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To: haveyoursay
Subject: Submission Form - Use of Drones Policy 2026

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Submission Form - Use of Drones Policy 2026

Full Name

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[REDACTED]

Your FEEDBACK

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to provide feedback regarding the proposed drone policy currently under review by the Waitomo District Council.

Reference: Waitomo District Council Drone Policy Review.

I have concerns that the proposed policy, in its current form, does not align with how the real estate and commercial media industries operate and may unintentionally make it extremely difficult for legitimate and qualified operators to carry out their work within the district.

I am a CAA-certified drone pilot operating under Part 101 and Part 102 frameworks, with over 17 years in business & 7 years of professional drone operator experience operating drones for commercial photography, videography, and real estate marketing. In all of my operations I work to the highest safety standards and strictly follow the rules and operational guidelines set by the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand.

The Civil Aviation Authority already provides a comprehensive regulatory framework governing drone operations in New Zealand. These rules require operators to take all practicable steps to minimise hazards to people, property and aircraft, maintain visual line of sight, operate below 100 metres, and obtain landowner consent when required.

While I fully support safe and responsible drone operation, the proposed policy appears to introduce additional restrictions that could effectively prevent commercial drone use in Te Kūiti, particularly for legitimate business purposes such as real estate marketing.

For example:

1. Aerodrome communication challenges

The policy requires operators within 4km of aerodromes or heliports to obtain permission from the aerodrome operator. While this aligns with aviation safety expectations, in practice it is often extremely difficult or near impossible to make contact with the aerodrome operator when operating in the area.

Professional operators already take appropriate precautions, including:

- Conducting shielded operations where possible
- Flying below surrounding structures or trees to remain clear of flight path
- Monitoring airspace through aviation tools
- Seeking coordination with the rescue helicopter where required
- Our drone's have a warning system of other manned & unmanned aircrafts, and will not fly if they are in the area.

The policy itself acknowledges that shielded operations are permitted under CAA rules when flying within 100m of a structure and below its height.

However, the additional administrative requirements proposed may unintentionally make compliant operation impractical.

2. Impact on the real estate industry

Drone photography is now a standard marketing tool used across New Zealand's real estate industry. Aerial imagery is critical to properly showcase:

property boundaries

surrounding landscape

neighbourhood context

proximity to amenities

the character of the town and district

Preventing or severely restricting drone use makes it significantly harder to present properties effectively and ultimately impacts the ability to market and sell homes within the district.

Real estate marketing plays an important role in promoting towns like Te Kūiti and attracting buyers, investment, and new residents. Drone imagery helps show the town and surrounding landscape at its best.

3. Limited use of council property

In most cases, drone operations for real estate do not involve flying over council property.

Occasionally, however, a property may border a park, road reserve, or other council land, and flying briefly across or above these areas is sometimes necessary to obtain the angle required to accurately represent the property being marketed.

These flights are typically:

brief

conducted at safe altitude

shielded where possible

compliant with CAA rules

undertaken by experienced, licensed operators

4. Need for a commercial exemption or streamlined approval

I strongly encourage the council to consider implementing a clear exemption or streamlined approval process for qualified commercial drone operators, particularly those working in industries such as:

real estate marketing

tourism promotion

commercial photography and videography

infrastructure documentation

Operators holding recognised qualifications and operating within CAA Part 101 & Part 102 frameworks should be able to continue working responsibly within the district.

This could include options such as:

pre-approved commercial operators

annual permits for licensed pilots

streamlined approvals for low-risk shielded operations

clearer communication pathways with aerodrome operators

Conclusion

Drone technology is now an important tool for modern business, marketing, and regional promotion. While safety and privacy must always be prioritised, the proposed policy risks creating barriers that prevent responsible professionals from doing legitimate work.

I respectfully ask that the council reconsider aspects of the proposed policy and work with

industry operators to create a balanced framework that:

maintains public safety

aligns with existing CAA aviation rules

allows qualified commercial operators to continue their work

Without these considerations, the policy may unintentionally result in drones being effectively unusable in Te Kūiti, which would negatively impact industries such as real estate marketing and local business promotion.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this proposal.

Kind Regards,

Christina Vandy

Submissions

I wish to speak to Council about my submission

No

I am not a robot