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Submission Form - Use of Drones Policy 2026

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Your FEEDBACK

I am writing on behalf of UAVNZ – the Commercial Drone Industry Association, a division of Aviation Industry Association New Zealand (AIANZ).

UAVNZ represents a broad cross-section of the commercial unmanned aircraft sector, including operators, service providers, and technology specialists working across industries such as infrastructure, surveying, agriculture, and emergency response. As an industry body, we are committed to supporting the safe, compliant, and effective integration of remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) into New Zealand’s aviation and regulatory environment.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this policy and commend Council for taking a proactive approach to managing drone operations within the district. The following comments are intended to support alignment with Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regulations, provide clarity for operators, and ensure the policy remains practical, consistent, and future-focused.

<https://www.uavnz.org/> <https://aianz.org.nz/>

While we would welcome the opportunity to speak to this submission in person, this may be challenging due to work commitments. However, we remain available to provide any further clarification or support to Council as needed.

Submission on Waitomo District Council Drone Policy – Alignment with Civil Aviation Rules

1. INTRODUCTION – First Paragraph (4 km approval)

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

Issue:

- This does not align with Civil Aviation Rules Part 101.207
- Approval is required from the aerodrome operator, rather than Council (We understand that in this situation, Council is the operator, though CAA requires approval from the aerodrome operator)

Recommendation:

Replace with:

Operators must comply with Civil Aviation Rules, including requirements for operations near aerodromes.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE – Clause 2 (“additional CAA rules”)

“Due to the aerodrome and heliport in the District, additional CAA rules for flying in and around Te Kuiti...”

Issue:

- Civil Aviation Rules are set at a national level and cannot be created or modified by Council
- There are no location-specific CAA rules established by Council

Recommendation:

Delete this sentence and replace with:

“Operations near aerodromes and heliports must comply with Civil Aviation Rules and any requirements of the aerodrome operator.”

3. PURPOSE AND SCOPE – Same Clause (public and private land

“...apply to public and private land.”

Issue:

- Council policy does not extend to regulating private land or airspace

Recommendation:

Replace with:

“This policy applies to drone operations on land and facilities managed or controlled by Waitomo District Council.”

4. PURPOSE AND SCOPE – Applicability statement

“This Policy applies to all aircraft that are subject to CAA Rule Part 101...”

Issue:

- Does not recognise operators certified under Part 102

Recommendation:

Replace with:

“This policy applies to remotely piloted aircraft operating under Civil Aviation Rules Part 101 or Part 102.”

5. DEFINITIONS – “Shielded Operation”

“A shielded operation is a flight where your aircraft remains within 100 metres...”

Issues:

- Not fully aligned with AC101-1
- Includes interpretation (e.g. night flying context)
- Introduces local interpretation of aviation guidance

Recommendation:

Replace entire definition with:

“Shielded operations are as defined in Civil Aviation Authority Advisory Circular AC101-1.”

6. DEFINITIONS – General issue

Definitions block overall

Issue:

- Several aviation terms are redefined within the policy
- This creates a risk of inconsistency with established CAA terminology

Recommendation:

Add an overarching statement:

“Aviation-related terms are as defined in Civil Aviation Rules Part 1 and Advisory Circular AC101-1.”

The definitions section also states:

“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.”

Issues:

The current wording appears internally inconsistent. Under Civil Aviation definitions, drones are a subset of unmanned aircraft. As written, the statement may unintentionally contradict the intended scope of the policy.

Recommendations:

“This policy applies to remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), commonly referred to as drones, as defined under Civil Aviation Rules.

This policy does not apply to non-aerial unmanned systems, such as ground-based or waterbased vehicles.”

7. POLICY 1.1(a) – Reference to Part 101 only

(a) The operator must comply with Part 101 Rule...

Issue:

- Does not include Part 102 certified operators

Recommendation:

Replace with:

“The operator must comply with Civil Aviation Rules Part 101 or operate under a Part 102 certificate.”

8. POLICY 1.1(c) – Council can stop operations

(c) The operator must immediately cease use of the drone if requested by Council employees or contractors.

Issue:

- May be interpreted as extending into aviation regulatory authority
- Would benefit from clarification as a land-use control

Recommendation:

Refine wording:

“Council may require drone operations to cease where they are being conducted on Councilcontrolled land and are causing safety, access, or operational concerns.”

9. POLICY 2.1 – Over-specification of rules

Full 2.1 list

Issue:

- Reproduces Civil Aviation Rules within the policy
- This may create risk of errors or future misalignment

Recommendation:

Simplify to:

“Operators must comply with Civil Aviation Rules when operating near aerodromes and heliports, including obtaining any required approvals.”

10. POLICY 2.2 – Shielded operation explanation

“This means that a drone is flown within 100m...”

Issue:

- Reinterprets AC101-1 guidance
- May become outdated over time

Recommendation:

Replace with:

“Shielded operations are permitted in accordance with Civil Aviation Authority rules and guidance.”

11. POLICY 3 – Roads (permission requirement)

“permission must be sought...”

Issue:

- This is appropriate as a land-use control
- However, the distinction from airspace regulation could be clearer

Recommendation:

Add clarification:

“This requirement relates to the use of Council-controlled road corridors and does not replace Civil Aviation Rules.”

12. POLICY 4.1(n) – Blanket ban on parks

“Parks, playgrounds and recreation areas...”

Issue:

- This may result in a near-total restriction on recreational drone use
- Not aligned with a risk-based approach
- May be challenging to enforce consistently

Recommendation:

Replace with a controlled-use approach:

“Drone use in parks and recreational areas may be permitted subject to conditions or approval...”

13. POLICY – Missing Part 102 recognition (global issue)

Entire document

Issue:

- No recognition of certified operators or advanced operational approvals

Recommendation:

Add clause:

“Operators holding a Part 102 certificate may operate in accordance with their approved exposition, subject to any Council land access requirements.”

14. Missing Jurisdiction Statement (CRITICAL GAP)

Introduction / Scope

Issue:

- The boundary between CAA authority and Council authority is not clearly stated

Recommendation:

Add:

“This policy does not regulate airspace or aviation safety, which is governed by the Civil Aviation Authority.”

15. Maps (Schedule 1)

Issue:

- Static maps may become outdated
- Potential to create reliance on superseded information

Recommendation:

Replace or supplement with:

“Operators should consult Airshare / Flight Advisor and VNC for current airspace information.”

Future-Proofing the Policy (CAA Definitions and Rule Changes)

The policy indicates the next review is scheduled for 2029. Given the pace at which the Civil Aviation Authority updates rules, advisory circulars, and guidance material, it is likely that elements of Part 101, Part 102, or AC101-1 may change within this period.

The current approach of restating or redefining CAA terminology (for example, “shielded operations”) and operational requirements introduces a risk that the policy may become outdated or inconsistent prior to the next review. This may create uncertainty for operators and increase legal and operational risk.

Best practice is for local authority policies to reference Civil Aviation Rules and associated guidance rather than restating them. This approach helps to ensure that:

- The policy remains aligned with national regulations over time
- Updates to CAA rules are automatically reflected
- The risk of misinterpretation or inconsistency is reduced

Recommendation:

Replace duplicated or reworded definitions and rule interpretations with direct references, for example:

- “As defined in Civil Aviation Rules and Advisory Circular AC101-1”
- “Operators must comply with Civil Aviation Rules Part 101 or Part 102”

This approach will support a more robust, clear, and future-resilient policy framework through to the next review cycle.

END

Submissions

I wish to speak to Council about my submission

No

I am not a robot