

## **Para Class Recognition and World Sailing Class Status**

Para World Sailing Committee – 20 August 2026

Agenda Item 6 – Para Class Recognition and Regulations

### **Purpose**

This paper provides background to the ongoing review of World Sailing Class status for the Hansa 2.3 and Hansa Liberty and seeks the Committee's support for:

1. maintaining the current World Sailing Class status of both classes pending the outcome of the IPC decision and a subsequent review;
2. recognising the particular contribution both classes make to the international Para Inclusive Sailing pathway; and
3. commencing a review of whether the World Sailing Regulations should provide clearer and more appropriate recognition and retention criteria for classes supporting Para Inclusive Sailing.

For clarity, this discussion relates to World Sailing Class recognition and the wider Para/Para preferred class framework. It does not concern the selection of equipment for any future Paralympic Games programme. Any future Games equipment evaluation and selection would be undertaken separately through the appropriate World Sailing governance and technical processes.

### **Background**

World Sailing Regulation 10 provides the framework through which classes may receive and retain World Sailing Class status.

The existing framework includes requirements relating to class governance, technical administration, international activity and geographic distribution. Its purpose is to ensure that World Sailing Classes demonstrate an appropriate level of international participation and organisation.

The Regulations also recognise that numerical distribution requirements may not always appropriately reflect the value or purpose of an individual class. Provision exists for the relevant distribution requirements to be waived where a class is considered to serve a unique aspect of sailing.

The Hansa 2.3 and Hansa Liberty are currently under review against the existing World Sailing Class requirements, including international distribution.

This has raised a wider question as to whether the existing requirements adequately recognise the particular role that some classes play within Para Inclusive Sailing.

## **Para Inclusive Sailing Context**

Classes supporting Para Inclusive Sailing can fulfil purposes which are not necessarily reflected through conventional measures of international fleet size or geographic distribution alone.

Their contribution may include:

- providing access to sailing for athletes with particular impairment or support needs;
- providing an accessible entry point into competitive sailing;
- supporting grassroots and national development programmes;
- providing progression opportunities for developing sailors;
- supporting Sailability and similar participation programmes;
- facilitating regional and Emerging Nation development; and
- providing competitive opportunities which cannot readily be replicated using other equipment.

World Sailing Class status, recognition as equipment supporting Para Inclusive Sailing, and selection for a particular Championship or Games programme are therefore distinct considerations and should not be treated as interchangeable.

### **Hansa 2.3**

The Hansa 2.3 has an established role as an accessible entry and development boat within Para Inclusive Sailing.

Its simplicity and accessibility have made it particularly useful within grassroots and Sailability programmes and as a means of introducing sailors with disabilities to the sport.

Its contribution to the Para Inclusive Sailing pathway should therefore not necessarily be assessed solely through participation at international championships. Its wider value includes participation, development and progression into other competitive sailing opportunities.

The Committee may therefore consider that the Hansa 2.3 serves a particular and potentially unique development function within sailing which should be taken into account when considering its World Sailing Class status.

### **Hansa Liberty**

The Hansa Liberty provides a different and particularly important form of opportunity within Para Inclusive Sailing.

The boat enables athletes with high support needs to sail and compete independently, including sailors for whom other commonly available equipment may not provide an equivalent level of accessibility.

This supports World Sailing's objective of providing meaningful competitive pathways across a broad spectrum of impairment and support needs.

The Liberty may therefore represent a particularly strong example of equipment serving a unique aspect of sailing, through its provision of independent single-person competition for athletes who may otherwise have limited equivalent opportunities.

The impact of removing its World Sailing Class status should consequently be considered in the context of this wider contribution, rather than solely against current international distribution.

### **Timing and IPC Decision**

The timing of the current review is particularly relevant.

World Sailing is awaiting the outcome of the IPC process concerning the potential reinstatement of Para Sailing to the Paralympic Games programme. The timeframe for that decision remains dependent upon the wider IOC sports programme process.

At the same time, World Sailing is undertaking significant development across Para Inclusive Sailing, including implementation of the 2025 IPC Classification Code, expansion of international participation and continued development of the international competition and development pathway.

It would therefore be preferable to avoid making a long-term decision on the recognition of these classes immediately before the wider future framework for Para Inclusive Sailing becomes clearer.

Any continuation of the existing status should not be regarded as an indefinite exemption from World Sailing Class requirements. It would instead provide a short, defined period in which the IPC process can conclude and World Sailing can subsequently undertake a more informed review of the wider Para class framework.

### **World Sailing Executive Position**

Following consideration of the current Class status review and the timing of the wider IPC process, the World Sailing Executive position is that the existing World Sailing Class status of the Hansa 2.3 and Hansa Liberty should be maintained at this stage.

This recommendation is not intended to provide either class with an indefinite exemption from the requirements for World Sailing Class status.

Rather, the recommendation is that no change is made to the current status of either class until the IPC decision has been received and the subsequent review of the Para class framework can take place.

In parallel, the Para World Sailing Committee is asked to consider whether the existing World Sailing Regulations provide an appropriate long-term framework for recognising and retaining classes which serve a particular or unique role within Para Inclusive Sailing.

### **Para-Specific Recognition Framework**

The current situation provides an opportunity to consider whether conventional World Sailing Class requirements are always an appropriate measure of the contribution made by equipment supporting Para Inclusive Sailing.

Rather than repeatedly considering individual exceptions, World Sailing could develop clearer recognition and retention criteria for Para classes and/or Para preferred classes.

Such a framework could consider:

International participation and distribution – maintaining an expectation of meaningful international activity while considering whether conventional distribution thresholds are appropriate for Para classes.

Accessibility and impairment provision – whether equipment provides opportunities for sailors with particular impairment or support needs which cannot readily be provided through other equipment.

Development value – including use within national programmes, Sailability organisations, Inclusive Development Programmes and Emerging Nation development.

Competition opportunities – whether the class provides an active and sustainable national, regional or international competition pathway.

Class governance and technical standards – maintaining appropriate expectations around governance, class rules, equipment control and safety.

Unique contribution to Para Inclusive Sailing – recognising classes which provide an opportunity or pathway that would otherwise be absent from the sport.

A clearer framework would provide greater certainty for classes and World Sailing while reducing the need for repeated case-by-case consideration of exemptions.

### **Separation from Games Equipment Selection**

For the avoidance of doubt, recognition as a World Sailing Class, Para class or Para preferred class does not imply selection or preferred status for any future Paralympic Games programme.

The purpose of this review is to consider how World Sailing appropriately recognises and supports equipment which makes a meaningful contribution to the wider international Para Inclusive Sailing movement.

Any future Paralympic Games equipment evaluation and selection process would be separate from this work and would commence, if required, following the relevant IPC decision and through the appropriate World Sailing governance and technical processes.

### **Proposed Committee Recommendation**

The Para World Sailing Committee is invited to:

1. Support the World Sailing Executive recommendation that the existing World Sailing Class status of the Hansa 2.3 and Hansa Liberty is maintained pending the IPC decision and subsequent review of the wider Para class framework.
2. Support a review of the World Sailing Regulations to determine whether clearer and more appropriate recognition and retention requirements should apply to classes supporting Para Inclusive Sailing.
3. Agree that this review should consider international distribution alongside accessibility, impairment provision, development value, competition opportunities and the unique contribution made by individual classes.
4. Note that this work concerns World Sailing Class recognition and the wider Para/Para preferred class framework only, and is separate from any future Paralympic Games equipment evaluation or selection process.