

Parks and Reserves Policy

Adopted: 30 June 2022
Amended: 20 February 2025

Background

The Council owns a significant number of parks and reserves that provide cultural, historical, recreation, leisure, environmental, accessibility and amenity need for residents and visitors to the Far North region.

This policy will guide the Council and the public on decision making matters relating to the control and management of parks and reserves and ensure that the Council fulfils its obligations to address the cultural, social and physical wellbeing of residents and visitors to the region by providing space for recreation, both passive and active, and maintaining and enhancing significant historic, scenic, natural and scientific values.

The Council will adopt the provisions of this policy when it prepares other policies, strategies and plans, or specific developments that affect parks and reserves.

This policy replaces the former Reserves Policy 2017 and has been produced following a robust consultative process.

Application

This policy applies to all parks and reserves that are owned by the Council, or where the administration, control or management of the park or reserve is vested in the Council.

The Council has other policies and bylaws that addresses specific infrastructure and operations located on parks and reserve land such as, town halls, community centres, cemeteries, Council offices, town centres, elderly pensioner housing, and camping grounds. This policy complements those specific policies.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Policy:

- **Acquisition** – means obtaining land by purchasing, vestment on subdivision, gifting, or endowment.
- **Council** – means the Far North District Council.
- **Landlocked Land** – has the same meaning as in section 326 of the Property Law Act 2007.
- **Multiuse Facility** – means a structure that is subject to a lease or licence agreement that will be used by more than one entity.
- **Network Utility Operator** – has the same meaning as in section 166 of the Resource Management Act 1991.
- **Park** – has the same meaning as in Section 138 Local Government Act 2002

Related information

As at 13 July 2021, the definition is: “land acquired or used principally for community, recreational, environmental, cultural, or spiritual purposes; but does not include land that is held as a reserve, or part of a reserve, under the [Reserves Act 1977](#).”

- **Policy** – means the Council’s adopted Parks and Reserves Policy.
- **Reasonable Access** – has the same meaning as in section 326 of the Property Law Act 2007.

- **Reserve** – means any land set apart for any public purpose as defined within the Reserves Act 1977.

Related information

As at 28 October 2021, the definition is: “**reserve** or **public reserve**, except as hereinafter provided in this definition, means any land set apart for any public purpose; and includes—

(a) any land which immediately before the commencement of this Act was a public reserve within the meaning of the Reserves and Domains Act 1953:

(b) any land vested in the Crown which after the commencement of this Act is reserved or set apart under [Part 12](#) of the Land Act 1948 or other lawful authority as a reserve, or alienated from the Crown for the purpose of a reserve:

(c) any land which after the commencement of this Act is vested in the Crown by or under the authority of any Act as a reserve:

(d) any land which after the commencement of this Act is taken, purchased, or otherwise acquired in any manner whatever by the Crown as a reserve or in trust for any particular purpose:

(e) any land acquired after the commencement of this Act in any manner by an administering body as a reserve within the meaning of this Act, and any land vested in any local authority which, not theretofore being a public reserve, is by resolution of the local authority pursuant to [section 14](#) declared to be set apart as a reserve:

(f) any private land set apart as a reserve in accordance with the provisions of any Act:

(g) any land which immediately before the commencement of this Act was a domain or public domain within the meaning of the Reserves and Domains Act 1953:

(h) any land, other than a national park within the meaning of the [National Parks Act 1980](#), administered under the [Tourist and Health Resorts Control Act 1908](#):

(i) any land taken or otherwise acquired or set apart by the Crown under the [Public Works Act 1981](#) or any corresponding former Act, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, for the purposes of a reserve, a recreation ground, a pleasure ground, an agricultural showground, or a tourist and health resort:

but does not include—

(j) any land taken or otherwise acquired or set apart under the [Public Works Act 1981](#) or any corresponding former Act, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, for any purpose not specified in paragraph (i):

(k) any land to which [section 167\(4\)](#) of the Land Act 1948 applies:

(l) any land taken, purchased, or otherwise in any manner acquired, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, by a local authority, unless the land is acquired subject to a trust or a condition that it shall be held by the local authority as a reserve:

(m) any Māori reservation”

- **Structure** – means any built physical feature placed on, in, or under the park or reserve.

Legislative Context

Parks and reserves are subject to various legislative controls that provide a framework for management, operation and potential divestment of these lands, including but not limited to; Local Government Act 2002; Reserves Act 1977; Resource Management Act 1991 and Public Works Act 1981.

Objective

To provide guidance to the Council and staff for the operation and management of parks and reserves that will:

- provide for the needs and desires of current and future residents of the Far North District
- ensure that the Council’s strategic planning and investment decisions are well-informed

- ensure the Council applies consistent and transparent decision-making for parks and reserves
- ensure the Council delivers a high-quality parks and reserves network that:
 - is well distributed and well connected to service communities and catchments;
 - is functional and designed to support the community’s sport, recreation, and physical activity needs;
 - protects, maintains, and enhances ecosystems, culture, and heritage values; and
 - provides connectivity between public spaces.

Section 1 – Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi

Policies

1. The Council will follow the principles and requirements in parts 2 and 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 for local authorities to facilitate participation by Maori in local authority decision making relating to parks and reserves.
2. The Council will give effect to Iwi Hapū Management Plans and general partnership principles when conducting operational and strategic decision making for all matters relating to parks and reserves.
3. The Council will have consideration to the cultural significance of parks and reserves land – mana whenua iwi worldview and cultural impact assessments when preparing reserve management plans and making strategic decisions that may affect these lands.

Section 2 – Easements

The Council will from time to time receive requests from adjoining landowners, Network Utility Operators and unrelated third parties for access or for the provision of services through or over parks and reserves and will apply this policy to make decisions in relation to the granting of easements.

Policies

- The Council will at its sole discretion and in line with Section 48 of the Reserves Act 1977 determine whether an easement application over park or reserve land is to be advanced.
- The Council will not grant an easement if the applicant has another reasonable land based practicable alternative option that does not involve the park or reserve.
- If an easement through, on or over the park or reserve is the only reasonable land based practicable option, and the Council agrees to grant the right of an easement, then the route of the easement must be designed to minimise the impact on the land and the public’s enjoyment of that land.
- The Council will consider at its sole discretion the granting of easements over a park or reserve if this is the only means of unlocking access to physically or legally landlocked land.
- The Council will consult with the Domain Board or Reserve Management Committee (if applicable) and local Community Board before an easement application is presented to Council for consideration.
- The Council will require an agreement to grant easement to be entered with the applicant, conditional upon Council approval that outlines the process and parties responsibilities, including costs, and full detailed design of any services and structures to be installed within the easement area before the processing of the easement commences. The agreement will require an advance bond payment of an agreed sum to cover all costs as listed in Schedule 1.

- All approved easement applications over parks or reserve land will be charged the full current market valuation for the easement right(s) as a one-off easement fee as per the conditions in Schedule 1.
- The Council's staff or assigned consultants will project manage the easement legalisation process.

Section 3 – Acquisitions, Disposal and Land Exchange

The Council will from time to time make decisions to acquire, dispose of and exchange parks and reserves land. The Council is from time to time presented with land exchange opportunities that involve the exchange of part or all a park or reserve for non-park or reserve land.

Policies

1. The Council will make decisions in relation to the acquisition, disposal and land exchanges of parks and reserves in accordance with the requirements set out in Schedule 2 of the policy.
2. The Council will not sell a park or reserve if the land fulfils its purpose, classification, meets the objectives of Council's policies, strategies and plans, provides connectivity, or will disadvantage the public.
3. The Council will consider the processes and matters set out in Schedule 2 before it decides whether the sale, disposal, or exchange of part or all of the park or reserve is to be advanced.

Note:- The final decision on the revocation of a reserve status rests with the Minister of Conservation. If the Minister of Conservation declines the request for revocation then the sale process ceases.

Section 4 – Connectivity

Policies

1. The Council will actively seek to acquire land that creates connectivity between public spaces and provides significant public benefit.
2. The Council will acquire or engage developers to vest land or funds to provide connectivity to and between parks, reserves, waterways, subdivisions, nature areas, neighbourhoods and communities to create better spaces and corridors for walking, cycling and passive recreation.

Section 5 – Structures

There are often competing demands for park and reserve space including requests to establish structures and facilities. The Council will ensure that parks and reserves, open land areas and the character of the space will not be diminished through the establishment of inappropriate development.

Policy

1. The Council will at its sole discretion approve or decline applications for the establishment of any and all structures, including for single purpose user groups, and encourage where there is a demand to accommodate multiple complimentary user groups the establishment of single building or structure with multi-use facilities on parks and reserves based on the criteria set out in Schedule 3.

Section 6 – Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees

From time to time the Council will transfer the day-to-day management of specific reserves to Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees.

Policies

1. Council will support existing Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees and will facilitate the establishment of new Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees.
2. Domain Boards and Reserve Committees are to undertake the management of specific reserves as set out in Schedule 4.

Section 7 – Encroachments

There is a legacy of neighbouring property structures such as decks, sheds, boat ramps, jetties, driveways, fencing and landscaping encroaching illegally onto parks and reserves that prevents or discourages public use or access to that park or reserve.

Policies

1. The Council will not permit existing encroachments onto parks and reserve land to remain unless subsequent written approval from the Council had been obtained.
2. The Council will not grant retrospective authority for encroachments on parks or reserves unless, the Council at its sole discretion determines that the encroachment provides betterment to the public for enhanced use of the park or reserve, are deemed safe, fit for purpose and comply with appropriate regulatory and legislative requirements e.g. Building Act etc
3. The Council will require all unauthorised encroachments to be removed and the land reinstated by the landowner whose property is associated with that encroachment, at that landowner's cost.

Section 8 – Reserve Management Plans

The Council shall within 5 years of its appointment as the administering body or within 5 years after the commencement of the Reserves Act 1977, whichever is the later, prepare and submit to the Minister of Conservation for his or her approval a management plan for the reserve under its control, management or administration (Section 41 of the Reserves Act 1977). Reserve management plans shall provide for and ensure the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection and preservation, and the development as the case maybe for, recreation, historic, scenic, nature, scientific, Government purpose and local purpose reserves.

Policies

1. The Council will systematically prepare and adopt reserve management plans for all the reserves it owns and those reserves where administration, control or management is vested in the Council as follows:
 - (a) individual reserve management plans to be prepared for all large multi-user recreation reserves such as premier reserves that are subject to competing uses or development needs
 - (b) individual reserve management plans to be prepared for historic reserves because of the need to record the historic reason and relevance for the creation of that reserve
 - (c) individual reserve management plans to be prepared for local purpose reserves where the notice of vesting or notice to control and manage directs that a management plan is required (Section 41 (16) Reserves Act 1977)
 - (d) single district wide reserve management plans to be prepared for all scenic reserves.
 - (e) single ward wide reserve management to be prepared for smaller scale recreation reserves that currently do not have an individual reserve management plan and are not subject to significant demand and local purpose reserves (excludes esplanade reserves).
2. The Council may from time to time, due to changing circumstances, decide at its sole discretion that an individual reserve management plan(s) be required for any reserve or grouping of reserves.

3. The Council will keep its reserve management plans under continuous review so that the plans are adapted to changing circumstances or in accordance with increased knowledge.
4. The Council may from time to time choose to implement management plans for parks adopting the reserve management plan process, however such management plans are not a legislative requirement.

Section 9 – Leases and Licences

Policies

1. The Reserves Act 1977 sets out the statutory processes associated with the granting of leases and licences on reserves however a lease cannot be for a term longer than 33 years with a further right of renewal of 33 years.
2. The Council will review all applications for a lease or licence to ensure that the purpose of the lease or licence is provided for within the Reserves Act 1977, before considering whether to grant the lease or licence.
3. A lease or licence of part or all of a park with a term of 6 months or longer that has the effect of excluding or substantially interfering with the public's access to the park is considered to be disposal (refer to Section 3 of this policy) and the Council must consult on that lease or licence proposal (Section 138 Local Government Act 2002).
4. A lease or licence of part of a record of title area of 35 years is deemed to be a subdivision (Section 218 Resource Management Act 1991).
5. The Council will discourage the granting of exclusive use of all or part of a park or reserve where that use will exclude the public, except where Council deems that exclusive use to be appropriate.
6. The Council will require leases and licences to be entered into where exclusive use of part, or all the park or reserve is proposed.
7. The granting of a lease or licence on reserves must either comply with the provision of the associated reserve management plan or be subject to separate consultation.
8. The Council will consult the relevant Domain Board, Reserve Management Committee (if applicable) and local Community Board on lease and licence application proposals prior a Council decision.
9. The Council will grant exclusive leases of part or all of a park or reserve for a maximum term of 15 years with a further right of renewal for 15 years if it deems such terms to be appropriate. The lease will include the general provisions as set out in Schedule 5.
10. The Council maintains and applies a schedule of fees, charges, and bonds as security against potential reinstatement costs for the use of parks and reserves for leases, licences and events.
11. All planned events on parks and reserves are required to be booked in advance through the Council's online "Book a Park, Reserve or Open Space" system.

Section 10 – Esplanade Reserves and Esplanade Strips

Esplanade reserves and esplanade strips may be required when land is subdivided, when land is reclaimed, developed or when a road is stopped under the Local Government Act 1974. They can also be created voluntarily.

Esplanade strips are a legal instrument (like an easement) created between a landowner and the Council. They are registered on the property's record of title, but the land within the strip remains in the ownership of the landowner and does not need to be formally surveyed.

Unlike esplanade reserves, the width of an esplanade strip remains unchanged within the same allotment. For example, if a riverbank erodes by 2 metres, the width of the esplanade strip then extends beyond its old boundary by 2 metres to offset the lost ground.

Policies

1. The Council will through the District Plan rules require developers to provide esplanade reserves or esplanade strips to contribute to the protection of conservation, enable public access to or along any sea, river or lake, or to enable public recreational use of the esplanade reserve or esplanade strip and adjacent sea, river or lake when the use is compatible with conservation values. (s.229 Resource Management Act 1991).
2. Except as provided for by any rule in the District Plan or a resource consent that waives, or reduces the width of the esplanade reserve, where any allotment of less than 4 hectares is created when the land is subdivided, an esplanade reserve of 20 metres in width shall be set aside from that allotment along the mark of the mean high water springs of the sea, along the bank of any river (river bed to have an average width of 3 metres or more) or along the margin of any lake (whose bed has an area of 8 hectares or more), as the case may be. (s.230 Resource Management Act 1991).
3. The Council will only accept vestment of esplanade reserves on subdivision when they are clear of weeds identified in Northland Regional Council pest management plans as exclusion, eradication, progressive containment and sustained control plants (or equivalent categories in revised pest management plans).
4. The Council will classify local purpose esplanade reserves once the land has been vested in the Council.
5. The Council will consider climate change when deciding whether to accept an esplanade reserve or esplanade strip on subdivision. Climate change is causing sea level rise, an increase in frequency and impact of storm weather events resulting flooding and or erosion incidences where in some cases esplanade reserve widths have diminished to the point where the public are now unable to traverse the length of that esplanade reserve. To avoid these situations occurring, esplanade strips will be requested instead of esplanade reserves when there is evidence available through sources such as the Northland Regional Council River Flood Hazard Maps, and Coastal Hazard Maps that there is a reasonable expectation that the 20-metre width of the esplanade will diminish in the future. By doing so the Council will future proof public access and connectivity.

Section 11 – Application of Revenue

Policies

1. The Council will deposit into a suitable Council bank account all net monetary proceeds received from parks and reserves by way of rent, royalty, tree clearance, accommodation, land sale, land exchange, leasing and licensing including farming and afforestation.
2. The Council will apply the net monetary proceeds from Section 11 Policy 1 to purchasing, taking on a lease, managing, administering, maintaining, protecting, improving, or developing parks and reserves in the same

Council Ward to generally benefit, where appropriate, the community from which the net monetary proceeds were derived.

Section 12 – Financial and Development Contributions

The Council may use financial or development contributions on subdivisions and or developments as a mechanism to provide or improve reserves within the district.

Policies

1. The Council may require financial contributions of money, or land including an esplanade reserve or esplanade strip (other than in relation to a subdivision consent), but excluding Māori land within the meaning of the Te Ture Māori Land Act 1993 unless the Act provides otherwise; or a combination of money and land (Section 108(9) Resource Management Act 1991). The level of contribution is determined in the manner described in the district plan or proposed district plan (Section 108(10) Resource Management Act 1991).
2. The Council may in accordance with its Development Contributions Policy charge development contributions on subdivisions and developments to go towards paying for growth related infrastructure including parks and reserves (Section 106 Local Government Act 2002).

Monitoring and Implementation

- Implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Council.
- This policy will be reviewed in response to issues that may arise, every 5 years, at the request of the Council, or in response to changes to legislative or statutory requirements (whichever occurs first).
- Amendment to this policy following a review may be subject to a public consultative process.

Change to Schedules

The schedules in this Policy may be amended at any time by Council resolution.

Schedule 1 – Easement agreement bond payment and easement fee

Easement agreements will require an advance bond payment to cover all Council costs as per the provisions of this Schedule under Section 2 – Easements Policy (4).

These costs for the bond payment include but are not limited to:

- staff time
- survey
- legal
- public and iwi consultation
- valuation and Land Information New Zealand
- Council s.243 Resource Management Act 1991 consent charges.

Approved easement applications will be charged a one-off easement fee as per the following conditions of the Schedule under Section 2 – Easements Policy (5).

- The full current market valuation for the easement right(s) as determined by an independent registered valuer appointed by Council.
- The valuation shall be completed in accordance with the compensation principles contained within the Public Works Act 1981, including consideration of injurious affection and damages.

- The valuer is to adopt a land value in the compensation assessment that assumes the land rate of similar non reserve or park land in the locality.
- The added value benefit that the easement provides to the applicant shall also be determined and a percentage of the added value benefit, to be negotiated, shall form part of the one-off easement fee together with the valuation easement fee.

Schedule 2 – Criteria for acquisition, disposal, and land exchange decisions (for parks and reserves only)

Acquisition

Council will make decisions regarding acquisitions based on the following criteria outlined in the Schedule under Section 3 – Acquisitions, Disposal and Land Exchange

- Will the acquisition fulfil the Council’s objectives, policies, strategies, and plans?
- Will the acquisition provide connectivity between existing parks and reserves, neighbourhoods, water bodies and existing open space public lands?
- Does Council have available budget to acquire the land and maintain the land?
- The land must have physical and legal access, be accessible for the public, will not generate foreseeable public safety concerns, and be of a suitable size and scale to meet the Council’s requirements.
- Does the land meet passive or active recreational requirements, or the protection of environmental landscapes, cultural landscapes, features, and habitats?

Disposal

The Council decision to advance the Reserves Act 1977 revocation processes including public and iwi consultation processes for a reserve and sale for a park will only occur after all the processes and matters set out below have been addressed:

- A land status investigation to determine whether the land was derived from the Crown must be undertaken. (Note:-if the land was derived from the Crown then the land reverts to the Crown under Section 25 of the Reserves Act 1977).
- The Council does not have another public works use for the land.
- The Council has determined its obligations under the Public Works Act 1981 offer back regime.
- The Council has consulted the local Community Board on any proposal to dispose of a park or reserve or to use that land for another public work.
- The Council has considered its obligations under the Section 1 of this policy - Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi.
- The Council will engage, discuss and listen to local Iwi on proposals to dispose of park or reserve land and will offer the land to Iwi, as a first right of refusal to purchase when the Council is not legally required to offer land for sale to the former owner under the Public Works Act offer back regime.

Land exchange

The Council will address the following processes and matters before advancing a land exchange:

- The land exchange must be beneficial to the park and reserve and equitable by way of land and or cash adjustment.
- The land exchange results in a net benefit to the public.
- The land exchange shall align with the Council’s policies strategies and plans.
- The Council has determined its obligations under the Public Works Act 1981 offer back regime for that portion of park or reserve being exchanged.
- The Council has consulted the local Community Board on the proposal.
- The Council has considered its obligations under Section 1 of this policy - Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi.

Schedule 3 – Criteria for decisions for establishment of structures

Council will make decisions to approve or decline applications for the establishment or placement of structures, including single use and multi-use facilities on parks and reserves based on the following criteria, with reference to Section 5 – General provisions for building facilities:

- All structures must be deemed safe, fit for purpose and comply with the appropriate regulatory and legislative requirements e.g. Building Act etc. For new structures being promoted by volunteer or community entities, and for single user or multi-use facilities that may or may not be subject to a possible lease or licence agreement, the applicant must prove that it has community support for the installation of that structure and has the financial basis to complete the installation of the structure to the satisfaction of Council. Where the structure is subject to a lease or licence agreement the applicant will maintain that structure. The policy considerations in Section 9 and Schedule 5 are to be referenced.
- The applicant shall provide to Council detailed drawings of the structure prior to construction.
- The ownership of a structure that is not subject to a lease or licence agreement transfers to the Council once that structure installation is complete. Ownership and responsibility for the structure prior to its completion rests with the party responsible for the installation of that structure.
- The ownership of a structure that is subject to a lease or licence agreement is addressed in Schedule 5.
- The applicant shall demonstrate to Council that it has a sound governance structure that is appropriate for the specific situation.
- The applicant will consult with Council staff on the proposal for the establishment or placement of the structure on the park or reserve before the applicant consults with the Domain Board and Reserve Management Committee (if applicable) together with the local Community Board on the proposal as part of Council's decision-making process.
- If Council approves the proposed structure that is to be subject to a lease or licence then an agreement to grant a lease or licence agreement will be negotiated with the applicant detailing all conditions to be met prior to the Council entering a deed of lease or deed of licence. A specific requirement is that an asset management plan detailing lifecycle maintenance funding will be required. The policy considerations in Section 9 "Leases and Licences" is to be referenced.
- The Council may at any time and for any reason remove a structure from a park or reserve where that structure is not subject to a lease or licence. Where a structure is subject to a lease or licence then the terms of that lease or licence shall apply.

Schedule 4 – Role of Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees

Council will sometimes transfer the day-to-day management of specific reserves to Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees. Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees are expected to undertake the following under Section 6 – Domain Boards and Reserve Management Committees:

- Undertake day to day management of the reserve including administration of the reserve.
- Engage local contractors to do basic reserve maintenance.
- Foster and promote sport and passive recreation.
- Provide advice to the local Community Board on on-going reserve management.
- Advise Council where and when major maintenance and capital improvements to the reserve are required.

Schedule 5 – General provisions for building facilities

All leases associated with building structures not funded or built by Council will require the following under Section 9 - Leases and Licenses:

- Either transfer of ownership of the building structure to Council on the termination of the lease, or removal of the building structure and reinstatement of the land at the lessees' cost.
- Asset management plans and proof of available funding to maintain the building structure in accordance with the approved asset management plan during the term(s) of the lease.
- Forfeiter of the lease should the lessee's membership or patronage of the building or structure decline to the point where Council deems that there is a better alternative use for that facility.
- Lessee and licensees will be required to cover all outgoings including utilities associated with the use of the park or reserve.