

Draft under review
Waitomo District Council

Drone Policy 2026

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Responsibility:	General Manager – Strategy and Environment
Adopted by:	Council

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INTRODUCTION | KUPU ARATAKI

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Rules require Council approval to be obtained prior to operating drones within 4km of Te Kuiti Aerodrome.

The Drone Policy (the Policy) also provides guidance to drone operators outlining when activities are permitted, or not, on land under the control or management of the Waitomo District Council.

The use of drones must comply with the Civil Aviation Rules regulating RPAS.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE | TE ARONGA ME TE KORAHĪ

1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance on the use of drones on or over Waitomo District Council (Council) property, facilities, and roads.
2. Due to the aerodrome and heliport in the District, additional CAA rules for flying in and around Te Kuiti, these rules are stated in the Policy and apply to public and private land.

This Policy applies to all aircraft that are subject to CAA Rule Part 101, both recreational and commercial operators. RPAS over 25kg have to be certified by the CAA.

DEFINITIONS | NGĀ WHAKAMĀRAMATANGA

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)	means an unmanned aircraft that is piloted from a remote station and: (1) includes a radio controlled model aircraft; but, (2) does not include a control line model aircraft or a free flight model aircraft.
Unmanned Aircraft (not a drone)	An aircraft designed to operate with no pilot on board and includes unmanned balloons, kites, control-line model aircraft, free flight model aircraft
Drone	Also known as Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and including Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) —They can be remotely piloted or fly autonomously.
Emergency Situation	An emergency situation is defined as a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action to avoid injury, loss of life or damage to property.
Shielded Operation	A shielded operation is a flight where your aircraft remains within 100 metres of, and below the top of, a natural or man-made object. For example, a building, tower, or trees. When flying as a shielded operation you are allowed to fly at night, or within controlled airspace without Air Traffic Control clearance, as other aircraft are unlikely to be flying so low and close to structures.

This Policy does not apply to Unmanned Aircraft, however Unmanned Aircraft are subject to the relevant CAA Rules Part 101. The Policy does not apply to Drones that are land or water based i.e. not aerial.

1. Permission to operate a drone

- 1.1. Council does not allow the use of drones in areas listed in sections 2, 3 and 4 ,unless prior permission has been obtained, subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) The operator must comply with Part 101 Rule or any other relevant CAA rules and regulations which apply to RPAS.
 - (b) Booked events on Council reserves and property take priority. The permission of the occupier, site manager and/or event organiser will be required.
 - (c) The operator must immediately cease use of the drone if requested by Council employees or contractors.
 - (d) The drone operator is responsible for any damage or claims caused by the use of the drone in relation to Council or other property.
 - (e) The use of a drone for the application of any product or chemical is prohibited, except for approved contractors.
 - (f) The operator is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Privacy Act 1993 and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner guidance on preserving people’s personal privacy.
- 1.2. Any breach of the above conditions could result in termination of the operator’s permission to use public land for the purpose of operating a RPAS and/or a report of any non-compliance with Part 101 Rule to the CAA.

2. Aerodromes and Heliports

- 2.1. **The Waitomo District is home to an aerodrome and heliport, the Te Kūiti Aerodrome and Te Kūiti Hospital helicopter landing pad. Within 4km of all aerodromes and heliports (see Schedule 1 for map), drone operators must:**
 - a) obtain permission from the aerodrome/heliport operator. If within an area of overlapping aerodromes/heliport, the operator must seek permission from both.
 - b) possess an appropriate pilot qualification or be under the direct supervision of someone who does.
 - c) never fly over a runway strip or aircraft maneuvering area.
- 2.2. The CAA rules allow flying within 4km of aerodromes/heliports if flying as a shielded operation. This means that a drone is flown within 100m of a natural or man-made object (e.g., trees or buildings) and below the top of it, to keep out of any flight paths.

3. Roads

- 3.1. If an operator wants to fly a drone over a Council road or road reserve, permission must be sought from the Roading Manager via the Drone Flight Form.

4. Prohibited Areas

- 4.1. Council does not allow the use of RPAS on or above the following Council properties:
 - a) WDC Queen Street Office

- b) Waitomo District Library
- c) WDC Customer Service Centre
- d) Te Kūiti Railway Building Complex and Plaza area
- e) Waitomo District Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants
- f) Waitomo District Landfill and all Transfer Stations
- g) Waitomo District Council Cemeteries
- h) Les Munro Centre and adjoining Centopath Memorial Garden
- i) Piopio Memorial Hall
- j) Redwood Flats Elder Persons Housing
- k) Menz Shed, Te Kūiti
- l) Waitomo District Aquatic Centre
- m) Waitomo District Pound
- n) Parks, playgrounds and recreation areas owned or administered by Waitomo District Council

4.2. This does not apply to the use of drone by Council or its employees, contractors or authorised persons.

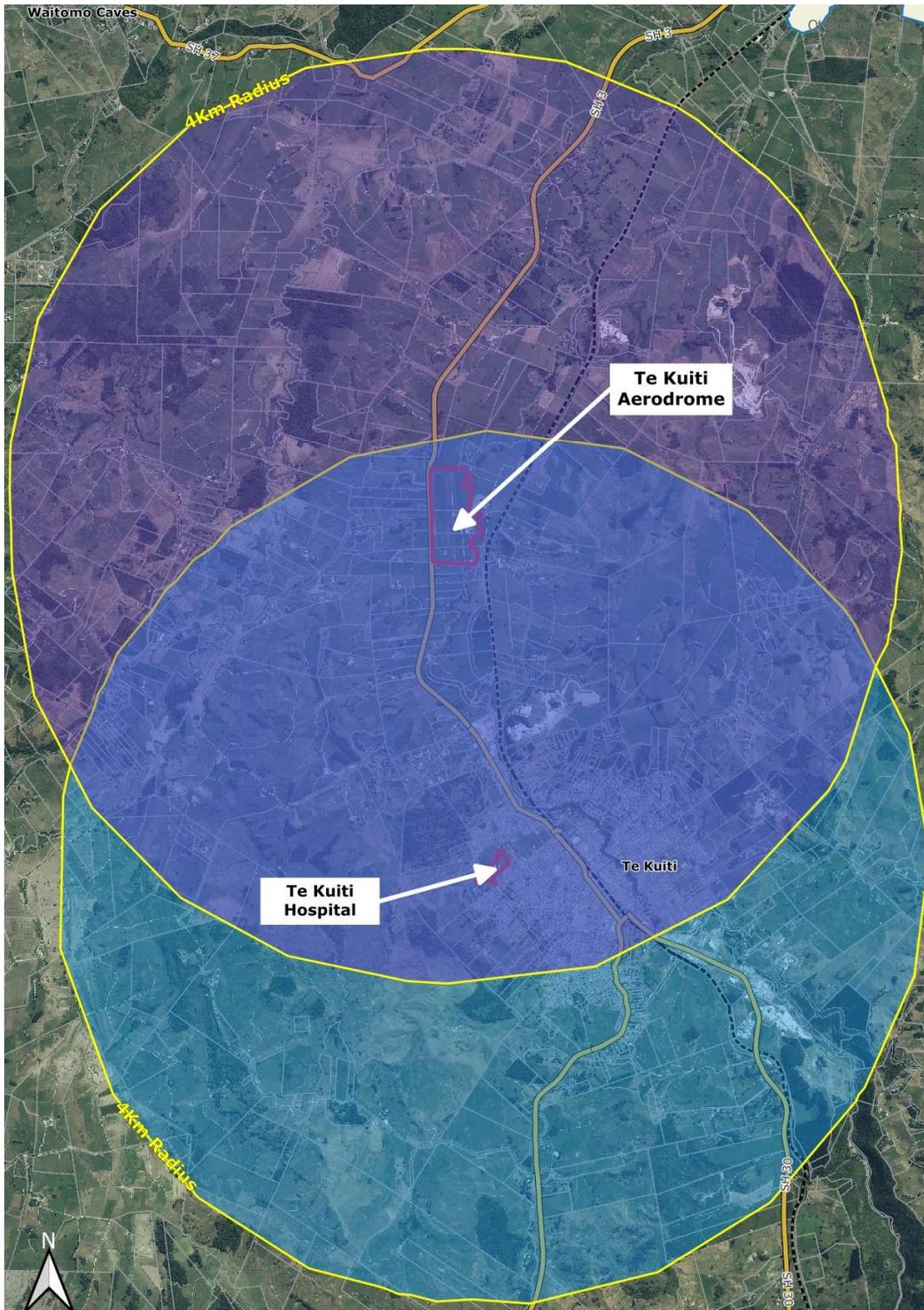
(note – has moved to section 1)

5. Police and Emergency Situations

- 5.1. There is no requirement for the New Zealand Police, Civil Defence, or Emergency Management officials to apply to the Council for permission to fly above Council property, including roads, during an emergency situation.
- 5.2. Other than drones used by the Civil Defence and Emergency Management officials, no approval is given to fly a drone over any Council property within 1 kilometre of an emergency situation which is being actively attended by emergency officials.

SCHEDULE 1 | WAHANGA 1

Map indicating 4km no-fly radius around the Te Kuiti Aerodrome and the Te Kūiti Hospital



Submission Form



Draft Drone Policy 2026

Submissions close 5pm 31 March 2026

Sub No.

For office use only

You can share your views by:

- Completing this submission form and returning it to us by:
 - Visiting our Customer Service & Visitor Hub on Rora Street, Te Kuiti
 - emailing it to: haveyoursay@waitomo.govt.nz (scan and pdf or take a photo)
 - Posting to: FREEPOST 112498, Waitomo District Council, PO Box 404, Te Kuiti 3941
- Visiting our website: waitomo.govt.nz/consultation and fill an online submission form

Full Name:	<input type="text"/>
Organisation: <i>(if responding on behalf of)</i>	<input type="text"/>
Phone: <i>(home/mobile)</i>	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>
Postcode:	<input type="text"/>
Email:	<input type="text"/>

The Local Government Act 2002 requires submissions to be made available to the public. Your name and/or organisation will be published with your submission and made available in a report to elected members and to the public. Other personal information supplied (such as address / email address) will be removed from the public copy.

I wish to speak to Council about my submission.

(Hearings are scheduled for 14 April 2026. We will contact you to arrange a time.)

Yes No

YOUR FEEDBACK

Please give us your feedback on the Draft Drone Policy 2026
