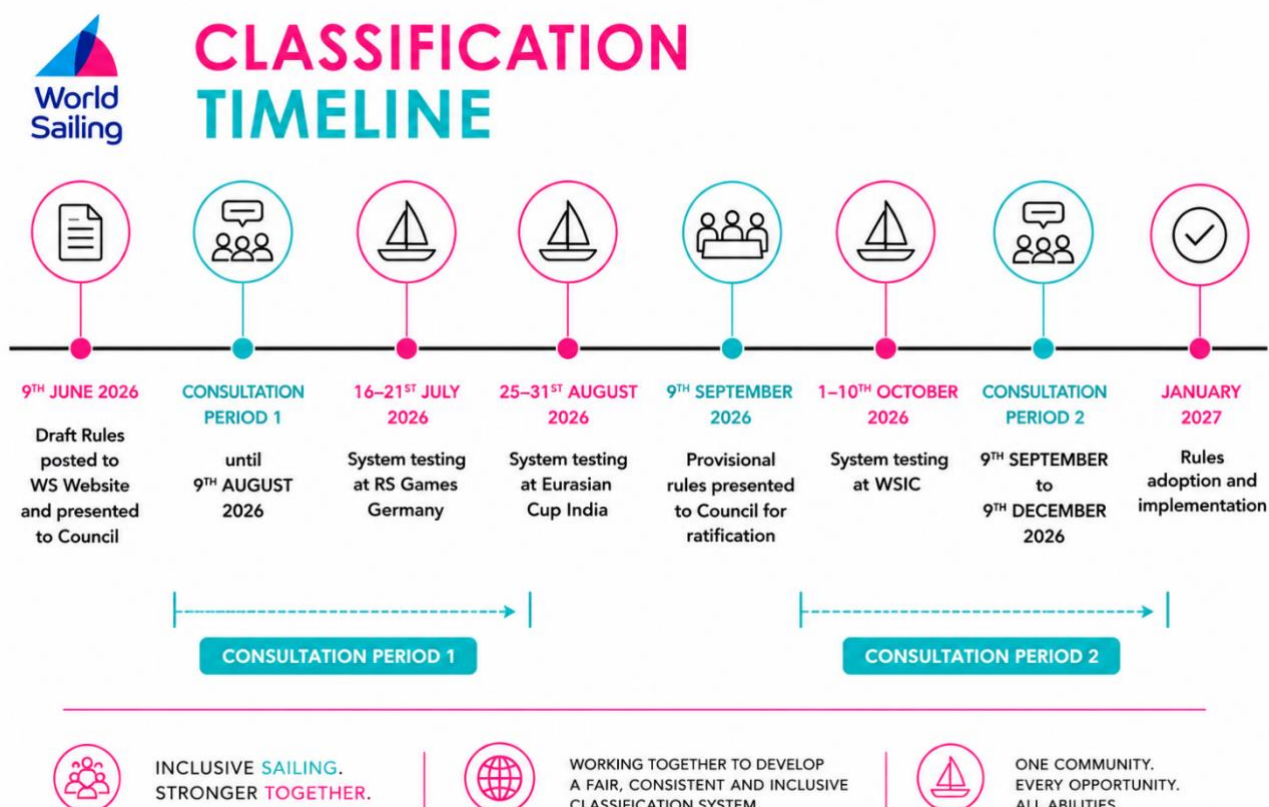
The draft Rules are publicly available on the [World Sailing Para Sailing Classification page](#). The website makes clear that the provisional 2027 Rules are currently subject to consultation and that they modernise the previous framework through adoption of the IPC 2025 Classification Code.

Alongside consultation, World Sailing has adopted a deliberate programme of live testing. The new system and associated processes are being evaluated in real competition environments, allowing practical experience and evidence to inform subsequent revisions.

Testing includes:

- 16–21 July 2026 – RS Games, Germany: initial system testing;
- 25–31 August 2026 – India: further system testing;
- 9 September 2026 – World Sailing Council: provisional ratification;

- 1–10 October 2026 – World Sailing Inclusion Championships, Portugal: major system pilot;
- 9 September–9 December 2026: second consultation period; and
- January 2027: final adoption and implementation.



This phased approach deliberately allows World Sailing to learn, adjust and improve before final implementation.

5. The Rules will continue to evolve

It is important that provisional ratification is not interpreted as the end of the Rules development process.

The current Rules represent the best position reached through the work undertaken to date, but classification must be evidence-led. Practical experience from athletes and classifiers, consultation responses, research, testing and continued IPC engagement may identify areas requiring further refinement.

The Rules will therefore evolve.

Indeed, the purpose of testing at events is to identify where the proposed system works well and where further changes are required before final adoption.

The existing Council material deliberately describes the Rules as draft and the requested decision as an endorsement of the direction of travel rather than adoption of a finished product.

This approach should give Council confidence rather than concern: World Sailing is building, testing and refining the system transparently before final adoption.

6. World Sailing Inclusion Championships

The World Sailing Inclusion Championships in Portugal provide a particularly important stage in implementation.

WSIC will bring together athletes, classifiers, coaches, officials and MNAs from around the world and provides an invaluable opportunity to test the new classification framework at scale before final implementation.

Provisional ratification by Council on 9 September enables this planned pilot to proceed within the wider implementation framework.

The Championships are also an important demonstration of World Sailing's wider Paralympic ambitions. The values that underpin a credible classification system; fairness, transparency, athlete confidence and sporting excellence, are the same values World Sailing must demonstrate as it seeks to return sailing to the Paralympic Games.

7. Paralympic reinstatement

World Sailing's Paralympic bid and its classification work should not be viewed as separate projects.

They are intrinsically connected.

A credible classification system is a prerequisite for credible Paralympic sport. The work currently being undertaken demonstrates that World Sailing has listened to previous feedback, understands the standards now expected and is prepared to take organisational responsibility for meeting them.

The existing Council briefing is explicit that classification is fundamental to rebuilding confidence in the sport and demonstrating readiness to return to the Paralympic programme.

At this stage, stopping or unnecessarily delaying the planned implementation pathway would risk undermining that progress at precisely the point when World Sailing needs to demonstrate momentum, organisational alignment and readiness.

Provisional ratification does not remove Council's ability to scrutinise the final Rules. Rather, it enables the evidence required to produce the strongest possible final Rules to continue to be gathered.

8. Recommendation

Council is therefore requested to:

Endorse the continued programme of consultation, research, testing and implementation of the Para Classification Rules, which are continuing to evolve ahead of final adoption and implementation in January 2027.

In doing so, Council will:

- support World Sailing's implementation of the IPC 2025 Classification Code;
- enable further live testing, including at the World Sailing Inclusion Championships;
- support the continued development of an evidence-based, fair and transparent classification system;
- recognise classification as a shared organisational responsibility rather than solely a technical classification function; and
- demonstrate World Sailing's continued commitment to meeting the standards expected of a sport seeking to return to the Paralympic Games.

Classification is the backbone of Paralympic sport. Building a classification system in which athletes, MNAs, classifiers, the IPC and the wider sailing community can have confidence is therefore fundamental to the future of Para Sailing and to World Sailing's ambition to return to the Paralympic programme.