

Kite Identification at LA2028

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its July 2025 meeting, Council approved the Events Committee recommendation that all Olympic equipment display prominent national identifiers larger than those used at Paris 2024. For kites, Council directed that a solution for dominant country branding be presented by December 2025.
- 1.2 The Executive Office has initiated consultation with all Olympic kite brands and manufacturers (the “manufacturers”). The focus has been to test the feasibility of alternative approaches to achieve visibility of national identifiers on kites while protecting equipment integrity and athlete fairness.

2. Update

- 2.1 At their September meeting, the Board:
 - (a) Noted the progress of consultation made to date and the preliminary findings on feasibility of a solution for kites.
 - (b) Approved the process for deciding on the solution; whereby:
 - (i) The Executive Office will coordinate a formal consultation with the manufacturers to evaluate the technical feasibility, cost implications, and impact of implementing potential solutions.
 - (ii) The Executive Office will share its findings with the Equipment Committee, the IKA-Formula Kite Class and other stakeholders defined by the Board (consultative bodies) to gather their input.
 - (iii) Following further consultation with the manufacturers and the consultative bodies, the Executive Office will recommend a solution to the Board. The Board will then make a decision and present its recommendation to Council for approval.
 - (iv) The recommendation will identify the preferred solution and summarise feedback received from the consultative bodies.
 - (v) Notwithstanding other regulations, the Executive Office recommendation may require changes to the Class Rules, Building Specifications, Olympic Commercial Undertakings between World Sailing and manufacturers, the Advertising Code, and the relevant Olympic Event Rules and Regulations, as necessary to facilitate implementation.
 - (vi) Council shall retain the authority to reject the Board recommendations. However, any Council decision in favor of a solution must be made on the recommendation of the Board.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Olympic Broadcasting Service and IOC feedback following Paris 2024 stressed the need for improved visibility of kites to ensure identification of athletes on broadcast. Council approved Recommendation 5 from the Events Committee report in July 2025, directing World Sailing to implement solutions across all Olympic equipment, including a specific December 2025 deadline for kites.
- 3.2 In response, the Executive Office initiated a formal consultation with all Olympic kite manufacturers.

- 3.3 On 20 August 2025, letters were issued to all manufacturers, outlining Council's decision and requesting their formal input. The letter explained that the requirement was driven by OBS and IOC feedback, and set out several implementation options. It also noted World Sailing's preference for full-flag designs. Manufacturers were advised that failure to comply with any solution determined by World Sailing could affect their eligibility for licensing or selection for LA2028 and other events.
- 3.4 Several implementation options were presented:
- (a) Option 1: Full kite displaying the national flag and country codes
 - (b) Option 2: Kite displaying a national flag of reduced size and country codes
 - (c) Option 3: Kite in the colours representing the NOC at the Games (e.g. orange tones for NED, blue tones for ITA) and country codes
 - (d) Option 4; variations or alternative solutions proposed by manufacturers.
- 3.5 The Class Rules permit competitors to choose amongst the designs registered by each manufacturer. Four manufacturers currently produce Kites for the IKA Formula Kite Class. The market share is approximately: Flysurfer $\approx$ 85%, Element $\approx$ 10%, Ozone $\approx$ 5%, North Kiteboarding $\approx$ 0%.
- 3.6 Feedback received from the manufacturers can be summarised as follows:
- (a) Option 1 (full kite displaying the national flag):
 - (i) Flysurfer, Element, North: Not feasible - would mean redesigning kites and having to test each nation's designs, not all colors can be produced, would perform differently than the current ones, would increase kite weights risking lower wind ranges, asymmetric flags would not perform adequately, different flag designs would perform differently.
 - (ii) Ozone: Has the most experience and technical capability to customize kites. Either replacing kite material with sewn-in panels, or by sticking additional panels. Nevertheless, the same feedback as other manufacturers was noted.

Summary: Considered complex, costly and largely ruled out.
 - (b) Option 2 (partial kite with smaller flags):
 - (i) feasible with cost implications reported between €400 to 800 per kite, limited design resolution, and additional complexity and technical differences for certain flags.

Summary: Technically feasible but inconsistent application methods and potentially inequitable across nations.
 - (c) Option 3 (country colour schemes with country codes):
 - (i) Preference by all manufacturers. Identified as most practical, equitable and fairest across nations, avoiding asymmetric performance issues, and no changes in production methods.
 - (ii) Main challenge is colour availability; in addition to limited stocks, not colours can be sourced.

Summary: Preferred solution across manufacturers.
 - (d) Option 4:
 - (i) Assign a dedicated colour or combination of colours to each competitor, having a unique and identifiable kite per nation without necessarily replicating national colours or national identity.

3.7 In summary:

- (a) Option 1: Unworkable in practice for LA2028.
- (b) Option 2: Feasible but inconsistent and potentially inequitable.
- (c) Option 3: Supported by all manufacturers as the most practical, fair and potentially achievable.
- (d) Other options: viable variations but less effective for broadcast.

3.8 On this basis, the Executive Office currently favours Option 3 and Option 4 as the preferred direction of travel but will continue to investigate Option 2.

3.9 Further details on each option, including the specific feedback received from each manufacturer, are available upon request. The Executive Office has also prepared artistic sketches representing different options, which can be shared.

4. Issues

(a) Strategy/Objective Implications

- (i) Technical feasibility varies across options; full flag designs risk being unworkable for complex national flags.
- (ii) Costs and supply chain timelines must be considered, particularly minimum orders of fabric and lead times of 3 to 6 months.
- (iii) Governance process for approving specification changes must be clarified and codified.

(b) Financial Implications

- (i) Potential costs per kite may range from €400 to €1500 depending on option. These costs would be borne by manufacturers/NOCs.

(c) Consultation

- (i) IKA - Formula Kite class manager.
- (ii) Equipment Committee chair, Events Committee chair, Format WG Chair
- (iii) Manufacturers & Brands: Flysurfer, Ozone, Element, North Kiteboarding.

(d) Risk Register Implications

- (i) Risk: Adoption of technically unfeasible or unfair option.
Impact: Equipment performance issues, inequity between nations.
Likelihood: Moderate
Controls: Consultation with brands, manufacturers and Class.
- (ii) Risk: Decision-making process disputed or seen to exceed remit.
Impact: Governance and reputational risks.
Likelihood: Moderate
Controls: transparent consultation and final Council approval.

(e) Legal, Governance and Compliance

Changes may require amendments to Class Rules, Building Specifications, Olympic Commercial Undertakings, and the Advertising Code. Council approval will ultimately be required, on the recommendation of Board.

(f) Responsibility

Technical & Offshore Director – day to day lead

Board – decision prior to Council approval