metroSTOR® webinar
Safer Neighbourhoods. Cleaner World

metroSTOR Webinar Summary and Transcript

New Mobility Scooter Safety Guidance
for Housing Providers

27.11.25

Catch up on all our previous Webinars **here**

metroSTOR Webinar Summary

Overview

On 27 November 2025 metroSTOR hosted a webinar with guest speaker Andrew Frankum of the National Social Housing Fire Strategy Group to discuss the proposed update to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) mobility scooter guidance and the associated public consultation. The session focused on balancing resident independence with fire safety, particularly in relation to lithium ion battery risks, storage options and practical implementation in existing housing stock.

Background and purpose of the guidance

The original NFCC guidance was developed in partnership with fire and rescue services and housing providers, responding to a high volume of mobility scooters stored on escape routes and numerous notices of deficiency issued by Fire and Rescue Services.

The guidance aimed to provide a clear, consistent approach to managing mobility scooter storage while protecting residents' independence where scooters are essential mobility aids.

Seven years on, patterns of use, battery technology and resident demographics have changed. There is greater use of lithium ion batteries, rising numbers of older residents likely to require scooters, and increased awareness of e-bikes and e-scooters as an emerging fire risk.

Key changes and technical updates

Andrew highlighted several proposed changes in the draft guidance:

Status of the guidance

- The document is not Article 50 guidance under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.
- However there is currently no Article 50 guidance on mobility scooter storage, so this document is likely to be regarded as the industry reference point in the event of enforcement or legal proceedings.

Fire behaviour and heat release

- Updated technical data on heat release rates for mobility scooter fires is being included. Tests indicate that a scooter fire can develop rapidly and impact the escape route in around three minutes.
- A single scooter fire can generate heat in the order of 2,500 kW, comparable to a small car fire. In practice, scooters are often stored in groups, increasing the potential fire load and intensity.

Lithium ion battery risks and vapour clouds

- The revised guidance introduces more detail on thermal runaway in lithium ion batteries and the potential for toxic and flammable vapour clouds that may appear as smoke but present explosion and inhalation risks.
- Residents and staff should not attempt to tackle suspected lithium ion battery fires. The advice is to evacuate, close doors and allow the fire service to deal with the incident.

Options for storage and charging

- The original "menu" of options (internal, external and mixed solutions) remains, but has been strengthened to embed fire prevention principles more clearly.
- For internal storage the draft introduces a preferred requirement for: ground floor location, access from the outside, 60 minute fire resisting construction with appropriate doors, detection linked to an alarm receiving centre, automatic smoke extraction to outside and recommendation for water suppression where reasonably practicable.
- Andrew acknowledged that these standards will be realistic for new build but more challenging to deliver in existing blocks, particularly low to medium rise schemes. A risk based, pragmatic approach remains essential.

Removal of compensatory measures section

- The previous section on compensatory measures has been removed to reflect the stronger emphasis on prevention and protection in the main options.

Management arrangements and Building Safety Act

- The management section has been updated to reflect the Building Safety Act, including the need for mandatory occurrence reporting in higher risk buildings where relevant mobility scooter or lithium ion incidents occur.

Tenant information and case studies

- The previous tenant information appendix has largely been removed as it was out of date.
- In its place, the NFCC intends to include case studies of incidents and good practice examples so landlords can learn from each other. Contributions are invited via the scooters@shfsg.info mailbox.

Discussion and Q&A highlights

Electric wheelchairs and scope of guidance

Electric wheelchairs are treated as class one vehicles and are currently out of scope of the NFCC mobility scooter guidance, which focuses on class two and class three vehicles.

The advice is nonetheless to apply the same principles pragmatically, ensuring equipment is properly maintained and safely stored, particularly where batteries are lithium ion.

Internal versus external storage

Examples were shared of:

- Internally created scooter stores at flat entrance level, separated by one hour fire resisting construction and secondary doors.
- Longstanding practice of repurposing garages and community rooms with improved ventilation, detection and visual beacons to warn residents before opening a door onto a fire.
- A strategic shift in some organisations towards external storage only, typically at least six metres from the building, driven by Building Safety Act considerations and internal risk appetite.
- Speakers stressed the importance of project specific fire engineering advice, particularly where new internal scooter stores are proposed adjacent to escape routes.

Lithium ion technology, standards and resident behaviour

Attendees and speakers recognised that:

- Lithium ion battery technology and chemistries are evolving, including newer types such as lithium iron phosphate, but the installed base of older products and unregulated batteries remains the dominant risk.
- Online marketplaces make it easy for residents to buy unsafe chargers, replacement batteries and low cost conversion kits that may not be certified or compatible.
- Cost of living pressures can push residents towards cheaper, riskier products.
- The webinar touched on forthcoming and recent legislation, including the developing product safety regime and efforts to tighten controls on unsafe products, whilst noting that standards have not yet fully caught up with the pace of technological change.

Resident experience and practical constraints

- Lived experience contributions highlighted:
- External storage can shorten battery life in cold weather, leading some households to heat outbuildings or seek alternative arrangements.
- Manoeuvring scooters in tight internal spaces is challenging, especially where multiple doors are involved.
- Manufacturers and service providers often advise permanent trickle charging, which can conflict with landlord concerns about overnight charging.

Awareness and culture change

Several landlords described difficulties gaining internal traction on lithium ion and mobility scooter safety and expressed interest in sharing materials and approaches that have worked.

There was strong support for resident facing campaigns, including unbranded videos and resources that can be locally badged, plus more cross-sector sharing of incident case studies and positive examples.

Guidance scope and UK nations

Questions were raised about alignment across the UK and whether the current NFCC consultation applies to Scotland and Northern Ireland. While the NFCC guidance is developed for England and Wales, the principles are of interest to housing providers in all nations and there is active engagement from organisations in Northern Ireland.

Consultation process

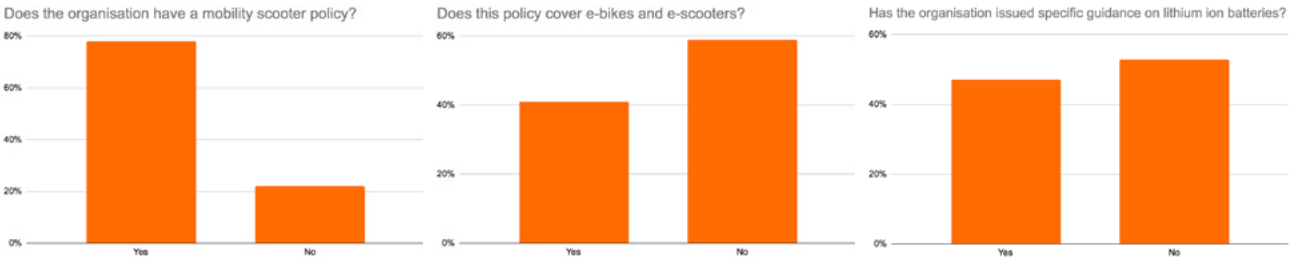
Attendees were encouraged to:

- Download and read the draft guidance before responding to the online survey.
- Provide organisational and personal views, even where internal sign off is still in progress.
- Submit examples of good practice and incident learning.
- It was confirmed that the NFCC consultation deadline had been extended to **15 December 2025.**

Participant Chat Summary

- Clarification requested on NFCC data for fires involving electric wheelchairs and how guidance differentiates scooters from powered wheelchairs.
- Attendees asked whether good practice examples would be shared, especially for low rise blocks and mixed housing types.
- Strong interest in lithium ion battery safety, including:
    - Safer chemistries such as LiFePO4
    - Risks from unsafe chargers, replacement batteries and conversion kits
    - Updates on the Lithium Ion Battery Safety Bill and Product Safety and Metrology Bill
- Questions on fire suppression, including:
    - Suitability of domestic vs commercial sprinklers
    - Whether suppression is necessary for external stores where buildings have no existing system
- Concerns raised about residents charging batteries inside flats and how landlords should regulate or enforce safe practice.
- Several organisations described difficulty gaining internal buy-in on lithium ion safety and asked to share successful approaches.
- Requests for lessons learned from previous scooter or lithium ion fires, including smoke spread into escape routes.
- Questions about UK-wide alignment, including whether the guidance applies in Scotland.
- Repeated queries about whether residents must seek permission for alterations or whether landlords should provide communal storage.
- NFCC confirmed the consultation deadline had been extended to **15 December 2025.**

Poll Results



Catch up on all our previous Webinars **here**

metroSTOR Webinar Transcript

Nigel Deacon

Well, thanks for joining our latest webinar on mobility scooters. I think we should probably make a start. I really appreciate you giving the time to join today. Please feel free, in the usual way, to use the chat, introduce yourselves, and put any points, questions and things that you might have for Andy. We will keep the mics muted until we get to the Q&A session.

A big thanks to Andy for giving us time today to tell us more about the proposed changes to the mobility scooter guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council. There is a consultation out at the moment which closes on **(15 December 2025)**, so apologies for the very short notice, but it was the only slot we could squeeze in. We wanted to get the message out and give an opportunity for as many people as possible to respond.

Just looking at the wider picture around e-mobility and lithium ion batteries, as you will know this is a rapidly emerging risk. In a sense, the regulatory side of things is struggling to keep up with the way things are developing. As always, if you do not mind just muting mics as you join, that would be great.

It is a rapidly evolving picture. There are simple things that we can do as landlords and building managers to identify and assess risks and mitigate them as much as possible. Andy, thank you for joining us today and I look forward to hearing what you have to share with us.

Andrew Frankum

Brilliant. Thanks, Nigel. Welcome, everyone, to the session this morning. It is really good to see so many people on the call. I was going to talk through a little bit around the consultation. We are obviously coming towards the end of it now, but we wanted to get this webinar in the diary. I would encourage anyone who has comments to respond to the consultation before Monday.

If you do not have time to respond, please put comments in the chat or give feedback when we go through the Q&A. Even if you cannot respond formally, it is important that I hear people's views so that I can try to represent everyone when we have follow up conversations once the consultation has closed.

I will walk through some slides and then I will turn the slides off so I can see everyone on the screen and we can have a bit of a Q&A and you can chip in at that point.

A bit of background. About ten years ago landlords, building owners and housing associations had lots of issues with mobility scooters. There was a lot of talk about what you were doing about it and how you managed it. They were on escape routes up and down the country, and Fire and Rescue services were issuing notices of deficiencies regularly. There needed to be a bit of clarity around how we could balance the risk of mobility scooters on escape routes with making sure that we considered the independence of individuals.

Residents might have a medical condition that restricts their mobility and the scooter is a critical piece of equipment for them. Existing buildings were not designed to cater for this type of equipment. Whilst we can tackle and think about it from a new build point of view, that is going to take years to establish in future buildings. It was a real challenge to work out how to tackle that.

Back in 2018 we had lots of conversations with providers. We joined up with a number of Fire and Rescue services, Greater Manchester, Staffordshire and the NFCC to pull together some standard guidance that people could follow. Things have moved on now. We are seven years down the track since the guidance was issued. We see lots of great policies organisations have adopted. It is not the only topic of conversation these days. E-bikes and e-scooters tend to be the emerging conversation, or fire doors and similar issues.

It is good to see that people have picked up the guidance, adopted it, had those conversations with residents and made buildings safer as a result. Whilst we cannot eliminate the risk, there have been some really positive steps to engage residents in the process and make sure that scooters are being stored safely.

Seven years on, things have moved on. A number of things in the guidance are no longer relevant and are out of date. We are seeing more use of lithium ion batteries. The technology is advancing significantly and we see more and more devices with lithium ion batteries in them: e-bikes, e-scooters, conversion kits and similar changes with mobility scooters. The battery technology is advancing.

We know that the population is ageing. Typically the demographic that uses mobility scooters is older, and that number is going to increase. We know from the Office for National Statistics that the population is ageing and that there will be more older people over the next 10 to 15 years. There is a real challenge in terms of how, as people's health deteriorates, we are going to keep pace with keeping people safe in buildings as use increases over time.

There is also an opportunity to share some of the good practice. I have some links at the end of the slides. We have set up an email address, so if you have been doing some really fantastic work and you want to share that, please send it over. We are happy to have a conversation with anyone. We will look to pull that together and share it through the Fire Safety in Housing website and through membership, and get that out so people can see what others have done. Ultimately it is about improving standards to ensure resident safety in purpose built blocks of flats.

I am going to talk through some of the key changes. In the original guidance, tests that were carried out estimated that it would take around three minutes, or just over three minutes, for a mobility scooter fire to impact the escape route.

I have just seen a comment pop up about slides. Yes, we will definitely share the slides afterwards, so please do not worry about taking notes.

Within the guidance we have clarified that it does not constitute Article 50 guidance. Article 50 is part of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and sets a legal precedent on guidance that is published. If you follow Article 50 guidance, you are likely to be complying with the Fire Safety Order. This guidance is not written under Article 50.

However, there is no Article 50 guidance on mobility scooter storage. In the absence of that, this guide will act as industry-led guidance. From a legal point of view, if an incident occurred and you were in court, the likelihood is that the court would look at this guidance as prescribed information on how you could comply with the law. Obviously I am not a lawyer, so you would need to take legal advice on that, but we wanted to clarify that it was not written under Article 50. In the absence of any other guidance, it should help you comply with the requirements.

There are a number of other changes. There will be images added to the guidance as visual representations. It has not been formatted correctly yet, but we wanted people to focus on the content in case any changes were needed or, through the efforts you have been taking to manage the risk, there was anything new we needed to think about. That was the purpose of making these changes.

There are a number of technical updates on heat release rates, in terms of the heat that is generated when a mobility scooter catches fire, and other issues such as toxic smoke generation. There are also risks associated with thermal runaway. We know this is a big issue with e-bikes and e-scooters, but in some situations when thermal runaway occurs it can create what is called a vapour cloud.

That looks and feels like smoke, but it is not. It is very flammable and very toxic and gives off lots of different gases. If people try to tackle the fire in that situation they could be overcome and become incapacitated. There is also an explosion risk. We have seen a number of incidents where that has occurred.

It is important to say that we are talking about a worst case scenario. If a lithium ion battery goes into thermal runaway or a mobility scooter catches fire, the risks are low, but they are present. We all know that Awaab's Law came in recently around damp and mould. We know government is planning to extend all other hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System in due course. We know fire and explosion will come into force effectively from next year, so consideration needs to be given to how we minimise that risk and how that will feed into the roll out of Awaab's Law as well.

As you might remember, for those that have used the guidance, there were a number of options available, about six options: external storage, internal storage and so on. No single option was preferred. It was more of a checklist: when you are looking at your building, these might be some of the options you can then risk assess and choose as the right solution for your building and your residents.

There are some changes to those options. Previously there was a paragraph around compensatory measures; that has now been removed. Some of the options have been expanded upon and now use language like "you should do this" or "you should do that". It does not mean that you must do everything, but we think that because the guidance has been out for about eight years we need to embed the principle of fire prevention more clearly into those options. In reality some of that might not be realistic in existing buildings.

If we are talking about guidance that says you should only have storage on the ground floor with external access and smoke extraction and suppression systems, sprinklers and so on, the reality is that in some buildings we have just been using storage areas that have a fire door and detection within them. It is going to be difficult to retrofit smoke extraction or water suppression. There are options, but this is about thinking long term. It is about shaping that direction, but I know there are challenges. It would be really good to get people's feedback on that. The National Fire Chiefs Council is really pushing that angle and I completely understand the principle in terms of fire prevention, but we also need to be pragmatic about where we can store scooters safely and what good practice looks like.

If you are looking at the guidance, focus on the options and look closely at them because that will be key.

Lastly, we had an appendix that was relevant for tenant information. A lot of the information in that section is no longer accurate, so most of it has been removed and in reality there was not much left. We decided to take that appendix out and replace it with some case studies where there have been incidents and lessons learned. We are asking people to share any good practice they have implemented. We can then revisit those case studies and update them, which will help other people. We will make that information available to members and others, assuming we have permission to do so from the organisations that shared it. It is about learning and sharing what that looks like.

When I talked about heat release rates, this was a graph that we were planning on putting in the guidance. I cannot remember if it has gone in or not. It is an example to show that when a mobility scooter catches fire, the heat generated can be up to 2,500 kilowatts. We put some examples in to show what that looks like compared with other fires. We used to say it is similar to a small vehicle fire, so if you had a Corsa fully loaded with fuel on fire, that would generate similar heat to a mobility scooter fire.

It is also important that typically we tended to see two or three scooters together, stored together. If one scooter can generate 2,500 kilowatts of heat, that increases exponentially as the fire transfers to other scooters. You can imagine the intensity of the fire in that scenario. It is really important to think about extraction, certainly from a firefighting point of view. If they do not have external access or there is no smoke extraction, then when firefighters start to tackle those fires it will impede the escape routes as they try to deal with it. That is something to think about. I thought it would be useful to share that and give some comparisons of the heat generated by a mobility scooter fire.

Going into the options, the changes mainly relate to the internal storage options. There is an introduction of a preferred requirement that storage should be at ground floor level only and accessed from the outside. That is fine for new build because you can design that in. It is really difficult for existing buildings, especially low to medium rise buildings with people on the top floor or second floor. It is challenging.

We have to think about the resident as well. If storage is only on the ground floor, there is always the issue of how the resident gets from the storage area to their flat, and vice versa. The requirement is in the guidance more around firefighting operations, but it is something to be aware of. There is also automatic smoke extraction venting to the outside, which I have already mentioned, and automatic water suppression is finally recommended as well. Given the heat release rates around scooter fires, it is important to think about automatic water suppression.

The restriction on charging was already in the guidance. This has been reaffirmed. We are seeing quite a lot of concern when we think about e-bikes and e-scooters. Whilst we are talking about mobility scooters today, I did have a conversation with the National Fire Chiefs Council, because a lot of the principles around storage and charging in the guidance can and should apply to approaches for e-bikes and e-scooters.

We have seen incidents with a number of fatalities where people have been charging on the hallway and leaving batteries on the only escape route. We have had those issues with mobility scooters too, especially where residents were storing them in their own property. We needed to make sure they were not on the only escape route.

Lastly, there is a change in the wording around fire detection. In those situations detection needs to be linked to an alarm receiving centre. Typically we are dealing with older people, so we need to think about how people can raise the alarm and make sure that fire detection is linked to a third party alarm receiving centre.

As I said, compensatory measures have now been removed to reflect those changes. We have also updated the management arrangements section to cover the requirements under the Building Safety Act for high risk buildings and the requirement to report certain types of incidents through your mandatory occurrence reporting mechanism. We wanted to reflect that in the guidance now that the Building Safety Act has come out.

To reaffirm, the deadline is **(15 December 2025)** and there are a number of links on the slide. We will send the slides out afterwards. You have the link directly to the online survey, which is the preferred option. When you go through the online survey, there are about ten questions for each section of the guidance. I would strongly recommend downloading the guide first, having a read through, and then completing the survey. If you have difficulties accessing it, there is an email address for the National Fire Chiefs who will be able to help with access issues, and an email address scooters@shfsg.info for any good practice to be shared. We will pick that up and feed it into the consultation responses.

That is all the information I wanted to share. Over to you, Nigel, to pick up any questions or anything in the chat.

Nigel Deacon

Thank you, Andy. That is really helpful. We do have one or two questions starting to come in the chat, so thank you for that. Please also feel free to put your hand up if you want to pose your questions, comments and observations live.

The first question is whether this applies to electric wheelchairs. Andy, can you give us a view on that, please?

Andrew Frankum

Electric wheelchairs are class one vehicles. The principles are the same. Technically they are not in scope. We excluded wheelchairs in the guidance, so it is mainly geared at class two and class three vehicles. Even though wheelchairs are not in scope, it is about applying the principles of the guidance and being pragmatic, making sure the equipment is being used appropriately, maintained by a reputable supplier and that it is not overloaded, and so on. It is about being pragmatic.

Nigel Deacon

Thank you for that. Is it also fair to say that power chairs are sold in the UK under tighter controls and tighter legislation than mobility scooters? Is that true?

Andrew Frankum

Yes, they are more of a medical device. Even though scooters are technically classed as medical devices, they are not necessarily treated in the same way because different legislation applies. For class three, for example, the Department for Transport requirements apply. So it does vary slightly, but the same principles apply.

Nigel Deacon

Excellent. There is a question which relates to your comment about implementing solutions which are reasonably practicable, given the building, conditions and circumstances. It relates to sprinkler systems for an external area if the apartment building lacks sprinklers.

It is an interesting one, because general needs buildings in particular will not have sprinklers. I suppose there are two questions. If scooters are stored externally, is suppression required, which may relate to distance from the building and the building fabric, and so on? What would you say about that, Andy?

Andrew Frankum

I think suppression was mainly geared towards internal storage. I would say it would be excluded at this point based on the guidance, because external storage presents different challenges. Depending on the location of the external storage, because it is away from the building it can be managed differently. It is about making sure that the location has been adequately risk assessed so it does not impede evacuation.

Nigel Deacon

I think that risk assessment is critical, because you can make broad recommendations, but everything needs a detailed risk assessment. If it is closer to the building, you might look at it and say it does actually need additional suppression for the assessor to feel comfortable with it.

Martin, do you want to come in with a question now?

Martin Jenic

Yes, thank you. I am Martin Jenic from Kensington and Chelsea Council. I found that graph really interesting when it started talking about the heat being produced and the energy. If you were to store scooters inside an internal unit, is there any guidance or recommendations on how many electric scooters can be stored in a room? Is there any commentary on that?

Andrew Frankum

Hi Martin, thanks for the question. What we tended to say was that once you were exceeding more than three scooters in a room in close proximity, that would obviously increase the heat generation. The principle was that as long as the storage was in a 60 minute compartment with a good fire door, detection and extraction where possible, that would help to mitigate the impact on the escape routes.

Martin Jenic

Perfect. Thank you.

Nigel Deacon

Do you think it is important to add that if part of the risk assessment process identifies that devices have lithium ion batteries, as opposed to the more traditional lead acid batteries, then their behaviour could be quite different and some of the traditional ways of dealing with this, for example fire doors and plasterboard walls, may not actually be capable of containing a lithium ion thermal runaway event? Is that a point we should note, and also that if a toxic vapour cloud spreads within the building that could be a really serious hazard?

Andrew Frankum

Yes, absolutely. When the guidance was written we had lots of mobility scooters on escape routes up and down the country, so we needed to do something about that. The guidance was originally focused on keeping escape routes clear and free from those hazards.

The technology is changing and lithium ion is developing. The reality is that if the worst happens and a lithium ion battery in a scooter that has been tampered with or damaged goes into thermal runaway, that will have a huge impact. Ideally, if it is behind a door for a period of time, that allows people to get out if they need to.

Nigel Deacon

Excellent. Thanks, Andy. Craig Thomas, do you want to come in with a contribution?

Craig Thomas

Hi there, I am Craig Thomas from the project team at Ashford Borough Council. At the moment I have a four storey project made up of M4(2) and M4(3) flats in Ashford, Kent. I have put just over a 2-metre square enclosure, fire rated, outside the front door of each flat. It is on the floor lobby, but it is protected from the stairway and lift by a secondary fire door. It is completely isolated, so it provides a protected, fire protected enclosure outside the front door of each flat.

We found that when you put storage on the ground floor it is not used because of theft. Whether it is push bikes or anything else, people do not use storage areas on the ground floor because items get stolen. If you have bought a three or four or five thousand pound item, and a number of them are stored remotely, the chance of them being stolen is so high that people will not use them.

Andrew Frankum

Right. When you talk about the enclosure, Craig, is that part of the fabric of the flat or is it at the side?

Craig Thomas

It is at the side. You come out of your front door, walk two or three metres and open a set of double doors. That is where your wheelchair would be. You get into your wheelchair, then go through another one-hour fire door into a compartment where the lift and stairs are. You have five or six flats leading off this enclosed area, so it is a standard Part B layout.

Andrew Frankum

OK, that is interesting. I have not seen that before. What fire resistance is it?

Craig Thomas

It is one hour. It is in planning at the moment. It can always go up, because I have not done the production information yet. It is still at that planning stage.

Andrew Frankum

Right, OK, that is interesting. I guess it is about assessing the risk. I have not heard that before and I do not profess to be an expert in everything. From a policy point of view, it is about balancing practicality for residents, especially those with mobility issues, against the actual risk of fire. It is about making sure the fire resistance is adequate, but if it is right next to their escape route and there was a lithium ion battery fire, that could impact on their ability to get out. It is about trying to balance those issues and coming up with the best solutions for that particular building. Does that answer the question a little bit?

Craig Thomas

Yes. I think I have a lot of wiggle room. I could increase it to two hours. I could upgrade the door. As I say, it is only at planning at the moment. There are still things that can be done.

Andrew Frankum

Would you have extraction from those enclosures?

Craig Thomas

I could put extraction in. I could put a mist system or something similar into that enclosure. I am hoping it would be ideal for anything that is taken in, because I have seen so many situations where you have got push bikes in hallways. People spend a lot of money on these things and keep them everywhere. I am looking at people not storing them in their accommodation, but having a safe place to store them outside the flat. With an M4(3) flat you are not guaranteed to have a wheelchair user, but you may have an electric bike or other device.

Andrew Frankum

Interesting.

Nigel Deacon

Good. Thank you, Craig. Now over to Chris.

Chris Adair

Good morning. I am Chris Adair from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. We are a large landlord in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has a number of housing associations as well and the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, so we have all got together and tried to create a collaborative grip on best working practice for how we approach this as social landlords.

There were a couple of things that struck me, having a look through, and I want to say to Andrew and Nigel thanks for promoting the consultation and trying to get voices into it. One thing I noticed was that it fell a little short on campaigns. I know a number of people have run Charge Safe campaigns, which were fantastic. I also thought a video would be useful, a resident-facing video to show risks that landlords could use, perhaps non-branded so local landlords could put their own branding on it if they wanted. I thought that might be a useful tool alongside the consultation.

Andrew Frankum

Brilliant. Thanks, Chris. That is really good feedback. I know we have had some conversations already about how Northern Ireland can think about and adopt that practice, because it is a bit of a challenge with some organisations; the guidance is not seen as the go-to guidance. I hope the comments around Article 50 may help with that process. It is key to share, and it is really good to see you have been able to pull associations together and have that collaborative approach to making buildings safe.

Chris Adair

One other thing I thought of was whether the policy might be broadened. I know you have maybe already touched on this. It is related to class one, class two and class three vehicles, but there are publications around PLEVs, private light electric vehicles, and whether that is open. That obviously could bring in e-bikes and other things. I wondered if there might have been an appetite to open it up to more things.

Andrew Frankum

I did have that conversation with the National Fire Chiefs Council. The issue is that there are different demographics in relation to those types of vehicles. I was trying to push for one set of guidance to cover everything, but they felt that because the demographics of users were different, and with PLEVs, e-bikes and e-scooters there are other sectors affected, such as online marketplaces and the waste industry, the NFCC wanted to issue separate position statements on those, but work towards consistent guidance on how to manage the risks from those vehicles.

Chris Adair

Thank you.

Nigel Deacon

Thank you, Chris. I agree that getting information out there and raising awareness with residents about these risks is the first priority.

Claire, do you want to come in next?

Clare Williams

Thanks. I am Clare Williams, building safety manager at South Essex Homes. I just wanted to learn a little bit more about the toxic vapour cloud that can develop. You mentioned that it looks like smoke. Is it actually visible if it escapes, and does it travel faster than smoke? What can we expect?

Andrew Frankum

It looks like smoke. It is a mass of gases that can include toxic gases such as carbon monoxide and others. Sometimes it can be heavier than air, sometimes lighter, but it appears to be smoke. If you watch incidents where vapour clouds have occurred, it looks like smoke.

The concern is that vapour clouds do not always occur, but when they do, certainly with lithium ion thermal runaway, if people are asking whether they should tackle a lithium ion battery fire, the answer is no. You need to get out as quickly as possible, shut the door behind you and let the professionals deal with it properly.

When a battery goes into thermal runaway it can give off gases that create a flammable vapour cloud, which can then ignite and cause an explosion. We have seen this not necessarily in residential situations but in other industries like transport, where batteries were being transported. There is an example where the back doors of a trailer were blown off because the fire brigade, trying to tackle the incident, put a hole in the trailer and it caused an explosion.

There are issues with it. It is rare, but we wanted to highlight the risk. Not many people know what vapour cloud explosions are, but they can result from thermal runaway in batteries. If we are talking about scooters, the battery pack will be larger than your typical mobile phone, so the risk increases.

Clare Williams

Lovely, thank you.

Nigel Deacon

Thank you, Clare.

Dave Black

Hi, I am Dave Black. I work for Bristol City Council. I think Nigel and I have spoken before. For about 15 years I have been dealing with mobility scooter storage. In the past we have used community rooms, taking sections of community rooms and fire rating them with fire doors and screens. We have also used garages.

We have smoke detectors, emergency lighting and increased ventilation. We have done this in conjunction with Building Control officers. We increased ventilation by taking out panels in doors, for example removing the bottom panels of double doors and replacing them with louvres so there was more ventilation.

One of the things I have insisted on is a flashing beacon, because the last thing we want is someone opening a door, discovering there is a fire and not being able to close the door. We have tried to find a way that if there is not a fire alarm, especially with garages, there is still some sort of flashing beacon indicating there is a problem inside so the alarm can be raised.

I have had some schemes where we started and then had to abandon them because the new Building Safety Act came out. Internally, all our stores now are external. I have just moved everything external. Anyone considering internal storage would probably be better looking at external storage at least six metres away from the building. Most people who use mobility scooters also use some sort of walking aid they could use to get to an external store, leave the scooter there and retrieve it afterwards.

I just wanted to share that we have been doing this for about 15 years. We have not had any fires in any of the blocks or garages. We install sockets, but we time the charging so there is no charging after working hours, no overnight charging. We use a permit scheme for the stores so we know people have scooters and where they are in the blocks. We have opened storage up to electric bikes and other things, including wheelchairs. I just wanted to share that with people.

Andrew Frankum

Thanks, Dave, that is really helpful.

Nigel Deacon

Yes, excellent. Great to hear examples of best practice, Dave.

Jan Taranczuk

Just to go back to our colleague from Ashford, my advice would be that they must have a fire risk assessor or fire engineer involved in the construction or planning of the site. My suggestion is to make sure that person is involved, because as David just talked about, you do not want someone opening a door and finding a fire, and you do not want smoke emerging from that store into the escape route. Whoever is providing fire advice for the building should be part of the discussion and able to sign off whatever the proposal is.

Joyce Hindley

Hi, I am Joyce Hindley from Bassetlaw and Mansfield District Council. I work as a health and safety professional, but I am also the wife of a mobility scooter user of the last 12 years.

I have three observations which are not really about fire safety, but I wanted to add them to the mix. One is external storage: batteries do not last as long in the cold. We personally store ours in an outhouse, but we have to heat it in the winter.

Secondly, thinking about internal access, someone mentioned a potential new block with stores next to each flat. Considering how people need to use a mobility scooter, in my experience with my husband there is an element of having to work around other things, backing in and negotiating doorways. Small spaces are not straightforward.

The other thing is charging overnight. I agree that charging overnight does not sound like a good idea, but it is what is in the guidance for mobility scooters, and when you talk to someone at a servicing place they will say the same thing, that scooters should be left on trickle charge. I am just adding that into the mix.

Andrew Frankum

Thanks, Joyce, I appreciate those insights.

Nigel Deacon

Thank you.

There is one point on the move towards safer battery technology such as lithium iron phosphate. Would you agree, Andy, that there is progress around this technology, but even some of these batteries are untested and have been known to lead to thermal runaway incidents? Of course, the big risk with all these things is all the products and batteries that are already out there and in use, gradually degrading. Would you comment on that?

Andrew Frankum

There are some real challenges. There have always been challenges with scooter storage. You have the fire safety elements on one side and the resident considerations on the other, from an independence and medical point of view. Everyone is different and will have different challenges. We are trying to come up with solutions that will enable safe storage.

Battery technology is moving all the time. Government wants to push it. We are talking about large energy storage systems being created, which pose different risks as well, certainly from a Fire and Rescue Service perspective, all the way through to the end user.

We have the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act and the new product safety regime developing. Government is in the process of creating secondary legislation to implement some of that, but it is not the complete answer. There are a lot of products on online marketplaces. You can go online and buy an unsafe charger or a battery that is not UKCA tested and has not gone through the same protocols. Some of them do not even have the right components in them to prevent fires from occurring in the first place.

There is a real challenge there. User requirements are developing, especially on the e-bike and e-scooter front, where people want to do things quicker and faster. These devices have taken off, especially with younger people. You can buy conversion kits for £100. To have it done professionally you are talking £600 or £700 for a proper conversion. There is a real challenge around cost. We are still in a cost of living crisis. All of these issues are in the mix.

I do not think standards have kept up, and I am not just talking about mobility scooter guidance. Standards have not kept pace with improvements in technology and government has not fully got a grip on that. As an industry we have to share, learn and recognise that one solution will not fit everything and that we will have to be flexible. I do not have all of the answers, but I hope that by raising awareness and trying to make the guidance as useful as possible, recognising it will not cover all circumstances, feedback will help us make it a better document for everyone.

Nigel Deacon

Yes, that is good. The controls on the sale of new equipment will certainly help, but I think there is still a big gap around what happens post-sale. Whether that is natural degradation of the battery, physical damage through normal use, or misuse and modification. A very typical scenario, as Joyce raised, is batteries failing due to cold weather and someone deciding they need a new battery, going online and buying one that for some reason is not compatible with the charger because it is not an original manufacturer component. That is a risk which could easily arise in any of our buildings.

There were some points about resources we can share around raising awareness. If you have things you are using and are happy to share links in the chat, I am sure that would be appreciated by everyone.

I am not sure we have time to cover all of the questions, but we will try to pick them up later.

Chris, do you want to come in?

Chris Adair

It was just a very quick question for Dave Black. Hi Dave, thanks for sharing that. I wanted to ask whether the Building Safety Regulator rejected your current installations or proposals within higher risk buildings and if that is why you moved to external storage. It was interesting what you set out.

Dave Black

Yes, basically it was something we were considering. We did a lot of community rooms and similar spaces in the past. We decided that anything we had done we would need to reassess properly and look at again. We got together and management decided that anything we did from 2024 onwards would be external. We would not look at anything internal; we would look at external storage.

There is a scheme I have just done where I have created two different areas in Bristol, in Gilton House. I have installed a double precast concrete garage. There were two garages that were falling down and had to be replaced. Normally the garages I do are double garages. I installed a garage with two sets of doors: a set of double doors, with a single 900 mm leaf and another smaller 400 mm leaf that can both be opened so you can get in easily. These are manual doors which we have suited.

I have then installed an automatic roller shutter, about five feet wide, the first time I have done an automatic roller shutter, which is remote controlled and has a key switch. We do not mark out the lines in the garage; we just use the space. I have put nine sockets in, spaced them out, with emergency lights, a smoke detector and a flashing beacon, and signed it with escape notices and so on.

Through metroSTOR we have installed three units outside a block of flats. The reason we did that is that we had a resident who said from day one that they could not walk to the garages. The units are six metres away from the building, but we did not put any electrics in them because they are on a staggered roof of some shops. We decided we could put storage there but we would not put any electrics in. She charges her scooter once a month. It is low use. We reassessed that and she stores the scooter outside in that shed and can get to it.

So it was just something we decided we were going to do. We would not create any new internal stores. One example was an old warden's office which had two external doors. I started to convert it but the entrance was blocked by scaffolding for cladding removal. We were still waiting on decisions and it dragged on for about two years, so that never got finished. We cleared it and painted it but walked away from it and abandoned it.

There are another couple of sites across the city where I had taken out tenant storage. We had cages in two rooms in two multi-storey blocks on the ground floor. We cleared the metal cages and painted those rooms but did not go as far as putting sockets in and again walked away from internal storage.

Andrew Frankum

Brilliant, thanks, Dave. I think what we will do is get you connected up after the session.

Just a last thank you to everyone for listening and for all the feedback and questions. They have been really positive and there is lots to take away. I will make sure those comments are reflected in the consultation when I meet with the National Fire Chiefs Council shortly.

If you are not a member of the Fire Safety in Housing Group, check out firesafetyandhousing.org.uk. It is free to sign up, so please carry on the conversation. If you have good practice to share, or you have been doing some fantastic work and want to share it with others, drop us an email at scooters@shfsg.info and we will try to join everyone up.

A massive thank you to Nigel as well for hosting the session today. Thanks, Nigel. Over to you.

Nigel Deacon

Thank you, Andy. I really appreciate what you have put into this and appreciate everybody's time for joining and for your contributions. Please keep the conversation going, give as much feedback as you can and share links to what you are doing, the best practice and the resources you are using. That is really valuable and really appreciated.

Thank you very much, everyone. Have a great day.

Andrew Frankum

Thanks, everyone. Have a good day.

Webinar Chat Summary

Participants raised questions about the availability of NFCC data on fires involving electric wheelchairs and sought clarification on the distinction between mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs in housing guidance. Several attendees asked whether examples of good practice would be shared, particularly regarding storage and charging arrangements in different housing types, including low-level blocks that may not fit the context of extra care or high-rise buildings.

There was considerable discussion around lithium-ion battery safety. Questions included whether more emphasis should be placed on safer battery chemistries such as LiFePO4, how best to manage manufacturer-determined battery choices, and whether government action is expected to restrict unsafe conversion kits. Attendees also requested updates on the Lithium-ion Battery Safety Bill and the Product Safety and Metrology Bill.

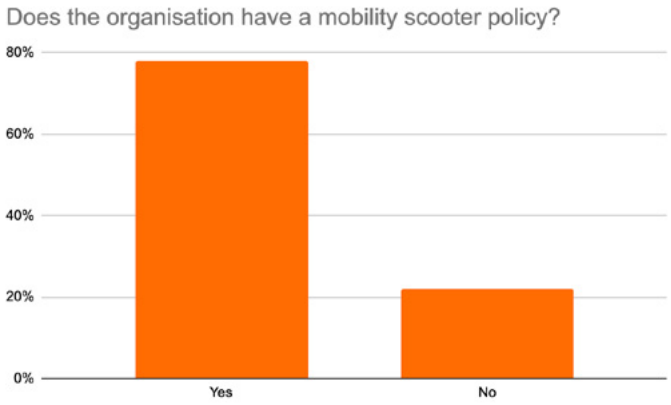
Fire suppression standards were queried, especially the suitability of domestic versus commercial sprinkler systems for scooter fires, and the practicality of installing suppression systems solely for external storage areas in buildings without existing sprinklers. Some participants also asked how landlords should manage and regulate tenants charging scooter batteries inside their flats.

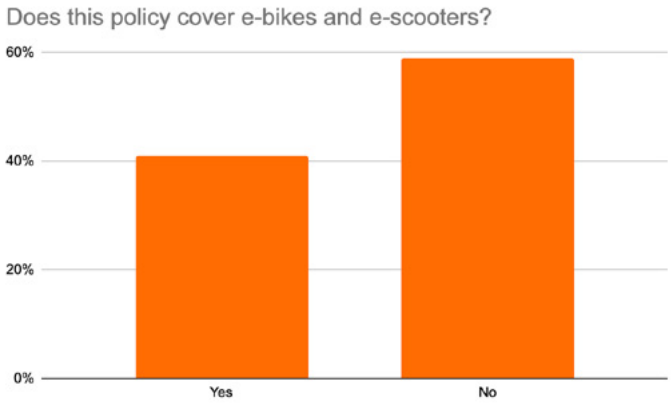
Several organisations reported challenges in gaining internal traction on lithium-ion battery safety and expressed interest in sharing approaches that have proven effective. Others asked for insights into experiences of lithium-ion or mobility scooter fires within building portfolios, including lessons learned. Concerns were also raised about smoke spread into escape routes, with reference to fire service videos demonstrating rapid smoke production.

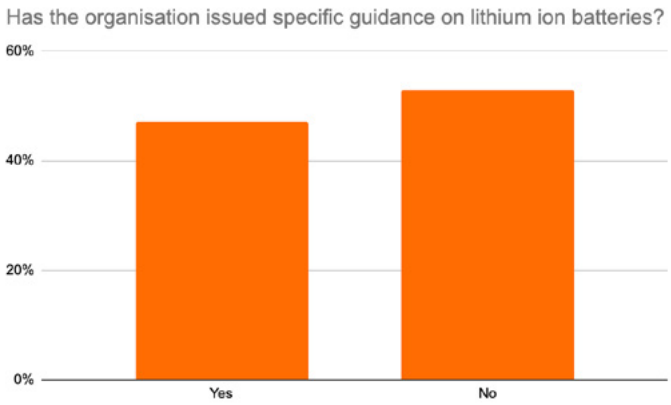
Questions were asked about the alignment of guidance across the UK, particularly whether the consultation applied to Scotland. Storage provision for mobility scooters was another recurring topic, including whether residents should seek permission for alterations or whether landlords should provide communal facilities.

Clarification was provided on submission routes for good practice examples, and it was confirmed that the NFCC consultation deadline had been extended to 15th December 2025.

Poll Results







Catch up on all our previous Webinars **here**

0800 102 6365
enquiries@metrostor.uk
metrostor.uk