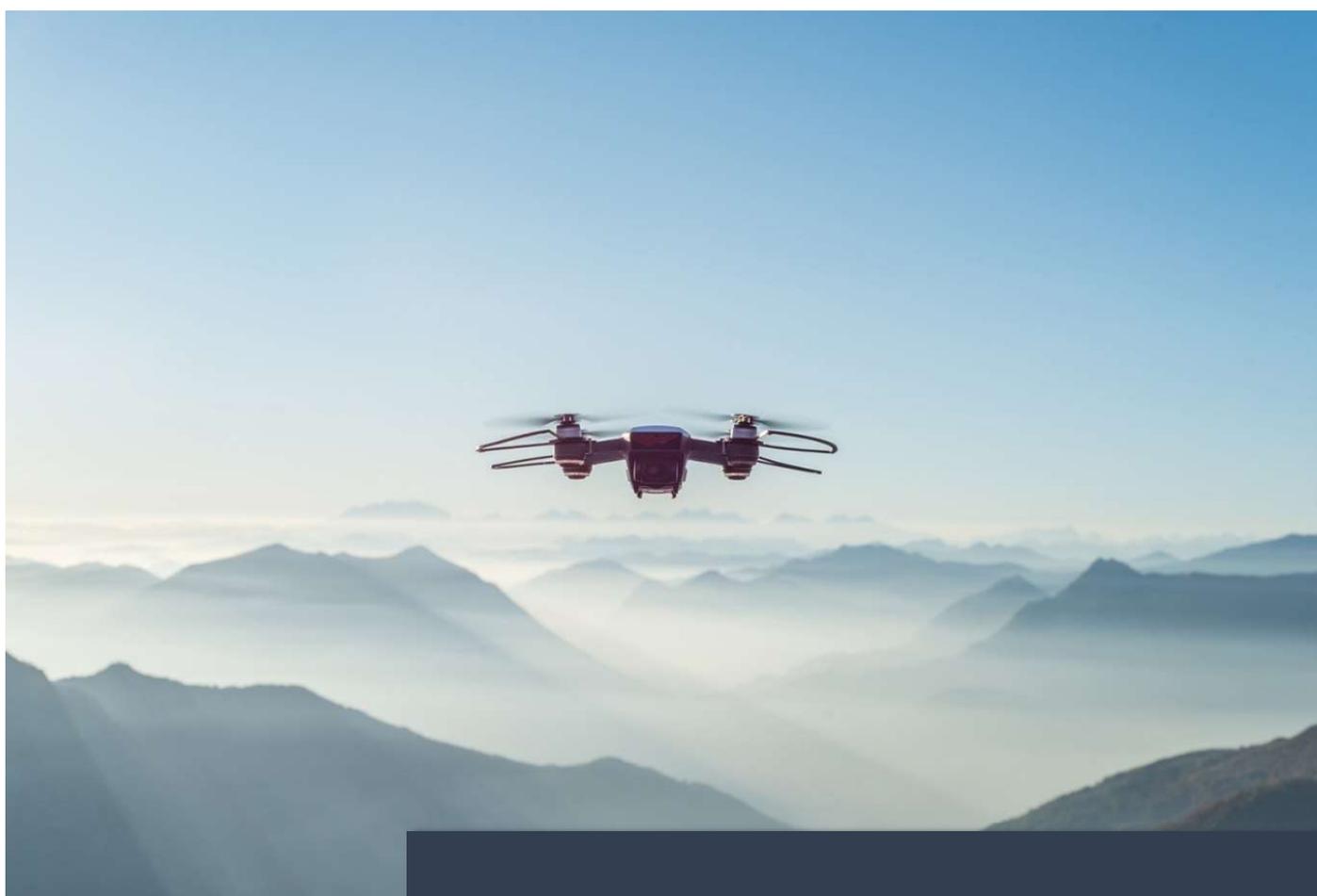


STATEMENT OF PROPOSAL

Review of Drone Policy 2026

Waitomo District Council



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PURPOSE

Waitomo District Council's (Council) vision for our District is "***Te hanga tahi o tātou Takiwa - Shaping our District together***". Council policies support this vision and the community outcomes.

The purpose of the Drone Policy is to:

- Provide guidance on the use of drones on or over Council property, facilities and roads; and
- State the rules for flying in proximity to our aerodrome.

BACKGROUND

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is the government agency responsible for aircraft safety and regulation. Anyone flying a drone must follow the relevant CAA rules.

The CAA Rules state that approval must be obtained from a property owner prior to flying a drone over someone else's land.

As a landowner, Council uses the Policy to set out the rules for operators when flying over Council owned or controlled land. The Policy applies to all aircraft that are subject to CAA Rule Part 101, both recreational and commercial operators.

Please note this Policy is applicable for Council administered land. The CAA rules cover the use of drones over public and private property.

REASON FOR PROPOSAL

The Policy was first adopted in 2016 and was last reviewed in 2023. Council reviews the Policy every three years.

This scheduled review has provided the opportunity to set out the criteria in addition to the CAA rules, to the use of drones over land or property owned or controlled by the Council.

Council wants your feedback on the changes proposed to this policy.

KEY DATES

WHEN	WHAT
26 February 2026	Submissions open
31 March 2026	Submissions close
14 April 2026	Hearings (should people wish to speak to their submissions) and Deliberations (Council discusses feedback from the community and changes are agreed to if appropriate)
28 April 2026	Council adopts the final Policy

This Statement of Proposal has been prepared to fulfil the requirements of sections 83 and 87 of the Local Government Act 2002.

WHAT WE'RE PROPOSING

Council has reviewed and updated its existing Drones Policy and is seeking your views.

This is a proposal to adopt the Waitomo District Council Drone Policy 2026 and revoke and replace the Use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (Drones) Policy 2023.

Summary of Key changes

The following key changes have been made to provide more clarity and make the policy more user friendly.

- Updated the permitted descriptions to provide more clarity.
- Updated the prohibited areas to include parks and recreational spaces for public safety and privacy reasons.
- Updated the criteria to allow the use of drones.
- Due to there being an aerodrome and heliport in the District, the Policy states additional rules for flying in proximity to aerodromes and heliports.
- Updated the map to show both restricted airspaces in Te Kuiti.
- Minor editorial changes throughout to improve readability and accuracy.

Draft under review

Waitomo District Council

**~~Use of Remotely Piloted
Aircraft Systems (Drones)~~
Policy 2026**

First Adopted:	October 2016
Review History:	May 2023 May 2026
Date of Next Review:	May 2026 May 2029
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 Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) or drones over Council land within 4km of Te Kuiti Aerodrome.

The Use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (Drones) Policy (the Policy) also provides guidance to RPAS users or 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.

~~is policy relates to Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) as defined in Part 101—Rules of the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand and which weigh less than 25kg.~~

PURPOSE AND SCOPE | TE ARONGA ME TE KORAHĪ

1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance on the use of RPAS 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.~~
- ~~3.2. —~~

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)

~~An~~ means an unmanned aircraft that is piloted from a remote station and: (1) includes a radio controlled model aircraft; but, ~~(1)(2)~~ but 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 ~~and remotely piloted aircraft.~~

Drones

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.

POLICY | KAUPAPA HERE

1. Permission to operate a drone

Permitted Areas

- 1.1. Council does not allow the use of RPAS drones in areas except those listed in sections 2, 3 and 4 on or above Council parks and reserves, 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 RPAS drone if requested by Council employees or contractors.
 - (d) The RPAS 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 RPAS 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. Operators of RPAS must not fly them within a four-kilometre radius of an aerodrome boundary (even if that radius includes uncontrolled airspace). See Schedule 1 for map.~~
- 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.
- ~~1.2. Part 61 Pilot Licences are exempted from this, as are operators who have received a "Wings" badge from MFNZ, or are accompanied by someone who has. Operators under these~~

~~categories still need prior authorisation from the aerodrome operator to fly within the four kilometre zone however they must not fly their model over any active runway strip, or any area where aircraft taxi. Control line aircraft must also remain clear of such areas.~~

3. Roads

- 3.1. ~~This policy does not apply to Council roads or road reserve. If an operator wants to fly a RPAS drone over a Council road or road reserve, a Corridor Access request (CAR) must be applied for and approved. 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) ~~Te Kūiti i Site Visitor Information~~ 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 ~~Rural~~ all Transfer Stations
 - g) Waitomo District Council Cemeteries
 - h) Les Munro Centre and adjoining Centopath Memorial Garden
 - i) Piopio Memorial Hall
 - j) Redwood ~~Park Housing Complex~~ Flats Elder Persons Housing
 - k) Menz Shed, Te Kūiti
 - l) ~~Te Kūiti Campground~~
 - 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 ~~RPAS drone by Council or its staff~~ employees, contractors or authorised persons ~~for the purpose of promotional filming and property or emergency management in those areas.~~

2. Permitted Areas (note – has moved to section 1)

- ~~2.1. Council allows the use of RPAS on or above parks and reserves, subject to the following conditions:~~
- ~~(a) The operator must comply with Part 101 Rule or such other CAA rules and regulations which apply to RPAS, in particular the requirement to obtain permission of people before flying the RPA over them.~~
 - ~~(b) Booked events on Council reserves and property take priority. The permission of the occupier, site manager and/or event organizer will be required.~~
 - ~~(c) The operator must immediately cease use of the RPAS if requested by a member of Council staff or its contractor.~~
 - ~~(d) The RPAS 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 RPAS for the application of any product or chemical is prohibited.~~

~~(f)–The operator is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner guidance on preserving people’s personal privacy and the Privacy Act 1993.~~

~~2.2. 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.~~

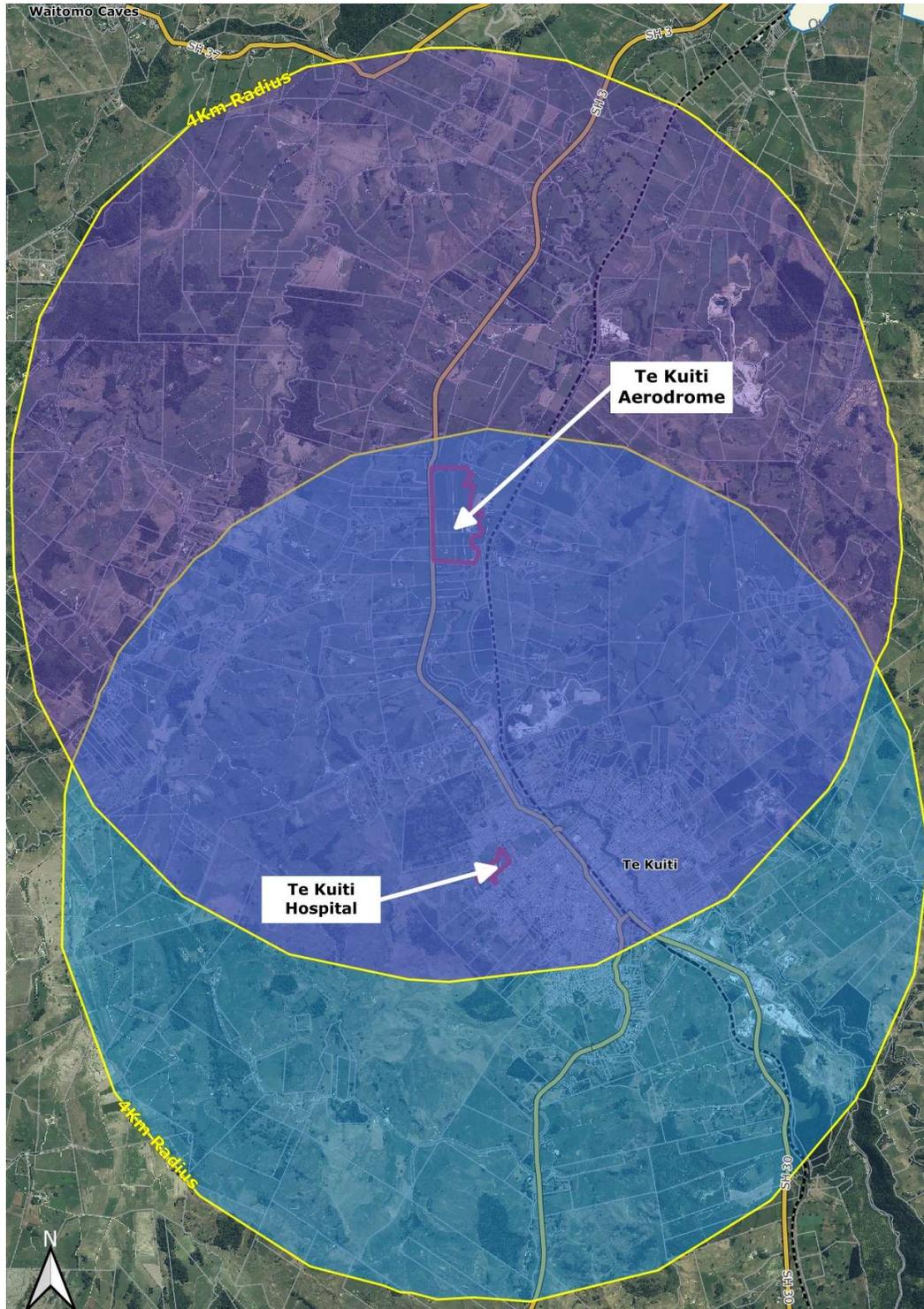
5. Police and Emergency Situations

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 RPAS-drones used by the Civil Defence and Emergency Management officials, no approval is given to fly a RPAS-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. Yes No
(Hearings are scheduled for 14 April 2026. We will contact you to arrange a time.)

YOUR FEEDBACK

Please give us your feedback on the Draft Drone Policy 2026
