

MV Freedom Policy - Booking Policy

As a registered charity it is important that activities carried out in the charity's name are consistent with the charity's aims and objectives. Trips undertaken by the vessel should reflect the nature and ethos of what the charity is seeking to achieve. The vessel's use should be transparent, and it must not be used for purposes that are not in support of our stated objectives. To be consistent and auditable all trips should follow an agreed booking and authorisation process.

All trips will be booked through a member of the Bookings Team, a small group of trained volunteers who will ensure that the criteria outlined in this policy statement is complied with. If there is any doubt, then the matter should be referred to the nominated Trustee.

Trips undertaken by MV Freedom should fall into one of the following categories.

1. The carriage of people with a physical disability, mobility issues or special needs. Freedom is specifically adapted for wheelchair users and therefore they would be seen as a priority for our services. This type of trip can include provision for the carriage of a small number of relatives and/or carers.
2. The carriage of elderly people who without Freedom's unique features would not be able to have access to sea trips. This would typically include the residents of care homes and day centres. This type of trip can include provision for the carriage of relatives or carers.
3. The carriage of individuals who appear to the charity to be deserving of its support and help. This type of individual could include, for example, young carers, close relatives of disabled individuals, young people in care, individuals who have faced severe hardship or disadvantage or individuals recuperating from or living with significant illness.
4. The carriage of outside bodies or organisations that have supported or sponsored the work of MV Freedom. This type of trip could include significant donors and would enable the charity to demonstrate how it has made use of the help and support such groups have given.

5. The support of other organisations that are providing community service. This could include supporting worthy causes and charitable events such as the Christmas Harbour swim.
6. To provide practical ongoing training trips for existing and new crew and to carry out sea trials on repairs and new equipment.

Requests for the use of Freedom that fall outside of these criteria may arise. These will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis with the Trustees input. The overriding principles to be applied in these cases should be that the request supports a worthy activity and that the vessel is not being used in lieu of another commercially available service.

Occasionally the charity is asked to scatter ashes. The default position should be that this falls outside of the remit of our constitution.

Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis if the deceased has had a significant connection with the charity or had been a frequent user of its services or if a close relative of the deceased is a wheelchair user or has mobility issues and there is no alternative accessible provision of this service locally. Careful consideration should be given to not directly competing with commercial operations that provide ashes scattering services.

The charity must protect its reputation and should not undertake trips that fall outside of these criteria and that could be conceived as a misuse of our charitable status.

Assistance Dogs

These are dogs who are an aid to provide additional support or assistance to a disabled person. Most assistance dogs are likely to be highly trained which means they are likely to sit or lie quietly on the floor next to their owner, unlikely to wander freely around the vessel and unlikely to foul onboard. They usually fall into one of these categories: Guide dog, Hearing dog, Medical Alert dog or Psychiatric dog. The term does not usually cover Therapy dogs or Emotional Support dogs who may not have such a high level of training.

Each request to take an Assistance Dog on board must be considered on an individual basis as advertised on our leaflets and website. At the point of enquiry the Booking Officer should ask whether the dog has been trained to a high standard and will be able to cope with the nature of the trip and passengers on board. For example, will it lie quietly and still next to the owner throughout the sail and not bark or whimper. It is not necessary or appropriate to highlight any particular disability which the dog may cause a problem to.

MV Freedom is equipped with three dog sized life jackets.

Allergies – at the point of enquiry the Booking Office should ask if the passengers have any allergies that we should know about and explain that there may be an assistance dog on board.

Mobility Scooters

MV Freedom is designed and equipped for the safe carriage of up to 6 wheelchair users i.e., someone who relies on their wheelchair for mobility.

A mobility scooter is designed as an aid for individuals who have difficulty walking because of an injury, physical disability or medical condition. There is but a short distance from the home berth / pontoon where MV Freedom is moored and access to the vessel is via a short ramp that is fully accessible to all ambulatory clients. The carriage of Mobility Scooters on MV Freedom would cause restrictions on deck space, may cause maneuverability problems which impact wheelchair users and become a hazard during any emergency drills.

MV Freedom should ideally not be used as a 'safe storage' option for clients who prefer not to leave their scooter on the pontoon. North Quay Marina is a secure area where access is limited to boat owners & operators, and guests. There is a storage area for bicycles and trolleys adjacent to MV Freedom's home berth and scooters can be safely stored there. This should be explained at the booking stage. Naturally, the

skipper of the day will make the final decision and may allow a small folding mobility scooter on board, if it is safe to do so.

Children - any child with a disability or who is a relative/close friend of a person with a disability can sail on the vessel if they are 5 years of age and over.

Bookings Policy - updated July 2026