

MOBILITY SCOOTER AND POWERED WHEELCHAIR POLICY

EG Approval: March 2025	Responsible Board:	Ocean Housing Ltd
Next Review: March 2028	Responsible Executive:	Managing Director Ocean Housing Ltd

1.0 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to both mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. For ease, in this policy, reference will be made to mobility scooters unless there is a need to make a distinction between the two vehicles. The policy does not apply to non-motorised wheelchairs or other un-powered mobility aids.
- 1.2 The rise in mobility scooter users has resulted in a number of challenges, particularly when mobility scooters are used by residents living in buildings with communal areas, which were built some years ago and were not designed with mobility scooters in mind.
- 1.3 This policy aims to balance the needs of individual residents against Ocean's duty to maintain a safe environment for all residents, colleagues, contractors and visitors, particularly in relation to fire risks. It also seeks to ensure that owners of mobility scooters understand their responsibilities, and that they take account of those before deciding to buy a mobility scooter.
- 1.4 Mobility scooters can create significant safety risks, which include:
- collisions with vehicles and people
 - damage to the building
 - trip hazards
 - obstructing fire escape routes
 - fire due to defective batteries or chargers
 - toxic fumes associated with a fire
- 1.5 This policy sets out how Ocean will consider requests from residents to keep mobility scooters, and the factors determining whether permission is granted or refused.
- 1.6 This policy applies to tenants and homeowners who have access to an internal communal area of a block of flats, and also residents who live in a house, bungalow or direct access flat if they store the mobility scooter inside.
- 1.7 Section 6 of this policy does not apply to owners of powered wheelchairs. This is because they have no choice about whether they require a powered wheelchair - it is a necessity for day-to-day mobility in their accommodation. For this reason, it is acknowledged that powered wheelchairs will generally be stored within a resident's home.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 Mobility scooters are defined as 'Invalid Carriages' under the Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988, which divide these machines into three classes:
- Class 1 covers manual wheelchairs (not covered by this policy)

- Class 2 applies to machines designed for use on the pavement, travelling at speed of up to 4 mph. They may be used on the road to cross from one pavement to another or where no pavement is available (this category includes powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters).
- Class 3 applies to machines that can be used both on the pavement where they are limited to 4 mph, and on the road where they can travel at up to 8 mph. Class 3 vehicles are required by law to be registered with DVLA for road use, and licensed in the disabled taxation class at nil duty.

3.0 Storage and charging of mobility scooters

- 3.1 Mobility scooters must never be stored or charged in an internal communal area of blocks of flats unless the area has been designed specifically for that purpose. This is because mobility scooters can increase the risk of fire or obstruct a fire escape route.
- 3.2 Storage of a mobility scooter in an external communal area will only be permitted if permission is obtained, in writing, in advance, from Ocean Housing. Any permission will clearly set out the terms on which it is given, having due regard to relevant guidance, in particular the *'Mobility Scooter Guidance for Residential Buildings'* issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council.
- 3.3 Ocean Housing currently has no programme to create mobility scooter storage facilities for its existing homes and we will not accept requests to fund such work. Ocean will also not fund alterations to communal areas to allow a mobility scooter to pass through.
- 3.4 Where no designated storage facility exists at a block of flats, storage and charging arrangements might be possible inside the home of individual residents, with the prior, written agreement of Ocean Housing. This option removes the risk from the communal hallways and corridors, placing the storage and charging of mobility scooters behind a fire-resisting, self-closing door. However, this does potentially place residents at risk from a fire involving a mobility scooter in their own home.
- 3.5 Before granting permission a mobility scooter in a flat, house, or bungalow Ocean Housing will assess the risk of doing so and at a minimum will stipulate:
- a) the mobility scooter must not be stored or charged in the hallway
 - b) the battery must be charged in-line with manufacturer recommendations
 - c) charging will not be allowed between 8pm to 8am as this reduces the risk of fire while people are asleep
 - d) the mobility scooter should be stored and charged in a separate room which is fitted with a fire-resisting door and fire detection, arranged by and at the expense of the tenant
 - e) a Portable Appliance Test (PAT) is carried out every 12 months, arranged by and at the expense of the tenant
- 3.6 Where a mobility scooter is stored or charged within communal areas without permission, or outside of the terms of permission granted, Ocean reserves the right to remove it without prior notice to safeguard the health and safety of other residents. It also reserves the right to

recharge the resident for the cost of its removal, as well as any associated costs. Ocean will accept no claim for loss where a mobility scooter is removed.

- 3.7 Residents who live in a house or bungalow may choose to store a scooter outside, under cover, or in a shed. If they do so, they should have regard to the *'Mobility Scooter Guidance for Residential Buildings'* issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council which says:

'It is recommended that any mobility scooter storage solution should be sited at least 6m away from buildings to reduce fire spread'

- 3.8 Cables should not run from the house or bungalow to charge a mobility scooter and where a new electrical supply is to be installed to charge a scooter a tenant improvement request must be made and approved.

4.0 Use of mobility scooters in communal areas

- 4.1 Class 2 and Class 3 mobility scooters are essentially outdoor vehicles and should not be used inside. Should there be evidence that the use of such a mobility scooter inside is essential because of the resident's mobility issues, use will generally be restricted to between the main entrance of the building and the resident's flat.
- 4.2 Where possible, motorised/non-motorised wheelchairs or walking aids should be used inside, rather than a large mobility scooter.
- 4.3 Mobility scooters must be driven with care and give priority to pedestrians. They should always give way and, if necessary, move over and stop to let a pedestrian pass. If a mobility scooter is used without due care, permission to keep it may be withdrawn.
- 4.4 Where it is necessary to drive a mobility scooter into a lift the following guidance will apply:
- one mobility scooter at a time should use the lift to ensure that weight limits are not exceeded and to avoid the risk of collision
 - mobility scooters should be driven forward into the lift and reversed out (using the lift mirror)

5.0 Permission to keep a mobility scooter (all property types)

- 5.1 The following criteria will apply:
- a) Residents who wish to obtain a mobility scooter must apply in writing for permission before they bring it on to Ocean property.
 - b) We will normally respond to requests within 20 working days of receipt of the application.
 - c) If no response is provided in 20 working days that does mean permission has been granted.
 - d) Ocean will accept no liability for costs arising from the purchase of a mobility scooter where permission is not granted or where permission is withdrawn.
 - e) Residents will be responsible for arranging and paying for any alterations to their property required, e.g. upgrading doors, and additional fire detection.

- f) Permission will be conditional on the resident ensuring their mobility scooter is, at all times, in a safe condition, serviced and maintained regularly, and compliant with all legal requirements relating to that class of mobility scooter, including taxation. Evidence should be provided to Ocean on request.
- g) Permission will not be granted for a second-hand scooter where the mechanical and electrical condition of the scooter cannot be verified to Ocean's satisfaction.
- h) Non-compliance with any requirements may result in permission for a mobility scooter being withdrawn. That includes acquiring an additional or new scooter without permission.

5.2 When deciding if permission should be granted, account will be taken of the availability of a suitable safe area to store and charge the scooter and the potential impact on other people.

5.3 Ocean cannot guarantee that every resident who wants a mobility scooter will be given permission to keep one. Permission will be refused where:

- there is no safe storage/charging space available.
- the mobility scooter is considered too large for any internal or external entrances/paths/corridors
- there would be a breach of legislation or impact on the health, safety or welfare of other occupants of the premises if the mobility scooter is permitted
- other users of the building will be adversely affected by its presence, in the opinion of Ocean.

6.0 Responsibilities

6.1 All Ocean staff have a duty to report breaches of this policy.

6.2 The Ocean Housing Board will:

- Review Ocean's Mobility Scooter and Powered Wheelchair Policy every three years.

Managers will:

- Ensure that their staff are aware of and follow the Policy and work with or refer appropriate agencies

Staff will:

- Be familiar with the Policy and related procedures

7.0 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

7.1 Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect. We will ensure that applications are decided carefully and thoroughly.

7.2 Reasonable Adjustments, under the Equality Act 2010, will be considered on a case-by case

basis.

7.3 We are committed to addressing any communication or language barriers by providing translation services for face-to-face contact and written communication when needed. We will also produce information in alternative formats such as audio or large print where required.

8.0 Monitoring and Review

8.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years or when new legislation or best practice guidelines are introduced.