

Yachting New Zealand

Minutes of the high-performance advisory group (HPAG) meeting held at Yachting New Zealand on Wednesday, January 29, 2025, at 10am.

Present: Nik Burfoot, Jo Aleh, John Clinton, Leslie Egnot, Jenna Hansen, Henry Moore, Daniel Willcox.

Online: Ian Stewart.

In attendance: David Abercrombie, Eduan Roos, Geoff Woolley.

Action items from meeting

HPAG:

- Details of how a more squad-based approach is to be achieved to be a discussion point at the next HPAG meeting for medal-capable classes, as well as 49erFX and classes with development potential for 2032 (like 470).
- ILCA 6 job description to be reviewed as part of squad discussion at next HPAG meeting.
- NB/JH to Develop draft external communication for wider distribution on HPAG role and rationale for consideration at next meeting (NB / JH).
- NB/JH to draft a conflict of interest register and circulate among HPAG members for completion.

Yachting New Zealand:

- IS/GW to draft list of skills required and job description for ILCA 6 role, and circulate to HPAG.
- Develop draft communication for publication on Yachting New Zealand website (and circulate to sailors as appropriate) on class campaign support for 2025-2028 Olympic cycle for consideration at next meeting (IS/GW/ER).
- Yachting New Zealand's high-performance team to stay engaged with Micah Wilkinson and Erica Dawson.

1.0 Welcome

NB opened the meeting by welcoming the HPAG members and guests and reminded everyone in attendance to sign the non-disclosure agreement provided.

A general discussion was had about the rationale for and the role of the HPAG, as an advisory group to Yachting New Zealand's chief executive and limitations in terms of its decision-making ability.

It was agreed that transparency and communication in decision-making was paramount, and NB encouraged HPAG members to declare any potential conflicts ahead of meetings directly with him as chair. Going forward, at the beginning of each HPAG meeting, there is to be a recurring agenda item to discuss any conflicts of interests that have been raised and where a conflict has been identified, it is recorded in a conflict of interest register, which needs to be drafted.

2.0 Recommendations

Priority classes

It was recommended that the priority classes for the 2025-2028 Olympic cycle are: 49er, ILCA 7 and men's and women's IQFOiL, to be reviewed annually by HPAG.

It was recommended that priority classes receive a full-time, class-specific squad coach.

ILCA 6 support (class)

It was recommended that the ILCA 6 class is a development class for the 2025-2028 Olympic cycle and that a full-time squad coach for Yachting New Zealand's ILCA 6 programme is appointed.

Kitefoil support (individual)

It was recommended that Lukas Walton-Keim's application for a Potential Training Grant from High Performance Sport New Zealand be endorsed, with a similar matching contribution from Yachting New Zealand for 2025 - subject to the drafting of agreed KPIs for annual review.

It was recommended that all applications be considered for the NZL development squad, where criteria are set on future talent identification in all Olympic classes.

It was recommended that Lucy Bilger's application to the NZL development squad be considered by Yachting New Zealand's high-performance team.

Nacra 17 support

A recommendation on future support for Micah Wilkinson and Erica Dawson is deferred to a later date.

3.0 Ian Stewart (Yachting New Zealand high-performance director)

High-performance programme funding

IS provided an update on HPSNZ's funding allocation for the new Olympic cycle and Yachting New Zealand's focus on smart investment which will see funding priority given to supporting medal-capable classes for Los Angeles 2028 and the development of other classes for Brisbane 2032 and beyond. Medal-capable classes include the 49er, ILCA 7 and men's and women's IQFOiL.

JA suggested communicating the role and responsibilities of the HPAG to the wider sailing community, and to share publicly which classes are considered medal-capable, which are considered development classes, and which classes won't receive funding support.

JH highlighted that HPAG doesn't represent any specific sailing classes and consists of people with a diverse range of skills and expertise and that the group could consult widely when required and welcomed the sharing of information when appropriate. IS and GW remain the first point of contact for all athletes in the high-performance programme.

It was recommended that communication on the HPAG's role and responsibilities be drafted for approval by HPAG, prior to wider distribution.

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ILCA 6 update

IS said that while the domestic ILCA fleet numbers are encouraging, coaching for these classes have been piecemeal.

Yachting New Zealand has identified the need for a full-time ILCA 6 coach, to combine the following roles:

- A priority of coaching Greta Pilkington and possibly Naomi Ferrissey with the aim of a top-10 result at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games and developing a wider group with the specific aim of a medal at Brisbane 2032;
- Further develop strong youth numbers in the domestic fleet;
- To improve the chances of New Zealand winning a youth medal in the class; and
- To leverage the ILCA 6 as a feeder and stepping stone to other classes.

A general discussion was had about if and how this coaching resource will be split between medal-capable and developing sailors. GW said the coach would have a squad-based focus with an emphasis on the domestic fleet, even if they were required to spend significant time abroad.

JA said it was necessary for the squad-based approach to be consistently applied across all classes, while JH asked for clarity about why classes like the ILCA 7 and 49er have more than one dedicated coach.

IS said while the intention is to have one coach per Olympic class this cycle, there may be exceptions due to squad size and depth, and medal capability for Los Angeles 2028. There is often the need for two coaches at events like world championships when we send big squads and fleets are split.

The importance of the ILCA 6 class as a feeder to other Olympic classes, and the potential impact of offering no or limited support to some classes was discussed.

It was recommended that communication be drafted for publication on the Yachting New Zealand's website on the level of support the respective Olympic sailing classes receive for the 2025-2028 Olympic cycle.

It was recommended that the ILCA 6 class is a development class for the next Olympic cycle and therefore a suitably qualified full-time squad coach for Yachting New Zealand's ILCA 6 programme be appointed.

IS and GW will draft a list of skills required and a complete job description for the role, and circulate to HPAG prior to publishing as part of recruitment for the role.

Nacra 17, 49erFX update

IS said Micah Wilkinson and Erica Dawson are expected to confirm whether they intend to campaign for Los Angeles 2028 soon. Given their success in Marseille, Yachting New Zealand are prepared to engage with them to determine the level of support for a new campaign. HPAG feedback will be requested once further details of potential campaign plans are shared with Yachting New Zealand.

Several potential 49erFX combinations are also finalising their plans and HPAG feedback on the level of support for this class will be sought at a later stage once more information is available.

Kitefoil update

Kitefoiling is not expected to be medal-capable or a class-suitable for squad development due to low levels of participation and the uncertainty of whether it will be included beyond Los Angeles 2028. However, this does not preclude supporting individuals when they meet the agreed criteria for individual support.

Lukas Walton-Keim has qualified for a Potential Training Grant from High Performance Sport New Zealand, which would also require support and investment from Yachting New Zealand.

IS said LWK had shown a commitment to campaigning for Los Angeles 2028 and improving his performance levels this year.

It was recommended that Yachting New Zealand provide individual funding support to LWK because he has met the individual performance criteria. This support would be reviewed annually against clear KPIs developed in collaboration with LWK and HPSNZ, recommended to be based on performance data obtained from Yachting New Zealand's performance analyst Alex Anastasiou.

Young kitefoiler Lucy Bilger has asked for development support from HPSNZ, which would require an endorsement from Yachting New Zealand.

A discussion followed about LB's performance level and potential in the class, creating pathways for female sailors and setting a precedent for other similar requests for endorsement.

It was recommended that all applications be considered for the NZL development squad, where criteria is set on future talent identification in all Olympic classes. It was recommended that Lucy Bilger's application to the NZL development squad be considered by Yachting New Zealand's high-performance team.

11.49am: Meeting closed.