DRONE OPERATIONS POLICY

This document can be made available , on request, in other formats such as larger print, audio-format, Braille and in other languages, as appropriate.

Adopted:	January 2025	Last Reviewed:	January 2026
Next Review Due:	January 2029		

1. Purpose

Oak Tree Housing Association (OTHA) recognises the potential of drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or UAVs) to enhance operations, including property inspections, maintenance assessments, and surveying. This policy establishes guidelines for the lawful and ethical use of drones, ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation and safeguarding privacy and safety.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all OTHA staff, contractors, and third-party providers engaged in drone operations on behalf of OTHA. It covers:

- Planning, operation, and data processing associated with drone use.
- Compliance with relevant laws and regulations.
- Safeguarding the privacy and safety of tenants, staff, and the public.

3. Legal Framework

Drone operations at OTHA must comply with the following legislation and regulations:

- **Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)**: Compliance with the UK's Air Navigation Order 2016 (as amended):
    - Operators must adhere to **CAP 722 (Unmanned Aircraft System Operations in UK Airspace)** guidelines.
    - Drones weighing over 250g must be registered with the CAA, and pilots must have a valid **Flyer ID**.
    - Operators must hold an **Operator ID** and ensure drones display the ID visibly.

- **The Data Protection Act 2018** and the **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**:
    - Ensure that the collection, storage, and use of video or photographic data comply with data protection laws.

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**:
    - Drones must be operated safely to avoid risks to health and safety.

- **The Human Rights Act 1998**:
    - Respect the right to privacy under Article 8.

- **The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002**:
    - Any records created by drones may be subject to FOI requests.

- **The Environmental Protection Act 1990**:
    - Compliance during environmental assessments or waste management activities.

4. Responsibilities

- **Management:**
    - Ensure compliance with this policy and relevant legislation.
    - Approve drone operations and select competent operators.
    - Conduct risk assessments for drone activities.
- **Drone Operators:**
    - Hold valid CAA registration and necessary certifications.
    - Follow safety protocols and obtain permissions for flights (e.g., landowner consent, CAA authorisations if required).
    - Report incidents to the CAA and OTHA management.
    - Follow CAA “The Drone and Model Aircraft Code”.

5. Procedures for Drone Use

5.1. Planning Drone Operations

- Obtain permission from tenants if drones operate near or over private property.
- Conduct a pre-flight risk assessment, including airspace restrictions and weather conditions.
- Notify local authorities (if required) before operations.
- Maintain safe operations within VLOS operating criteria.

5.2. Operational Requirements

- Fly below 120m (400ft) and maintain a line of sight.
- Avoid flights over congested areas without specific CAA permissions.
- Comply with restricted zones (e.g., near airports or schools).
- Maintain clearances of at least 50m from people, vehicles, and buildings not under OTHA’s control.

5.3. Data Protection

- Inform tenants and stakeholders about drone use through notices or letters.
- Minimise data collection to what is strictly necessary.
- Store data securely and delete it when no longer required.
- Use encrypted devices to transfer data where applicable.

5.4. Incident Reporting

- Report any accidents, near misses, or breaches of regulations to the CAA and OTHA management.
- Document all incidents in the OTHA incident log.

6. Third-Party Contractors

- Ensure contractors comply with this policy and provide proof of CAA registration, insurance, and training.
- Include drone operation standards in contracts.

7. Insurance

- Ensure drone operations are covered under OTHA's insurance policy.
- Contractors must provide proof of adequate liability insurance.

8. Training

- All operators must complete CAA-recognised training.
- Staff overseeing operations must understand risk assessment and data protection procedures.

9. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to changes in legislation or operational needs.
- Drone activities will be audited periodically to ensure compliance.

10. References

- **CAA Guidance**: www.caa.co.uk
- **ICO Guidance on Drones and Privacy**: www.ico.org.uk
- **Scottish Government Guidance on Drones**: [Insert Link]

End of Policy

This policy ensures Oak Tree Housing Association remains compliant with legal and ethical standards while leveraging drone technology to benefit tenants and operations.

This policy has been assessed with law, regulatory standards and good practice. This covers all relevant protected characteristics. The policy is therefore likely to have a positive effect in respect of equality issues.