

# **Waitomo District Council**

## **Drone Policy 2026**

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## INTRODUCTION | KUPU ARATAKI

A drone is classified as an unmanned aircraft or a remotely piloted aircraft, meaning it can pose risks to people, property, and other airspace users. The Civil Aviation Authority New Zealand (CAA) regulates civil aviation in New Zealand. Drone flyers must comply with CAA rules at all times to keep themselves and others safe.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE | TE ARONGA ME TE KORAHĪ

1. The purpose of the Drone Policy (the Policy) is to provide guidance on the use of drones on or over Waitomo District Council (WDC) property, facilities, and roads.
2. This Policy applies to drone operations on land and facilities managed or controlled by WDC.
3. This Policy applies to remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS), commonly referred to as drones, operating under CAA Rules Part101 or Part102.
4. This Policy does not regulate airspace or aviation safety governed by the Civil Aviation Authority.

## DEFINITIONS | NGĀ WHAKAMĀRAMATANGA

Aviation related terms are as defined in Civil Aviation Rules Part 1, Definitions and Abbreviations and Advisory Circular AC 101-1.

<b>Remotely piloted aircraft (RPA)</b>	An unmanned aircraft that is piloted from a remote station and: (1) includes radio-controlled model aircraft, but (2) does not include control line model aircraft or a free flight model aircraft.
<b>Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)</b>	A remotely piloted aircraft and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• its associated remote pilot station or stations, the required command and control links, and</li><li>• any other components required to operate the system.</li></ul>
<b>Unmanned Aircraft</b>	An aircraft designed to operate with no pilot on board and includes unmanned balloons, control-line model aircraft, free flight model aircraft and remotely piloted aircraft.
<b>Drone</b>	Also known as unmanned aircraft or remotely piloted aircraft (RPA)
<b>Emergency Situation</b>	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.
<b>Shielded Operation</b>	An operation of a remotely piloted aircraft within 100 metres horizontally of a natural or man-made object, and no more than 33 feet (10m) above the top of the object.
<b>Waitomo District Council (WDC)</b>	shall mean the organisation established to administer Council affairs, conduct operations, and bring effect to Council policy and strategies.
<b>Council</b>	shall mean the elected members that form the governing body of the Waitomo District Council.

## Guidance notes

- This Policy does not apply to any other unmanned aircraft (such as kites and balloons) other than drones.
- This Policy does not apply to drones that are non-aerial (such as ground or water based).
- Contact details for aerodrome operators and air traffic control units (ATC), as well as for other airspace, are available on websites such as AirShare - <https://www.airshare.co.nz/> or Flight Advisor - <https://flightadvisornz.io/>
- It is important to note that civil aviation rules do not overrule any local government policies or bylaws regarding use of RPAS or other policies on the use of public land, as per the Civil Aviation Authority, Advisory Circular AC101-1.
- To fly drones on or over WDC property (owned or managed by the WDC), prior authorisation from the WDC is required.
- Any inquiries about privacy may be sent to the Official Information and Privacy Advisor, email: [oiia@caa.govt.nz](mailto:oiia@caa.govt.nz).

## POLICY | KAUPAPA HERE

The fundamental principle of the Policy is that the drone flyers are responsible for flying safely and legally. This means understanding the CAA rules before take-off and making sensible decisions about when and where to fly.

When flying a drone, operators need to follow the CAA Part101 rules. If operators are not able to follow the rules outlined in Part101, they must apply for a CAA Part102 certification.

Council is not responsible for setting or monitoring CAA rules. These rules may change from time to time. For the latest updates, check the Civil Aviation Authority website - <https://www.aviation.govt.nz/>

### 1. CAA Rules

- 1.1 Key CAA rules below do not substitute a full reading of the rules, anyone wanting to operate a drone should ensure that they understand the rules that are relevant to their operation type:
  - a) Drones must not exceed 25kg and should be well-maintained (and ensure any additional requirements are followed for those aircraft between 15 and 25kg).
  - b) Don't fly higher than 120m above the ground.
  - c) Don't fly over people unless you have their permission.
  - d) Don't fly over properties such as farms or houses unless you have permission from the owner.
  - e) Always keep your drone in sight and fly only during daylight.
  - f) Give way to all manned aircraft.
  - g) Always stay 4km away from aerodromes and helipads.
  - h) Don't fly within controlled airspace without prior authorisation or doing a shielded operation.
- 1.2 Not following CAA rules can result in a fine or prosecution being issued by CAA under the Civil Aviation Act 2023.
- 1.3 Logging the drone flight in AirShare or Flight Advisor is preferred as this will help identify controlled airspace and flight exclusion zones.

## **2. Council Rules - Permission to operate a drone**

- 2.1 In addition to civil aviation rules, the following conditions need to be met when flying over WDC owned or administered land:
- (a) The operator must comply with Civil Aviation Rules Part101 or operate under a Part102 certificate.
  - (b) Booked events on WDC reserves and property take priority. The permission of the occupier, site manager and/or event organiser will be required.
  - (c) Any commercial or private use of drones must have prior approval from WDC (refer to clause 6 application process).
  - (d) WDC may require drone operations to cease where they are being conducted on WDC controlled land and are causing safety, access or operational concerns.
  - (e) The drone operator is responsible for any damage or claims caused by the use of the drone in relation to WDC or other property.
  - (f) The use of a drone for the application of any product or chemical is prohibited, except for approved contractors.
  - (g) The operator is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Privacy Act 2020 and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner guidance on preserving people's personal privacy.

## **3. Controlled airspace - Aerodromes and Heliports**

- 3.1 CAA rules have strict requirements for operating drones near airports and heliports. The Waitomo District is home to an aerodrome and heliport, the Te Kūiti Aerodrome and Te Kūiti Hospital helicopter landing pad.
- a) To fly a drone in a controlled airspace, operators must either gain prior authorisation from the aerodrome/heliport operator or fly the drone using a shielded operation.
  - b) If flying an "unshielded operation" within 4km of any airport or helipad, operators will also need to hold an approved qualification (or to be accompanied by someone who does).
  - c) never fly over a runway strip or aircraft maneuvering area.
  - d) land the drone if other aircraft are operating in the area.
- 3.2 Shielded operations are permitted in accordance with CAA rules and guidance.

## **4. Permitted Areas**

- 4.1 If an operator wants to fly a drone over a WDC controlled road or road reserve, permission must be sought via the Drone Flight Form, refer to clause 6 for the application process.
- 4.2 Drone use in parks and recreational areas may be permitted subject to WDC's approval, refer to clause 6 for the application process.

## **5. Prohibited Areas**

- 5.1 Council does not allow the use of drones on or above the following WDC 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 Landfill and all Transfer Stations
- f) Waitomo District Council Cemeteries
- g) Les Munro Centre and adjoining Centopath Memorial Garden
- h) Piopio Memorial Hall
- i) Redwood Flats Elder Persons Housing
- j) Menz Shed, Te Kūiti
- k) Waitomo District Aquatic Centre
- l) Waitomo District Pound
- m) Playgrounds owned or administered by Waitomo District Council

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

*(note – has moved to section 2)*

## 6. Application Process

- 6.1 Approval for flying a drone over WDC properties can be gained either by completing the online form available on WDC’s website (Drone Flight Form) or by emailing the Property Department – [info@waitomo.govt.nz](mailto:info@waitomo.govt.nz).
- 6.2 Drone operators holding recognised qualifications and operating within CAA Part101 and Part102 Rules can apply for ‘Annual Permit’ to be granted by completing the Drone Flight Form available on WDC’s website – [www.waitomo.govt.nz](http://www.waitomo.govt.nz)
- 6.3 Processing time for applications is between 3 to 5 working days.

### Guidance notes

- All flights should be logged for air traffic safety; this can be done online or by downloading an app from websites such as AirShare - <https://www.airshare.co.nz/> or Flight Advisor <https://flightadvisornz.io>.
- For singular flights our property team can log the flight for you once permission is granted.

## 7. Police and Emergency Situations

- 7.1 There is no requirement for the New Zealand Police, Civil Defence, or Emergency Management officials to apply to the WDC for permission to fly above WDC property, including roads, during an emergency situation.
- 7.2 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

