Far North District Council
Te Kaunihera o Tai Tokerau ki te Raki

KAUPAPA HERE WHAKAMĀMĀ REITI

RATING RELIEF POLICIES

2021-31

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HE ARA TĀMATA
CREATING GREAT PLACES
Supporting our people

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Introduction

Section 102 (2e) of the LGA 02 requires councils to adopt a policy for the remission and postponement of rates on Māori Freehold Land. In the development of these policies, Council has considered Schedule 11 of the LGA 02 and recognises that the nature of Māori land is different to General Title Land.

Section 102(3) of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA 02) provides that a council may adopt a rates remission policy and a postponement policy. This policy addresses both the remission and postponement of rates.

The objectives of Council's rating relief policies are to:

1. To provide a fair and equitable collection of rates from all sectors of the community.
2. Provide an equitable system of rating remission and postponement for all sectors of the community;
3. To recognise that there is a community benefit in providing assistance through rating relief to certain charitable and community organisations.
4. Provide ratepayers with financial assistance where they might otherwise have difficulty meeting their obligations to pay rates;
5. Align with Council's community outcomes and strategic priorities;
6. Recognise that certain unoccupied Māori Freehold Land not used may have particular conditions, ownership structures, or other circumstances which make it appropriate to remit or postpone rates for defined periods of time; and
7. Ensure consideration of Schedule 11 of the LGA 02 (matters relating to rates relief on Māori Freehold Land).

Making an application? This is what you need to know:

1. All applications under these policies must be made in writing, signed by the owner/ratepayer or relevant approved person, and accompanied by any required supporting documentation. After an application has been submitted, further documentation may be requested. In that event, the applicant will be notified accordingly.
2. As provided for in section 88 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 (LGRA 02), a postponement fee may be calculated and added to the postponed rates.
3. The basis of calculating the postponement fee is included in each year's Funding Impact Statement, which can be found in the Long Term or Annual Plan for that year.
4. The owner(s) of the property must provide proof of eligibility which will be confirmed with relevant Council information.
5. Where a property or part of that property is sold within the period of remission or postponement, Council has the right to recover the rates remitted or postponed for the applicable period. This may apply to the whole property or only to that portion of the portion that has been sold.
6. Council may require further information from the applicant if deemed necessary to process the application.
7. Council reserves the right to inspect the use of a property, where appropriate, for application assessment and to confirm compliance with policy criteria from time to time.
8. Any decision made by Council under this policy is final. Remissions or postponements granted under previous policies will remain in force as per those policies.
9. Applications may be made for a remission or postponement of rates in circumstances which are not included in the separate policy category sections set out below. These are known as "outside of policy" applications. Council's authority is restricted by the provisions of the LGRA 02. For that reason, all such applications "outside of policy" must be in writing, and accompanied by sufficient detail and documentation to support a decision by Council.
10. Council is under no obligation to approve any applications that do not comply with the established policies and Council's decision on the matter is final.
11. Council's decision whether to grant or deny an application for remission or postponement of rates will be based upon:
    a. The application itself; and,
    b. All supporting documents submitted by the applicant; and,
    c. Any relevant information and/or documentation held in Council's records.
12. Except where otherwise indicated, Council reserves the right to grant or deny any and all applications for remission or postponement of rates under these policies.

Definitions

For the purpose of these policies, words used in the singular include the plural, and words used in the plural include the singular.

ARREARS means unpaid rates as at 30 June of the rating year prior to application.

COMMERCIAL is defined by the land use code attributed to the property, the property has a liquor licence or by the fact that the entity buys and sells goods and services on a for profit basis.

COUNCIL means the Far North District Council and includes any person or agent authorised by the Far North District Council.

FARM BLOCK means the definition attributed to the land by the Valuer General, with an area of 20 hectares up to 50 hectares, by the valuer and not the standard definition of a farming block.

INTERNAL RETICULATION means all pipe reticulation from the meter to the house or property (known as the "private side of the meter")

LANDLOCKED LAND means a piece of land to which there is no reasonable access

LIFESTYLE BLOCK means the definition attributed to the land by the Valuer General, with an area of 1 hectare up to 20 hectares, by the valuer and not the standard definition of a lifestyle block.

MĀORI FREEHOLD LAND has the same meaning as defined in Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 Part VI section 129(2)(a).

NATURAL DISASTER has the same meaning as in the Earthquake Commission Act 1993.

NEW USER is a person that has not been previously identified in Council's Rates Information Database as being responsible for the rates on the land.

OCCUPIED means a formal right by occupation order or informal right by licence to occupy Māori Freehold Land, or other arrangements are in place and are exercised.

OCCUPIER means a person, persons, organisation, or business entity that is using a rating unit or portion of a rating unit under a lease, license or other formal agreement for a specified period of time.

OUTSTANDING NATURAL LANDSCAPE refers to any largely unmodified landscape with characteristics and qualities that amount to being conspicuous, eminent or remarkable. These landscapes are afforded protection through the Resource Management Act 1991 as a matter of national importance.

PAPAKĀINGA means the use of Maori multiple owned land, Maori ancestral land or land within the meaning of Te Ture Whenua Maori Act 1993 by a (the) shareholder(s) for (a) dwelling place(s).

POSTPONEMENT means an agreed delay in the payment of rates for a certain time, or until certain defined events occur.

PRIVATE FINANCIAL PROFIT means that the owner or ratepayer receives direct financial benefit from any profit generated by the entity. Profit that is directed to charitable purposes rather than to an individual or individuals is not deemed to be private financial benefit.

RATEPAYER includes, under the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, either the owner of the rating unit or a lessee under a registered lease of not less than 10 years, which provides that the lessee is required to be entered into the Rating Information Database as the ratepayer.

REASONABLE ACCESS in relation to land, means physical access for persons or services of a nature and quality that is reasonably necessary to enable the owner or occupier of the land to use and enjoy the land for any purpose for which it may be used in accordance with any right, permission, authority, consent, approval, or dispensation enjoyed or granted under the Resource Management Act 1991.

REMISSION means that the requirement to pay the rate levied for a particular financial year is forgiven in whole or in part.

STATUTORY LAND CHARGE means a charge registered against a Certificate of Title of a property by someone who has a financial interest in the property, such as debt or part ownership.

TREATY SETTLEMENT LANDS means any land which has been returned to Māori ownership in a Treaty Claims Settlement, or land which may have been purchased from Treaty settlement monies to replace land which could not be returned because it is in private ownership.

UNIFORM ANNUAL GENERAL CHARGE (UAGC) is a type of rate levied by Council. It is a fixed charge, or an amount that stays the same regardless of the value of the property. The UAGC is the same amount for all ratepayers across the District.

USED includes use for the purposes of any residential occupation of the land, or any activity for business or commercial purposes, including lease agreements, or storage of equipment, stock or livestock.

R21/01 – Remission of Penalties

Background

Penalties are charged where rates instalments are not paid by the due date. Council recognises the economic hardship faced by some ratepayers. This policy provides for the remission of rates penalties on the grounds of financial hardship.

Policy Objective

To allow for the remission of penalties where the ratepayer has entered into repayment arrangements or there are reasonable grounds to remove the penalty.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statement

Council may remit rates penalties where the application provides a reasonable reason for remission.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Applications will be considered if:
   a. The applicant has a previous good record of payment and on-time payments of all rate instalments within the last two years; or
   b. The rating unit has a new owner who has not received notice of the current invoice due date; or
   c. A request is made on compassionate grounds; or
   d. The ratepayer has entered into a Rates Easy Pay agreement and has maintained the arrangement to clear their outstanding rates for a period of 6 months.
2. If there is no cost to Council i.e. where, as an action of Council's revenue recovery process, the remission of penalty results in immediate full payment of arrears.

R21/02 - Unusable Land

Background

Natural disasters can cause land to become unusable for a long period of time. This policy addresses the issue of land that had been made unusable by a natural disaster.

Policy Objective

To provide rating relief to the owners of properties that have become unusable as a result of a natural disaster, and where the loss of the use of the property will result in financial hardship to the owner.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statement

Council may grant a remission of rates on land that has become indefinitely unusable as a result of a natural disaster.

Conditions and Criteria

1. The applicant must set out in detail the nature of the natural disaster that has caused the land to be unusable.
2. The application must outline the steps that the owner has taken, or will take, to return the land to a usable state. If this is not possible, the application must state why.
3. The application must be supported by a report from a Registered Engineer or other similarly qualified expert setting out the reasons why the land has become, and will remain, unusable. .
4. The maximum term for the remission of rates will be 5 years. At the end of that period, if the land remains unusable a further application will be required, including a statutory declaration that confirms that the conditions of the original expert's report remain unchanged, this must be confirmed in writing by the expert.
5. The applicant will be required to sign an agreement that any remission will be cancelled immediately if the land is returned to a usable state.

R21/04 - Community, Sports and Not-for-profit Organisations

Background

Community and voluntary groups provide facilities to enhance and contribute to the wellbeing of the residents of the Far North. This policy provides rating relief for those organisations that operate for the benefit of the community.

It is of note that the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 provides for a 100% non-rateability of land owned or used by certain categories of charitable and community organisations. In addition, a 50% non-rateability is provided in respect of land owned or used by organisations for sports or any branch of the arts, except where these organisations operate a club licence under the Sale of Liquor Act. For more details on the rateability of this type of land refer to the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, 1st schedule, Parts 1 and 2.

Policy Objectives

1. To assist in the ongoing provision of community services and recreational opportunities that benefit Far North residents.
2. To recognise that there is a community benefit in providing assistance through rating relief to certain charitable and community organisations.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statements

1. Council may remit up to 100% of the rates, providing the entity does not qualify for other financial support, payable on land owned or used by any entity which has, as its principal purpose and function, the provision of social housing, free access to family counselling, or, assessment, counselling and in-patient treatment for people with alcohol, drug and mental health related problems and that is a Registered Charitable Organisations or IRD approved donee organisation. Council may remit 50% of the rates payable on land owned or used by an entity, (society or association or persons, whether incorporated or not) for the purpose of providing benefit to Far North residents through:
    a. the promotion of recreation, health, education, or instruction for the benefit of residents or any group of residents of the district; or
    b. Land that is owned or used by, or in trust of any society or association or persons, to run a camping ground for the purpose of recreation, health, education or instruction, for the benefit of residents of the district.
2. This policy will apply for a period of three years unless the applicant's circumstances change. At the end of the three-year period, a new application will be required.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Relevant financial information must accompany all applications. This includes:
    a. statement of organisation objectives
    b. full financial accounts
    c. information on activities and programmes
    d. details of membership or clients.
2. No remission will be given on land on which a licence under the Sale of Liquor Act is held.
3. No remission will be given on land where any person or entity receives private financial profit from the activities carried out on the land. All income earned by ratepayers and entities receiving a remission under this policy must be spent on reasonable salaries, wages and other costs reasonably related to its community, sports, or not-for-profit purposes.
4. Land used for an activity which is commercial in nature does not qualify for rates remission. For example an "op-shop" does not qualify for rating relief under this policy.

R21/05 - Properties Spanning Multiple Districts

Background

There are a small number of rating units situated across the boundary line between the Far North District and other districts. These properties incur rates from both councils. This policy provides an equitable method of assessing rates for those properties.

Policy Objective

To recognise that some properties span multiple districts, and to ensure that only the portion of property within the Far North District is rated by the Far North District Council.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statement

Rates will be remitted on any portion of a property outside of the Far North District.

Conditions and Criteria

If there is a dwelling on the portion of the property within the Far North District:

- no portion of the Uniform Annual General Charge will be remitted; and
- the land value-based rate will continue to be remitted on the portion outside of the Far North District.

R21/06 Common-Use Properties

Background

Section 20 of the LGRA 02 requires that multiple rating units be treated as one rating unit if they are:

1. Owned by the same person or persons; and,
2. Used jointly as a single unit; and,
3. Contiguous or separated only by a road, railway, drain, water race, river or stream.

This policy expands on the provisions of the Act and provides for commercial operations to be treated as one rating unit to assist economic development in the district.

The circumstances where an application for a remission of charges will be considered are:

- A residential dwelling and associated garden and ancillary buildings where the property occupies at least two rating units and those rating units are used jointly as a single property
- A farm that consists of a number of separate rating units that are either contiguous or are located within a 2 kilometre radius
- A commercial, retail, or industrial business that operates from more than 1 rating unit where those rating units are contiguous and are used jointly as a single property
- A subdivision for the period that the individual lots continue to be in the ownership of the original developer and remain vacant. This provision has a maximum term of 3 years in respect of all charges excluding those that are set to fund utility services such as stormwater, wastewater and water supplies.

Policy Objectives

1. To enable Council to act fairly and equitably with respect to the imposition of the UAGC and applicable targeted rates on 2 or more separate rating units that are contiguous, separately owned and used jointly for a single residential, commercial or farming use.
2. To deal equitably with the imposition of the UAGC and applicable targeted rates on 2 or more separate rating units that have resulted from a subdivision to facilitate the development of the district.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Conditions and Criteria

Applications under this policy must be in writing, signed by the ratepayer and must comply with the conditions and criteria set out below.

1. The rating units must be contiguous, or in the case of a farm, must be situated within a radius of 2 kilometers from the primary property.
2. The rating units must:
    a. In the case of a residential/lifestyle property, be owned by the same ratepayer who uses the rating units jointly as a single residential property. In the case of residential rating units where two or more separately owned rating units are owned by an individual and/or trust and are contiguous but the ownership is not an exact match, the rating units will be considered as one. For this to apply one unit must have a dwelling and the other unit(s) considerable development which proves that the rating units are being used as one. E.g. House/dwelling on one rating unit and or garden and garage on the other rating unit.

    In the case of a farm/lifestyle property, be owned by the same owner, or be leased for a term of not less than 10 years, to the same ratepayer who uses the rating units jointly as a single farm. The owners of each of the individual rating units must confirm in writing that their unit/s is being jointly used as a single farming operation

    In the case of a subdivision, commercial or residential development, be owned by the original developer who is holding the individual rating units pending their sale or lease to subsequent purchasers or lessees and is vacant. This remission is limited for a term of 3 years for all charges and will be calculated from 1 July in the year that the rates were first remitted.

It should be further noted that the remission under this clause does not extend to sub- sequent purchasers.

3. The applicant must provide sufficient evidence as is necessary to prove that the properties are being jointly used as a single property and Council's decision on the matter is final.
3. Council reserves the right to determine that any specific targeted charge will be excluded from this policy.

R21/07 – Remission of School Sewerage Charges

Background

The Council recognises that schools may be disproportionately charged for sewerage services where there are a higher number of toilets in relation to the actual number of students enrolled in schools. This policy ensures that schools are equitably charged for sewerage services.

Policy Objective

To ensure equitable rating of educational establishments by providing relief for sewerage charges.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statements

Where the nominal number of pans is less than the actual number of pans, sewage charges will be remitted on those pans that make up the difference between the two.

Conditions and Criteria

1. This policy applies to those educational establishments specified in Schedule 1, clause 6 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002.
2. The nominal pan number will be calculated as one pan per 20 students/staff members or part thereof.
3. The policy does not apply to schoolhouses occupied by a caretaker, principal or staff
4. The number of students in an educational establishment is the number of students on its roll on 1 March of the year immediately before the year to which the charge relates.
5. The number of staff in an educational establishment is the number of full time teaching equivalent (FTTE) staff and full time equivalent (FTE) administration staff employed by that educational establishment on 1 March of the year immediately preceding the year to which the charge relates.

R21/08 - Excess Water Charges

Background

From time to time water consumers experience a loss as a result of leaks or damage to their water supply system. It is the normal practice for the consumer to be responsible for the maintenance of the reticulation from the water meter to the property and to account for any consumption of water supplied through the meter.

Council has taken the view that some consumers may experience an occasional water leak without them being aware of the problem. Therefore, they have decided that it would be reasonable to allow for a reduction in charges to these consumers in certain circumstances.

Policy Objectives

1. To standardise procedures to assist ratepayers who have excessive water rates due to a fault (leak) in the internal reticulation serving their rating unit
2. To incentivise ratepayers to regularly check their water meter and maintain their internal water reticulation ensuring that consumers retain responsibility for the maintenance of their private reticulation.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statements

1. Council may provide a full remission of excess water charges to the ratepayer once every 10 years where a leak in the internal reticulation of that property has resulted in water loss.
2. Council may provide a 50% remission of excess water charges to the ratepayer in the case of a separate leak on that property within 10 years following the grant of a first application.
3. The 10 year period will restart at zero if the property is sold and there is a new owner/ratepayer.

Conditions and Criteria

1. All applications must be made in writing and signed by the owner(s) of the property. Where a property is managed by a property management company (agent), instructions to act on behalf of the owner must be in place for the agent to act.
2. Applications made under this policy must be received by Council within six months of the first notification to the ratepayer by Council of a possible leak.
3. Meter readings will be taken after the application has been received to ensure all leaks have been repaired.
4. Proof of repairs to the internal reticulation must accompany the application. This may be in the form of a detailed written report or an invoice for repairs from a currently registered plumber, or a report from Council's service contractor.
5. Repairs carried out by the ratepayer must be peer reviewed by a currently registered plumber and a report provided to confirm that the repair is suitable and to current standards.
6. Excess water charges resulting from any other leaks within the 10 year period are not eligible for remission.
7. The maximum relief that will be provided will be the difference between the normal consumption and the actual water consumption for that period.

NOTE: The "normal consumption" will be calculated from three meter readings outside of the leak period for the property concerned.

R21/13 - Incentivising Māori Economic Development

Background

Council recognises that there is a need to incentivise economic development on Māori Freehold Land. Enabling and incentivising Māori economic development through the remission of rates may see direct economic and social benefits to landowners generating a return on the land, as well as to Council from future rates contributions, as the venture grows and becomes sustainable.

Policy Objectives

1. To provide incentives for Māori land owners to develop Māori Freehold Land for economic use.
2. To enable owners to develop an economic base and to assist with the subsequent payment of rates.

Scope

This policy applies to Māori Freehold Land only.

Policy Statement

Council will remit rates on Māori Freehold Land for the purposes of incentivising economic development.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Council will remit rates under this policy on an eight-year sliding scale as follows:
   - Years 1-3 - 100% remitted
   - Year 4 - 90% remitted
   - Year 5 - 80% remitted
   - Year 6 - 60% remitted
   - Year 7 - 40% remitted
   - Year 8 - 20% remitted; and
   - Year 9 - 0% remitted

   Remission will apply from 1 July in the year of application.
2. The land, or portion of the land, for which relief is sought must be considered suitable for development and confirmed as currently not used or economically viable in its current state.
3. Applications must be accompanied by a business case which must include a cashflow analysis for at least 3 years.
4. A meeting with Council staff will be required to determine any other necessary documentation.
5. Key considerations by Council will include:
   a. Suitable professional advice has been obtained;
   b. there is a suitable management structure in place;
   c. appropriate financial arrangements for the development of the land have been made;
   d. suitable monitoring and reporting systems have or will be established; and
   e. realistic financial projections and cash flows have been provided.
6. Each application will be submitted to Council for review and assessment. The decision of Council to approve or not approve is final.
7. Upon approval, an annual report and financial statements on the development must be submitted to Council within 3 months of the end of the entity's financial year.
8. If the development on which the remission is based does not proceed or is unable to meet the requirements to achieve a viable economic return, the remission will cease at the end of the rating year in which this is identified.

R21/14 - Treaty Settlement Lands

Background

Council recognises that post-settlement governance entities (PSGEs), which are formed to receive properties returned as a part of Treaty of Waitangi settlements, will require time to develop strategic plans, restore protections, and complete necessary works for cultural and commercial redress properties. These properties can be classed as General Title, which means that the rating relief policies for Māori Freehold Land do not apply to all of these properties. This policy has been developed in recognition of these circumstances.

Policy Objective

To recognise that lands acquired as part of a Treaty settlement process may have particular conditions or other circumstances which make it appropriate to remit rates.

Scope

This policy applies only to Treaty Settlement Lands and will retrospectively apply to any settlements prior to 1 July 2018.

Policy Statement

Council will agree to remit rates on Treaty Settlement Lands subject to the criteria set out below.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Before remission of rates may come into effect, Council must receive an appropriate and satisfactory application supported by sufficient documentation.
2. The applicant must provide proof that the land which is the subject of the application is Treaty Settlement Land.
3. Returned lands that were non-rateable under the previous ownership will receive a full rates remission for a period of three years.
4. Where returned lands are commercial redress properties and are not used, Council will grant a 50% remission for a period three years.
5. Where the returned lands are commercial redress properties and meet the criteria as outlined in the Incentivising Māori Economic Development Policy, Council will remit rates on an eight-year sliding scale as follows:

    - Years 1-3 - 100% remitted
    - Year 4 - 90% remitted
    - Year 5 - 80% remitted
    - Year 6 - 60% remitted
    - Year 7 - 40% remitted
    - Year 8 - 20% remitted; and
    - Year 9 - 0% remitted

R23/15 - Enabling Housing Development on Māori Freehold Land

Background

The Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 S114A requires Council to recognise that there is a need to enable housing development on Māori Freehold Land. Enabling housing development through the remission of rates will see direct social benefits to landowners, as well as to Council from future rates contributions.

Policy Objective

To provide a remission for Māori landowners to enable the development of housing opportunities on Māori Freehold Land.

Scope

This policy applies to Māori Freehold Land only and can be applied to any number of dwellings on a site. It will not apply to service connections, which will remain payable if the property is connected to Council reticulation.

Policy Statement

Council will remit rates on Māori Freehold Land for the purposes of enabling housing development.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Council will remit rates under this policy on an eight-year sliding scale as follows:
   - Years 1 - 3 - 100% remitted
   - Years 4 - 5- 75% remitted
   - Year 6 - 50% remitted
   - Year 7 - 25% remitted
   - Year 8 - 0% remitted

   Remission will apply from 1 July in the year of application.
2. The land, or portion of the land, for which relief is sought must be considered suitable for development and apply and be granted a resource consent.
3. Applications must apply for and be granted a building consent and a code of compliance certificate upon completion.
4. Notification of the above consents and certifications must be made to the Council rates team to ensure the continuation of the remission.
5. A meeting with Council staff will be required to determine any other necessary documentation.
6. Key considerations by Council will include:
   a. Suitable professional advice has been obtained.
   b. Appropriate financial arrangements for the development of the land have been made.
7. Each application will be submitted to Council for review and assessment. The decision of Council to approve or not approve is final.
8. If the development on which the remission is based does not proceed or is unable to meet the requirements to be compliant with the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Building Act 2004, the remission will cease at the end of the rating year in which this is identified.

P21/01 - Land Subject to Protection for Outstanding Natural Landscape, Cultural, Historic or Ecological Purposes

Background

The Far North District Council recognises that certain rateable land within the District is protected for outstanding natural landscape, cultural, heritage, or ecological purposes.

Policy Objectives

To provide rating relief to landowners who have reserved lands that have particular outstanding natural landscape, cultural, historic or ecological values for future generations.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statements

1. Council may **remit** rates on land subject to protection for outstanding natural landscape, cultural, historic or ecological purposes under the formal protection agreements listed in 2 a) through 2 g) of the conditions and criteria of this policy.
2. Council may **postpone** rates on land subject to protection for outstanding natural landscape, cultural, historic or ecological purposes under the formal protection listed in 2 h and i) of the conditions and criteria of this policy.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Applications must be supported by a copy of the formal protection agreement and a Management Plan detailing how the values of the land are to be maintained, restored, and/or enhanced.
2. The land must be subject to a formal protection agreement as set out below:
    a. An open space covenant under section 22 of the Queen Elizabeth the Second National Trust Act 1977; or
    b. A conservation covenant under section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977; or
    c. A Nga Whenua Rahui kawenata under section 77A of the Reserves Act 1977; or
    d. A declaration of protected private land under section 76 of the Reserves Act 1977; or
    e. A management agreement for conservation purposes under section 38 of the Reserves Act 1977; or
    f. A management agreement for conservation purposes under section 29 of the Conservation Act 1987; or
    g. A Māori reservation for natural, historic, or cultural conservation purposes under sections 338 to 341 of the Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993 (Māori Land Act 1993); or
    h. A covenant for conservation purposes under section 27 of the Conservation Act 1987.
    i. A covenant for conservation purposes approved under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 (or Historic Places Act 1993)
3. The rating unit or portion of the rating unit that is the subject of the application must not be in use. For the purposes of this Policy, the definition of person actually using land is taken from the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002. It means a person who, alone or with others: –

    Leases the land; or

    Does 1 or more of the following things on the land for profit or other benefit:

    i. Resides on the land
    ii. Depastures or maintains livestock on the land
    iii. Stores anything on the land
    iv. Uses the land in any other way.

NOTES:

Notwithstanding the above, work undertaken to pre- serve or enhance the features covenanted on the land, including weed control, will not impact the “unused” status of the land

The removal of traditional medicinal tree and plant material by tangata whenua for personal use will not constitute actual use of the land.

5. Where the entire rating unit is the subject of the application, the remission or postponement of rates will apply to all rates levied on the property.
6. The protected and unprotected portions of the rating unit will be separately valued and assessed as separate parts pursuant to Section 45 (3) of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002. In these instances, the remission or postponement of rates will only apply to the protected portion of the rating unit. It should be noted that these separate parts will not constitute separately used or inhabited parts for rating purposes and a full set of UAGC and other charges will be assessed against the part of the rating unit that is being used
7. Any remission or postponement granted under this policy will become effective on 1 July in the rating year following the submission of the application.
8. Any remission or postponement of rates on the land will be cancelled immediately in the event that the land ceases to be protected under a formal protection agreement. Postponed rates that have not been remitted will be repayable in the event that

the covenant conditions and the Management Plan objectives are breached in the sole opinion of the Council, whose decision is final.

Specific Conditions and Criteria for Postponement of Rates

1. After a term of ten years, the postponed rates for the first year of the covenant period will be remitted. After this, one additional year of the postponed rates will be remitted each year, so that a maximum of ten years of postponed rates are held against the land at any given time.
2. Upon expiration of the covenant or other agreement**,** any rates that are postponed against the land at that time, which have not been remitted under paragraph 1 above, will become due.
3. The repayment of postponed rates will not be required as a result of a change of ownership, provided that the land continues to comply with all criteria.
4. Council will not seek repayment of postponed rates where future postponement is revoked due to Council changing its criteria for postponement.

P21/03 - Landlocked Land

Background

The Property Law Act 2007 enables owners of landlocked properties to take legal action in order to gain reasonable access to their property.

landlocked land means a piece of land to which there is no reasonable access.

reasonable access, in relation to land, means physical access for persons or services of a nature and quality that is reasonably necessary to enable the owner or occupier of the land to use and enjoy the land for any purpose for which it may be used in accordance with any right, permission, authority, consent, approval, or dispensation enjoyed or granted under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Ratepayers may be unable to take action under these provisions of the **Property Law Act due to their financial circumstances.**

This policy has been prepared to cover the exceptional circumstances and will only be applied after all other avenues for access have been explored by the owner.

Policy Objectives

To provide rating relief to ratepayers where their land has no reasonable access and the ratepayer cannot afford to take action through the Property Law Act 2007.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title land and Maori Freehold Land.

Policy Statement

Any owner who has purchased land knowing that it is land locked and no access is possible will not qualify for remission under this policy.

Council may postpone rates on landlocked land where there is no reasonable access as defined in the Property Law Act 2007.

Conditions and Criteria

1. The land must be landlocked as defined in Section 326 of the Property Law Act 2007. **The application must state why access cannot be obtained through procedures set forth in Part 6, Subpart 3, of the Property Law Act 2007.**
2. The application must include a legal assessment that details how the land meets the definition in the Property Law Act 2007 and why access cannot be obtained through the legal channels identified in that Act.
3. The maximum term for the postponement of rates for landlocked property is three years. If the land remains landlocked at the end of that period, postponed rates will be remitted, and a new application will be required.
4. The owner must advise Council if the status of the land changes, if access is obtained, or if any person commences to use the land. If the land ceases to be landlocked during the period of the postponement, any rates postponed will be remitted at the end of the three year period, provided that the owner keeps the rates up to date for the remainder of the three year period.
5. The owner must agree to a statutory land charge being entered on the Certificate of Title, in relation to Maori Freehold land, this will be an agreement in the form of a statutory declaration only.
6. As provided for in the legislation, a postponement fee will be added to the postponed rates.
7. The repayment of postponed rates will not be required merely because of a change of ownership of the land provided that the change has not arisen from the sale of the property and provided that the land continues to comply with the criteria of this policy.

P21/04 - Transitional policy for the postponement of rates on farmland

Background

This transitional policy statement has been prepared to address the rating of farmland that previously received a rates-postponement value pursuant to Section 22 of the Rating Valuations Act.

That section of LGA, which has now been repealed, provided for rates relief for the owners of farmland whose values were increased beyond that of other farmland in the district because of the potential use to which the land could be put for residential, commercial, industrial, or other non-farming development.

A number of proper ties in the Far North received these farmland postponement values because their values were significantly enhanced because of their proximity to high valued urban or coastal areas.

This transitional policy provides Council with the ability to continue to provide rating relief to certain proper ties that were receiving a postponement of rates prior to the introduction of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, and that qualified after that date under policy P04/04, which has now been repealed.

This Transitional Policy is restricted to those farms which are owner operated, where the owner is a natural person and/ or is a company where the owners live on and operate the farm as a personal business. The policy specifically excludes those farms which are held as investment properties where the owners, corporate or otherwise, live either outside the district.

Effect of rates postponement values

The postponed portion of the rates for any rating period shall be the amount equal to the difference between the amount of the rates for that period calculated according to the postponement value of the rating unit an amount of the rates that would be payable for that period if the rates were calculated on the basis of its actual value.

The amount of the rates for any rating period so postponed shall be entered in the rate records and will be included in or with the rates assessment issued by Council in respect of the rating unit.

Any rates so postponed will, so long as the property continues to qualify for rates postponement, be remitted at the expiration of 10 years from the date at which the postponement was granted.

Each year a postponement fee will be added to the outstanding balance and will become part of the rates postponed on the rating unit pursuant to Section 88(3) of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002.

Policy Objective

To afford rating relief to farmers who had previously been receiving this form of rating relief under the provisions of repealed legislation and/or previous versions of this policy, where Council believes that it is in the interest of the district to maintain a postponement of rates to reduce the incidence of coastal development.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Council will not accept any new applications under this policy.

Conditions and Criteria

1. This policy provision only applies to those rating units which previously qualified for a postponement of rates under policy P04/04, which was repealed on 30 June 2006, and which continues to be owned by the same ratepayer/s who owned it at that date.
2. For the purposes of this transitional policy, the definition of qualifying farmland has been revised as follows:
    a. Farmland means land which is used principally or exclusively for agricultural, horticultural, or pastoral purposes but excludes land that is used for forestry, lifestyle, or farm park type purposes.
    b. The farming operation must provide the principal source of revenue for the owner of the land, who must be the actual operator of the farm and who must reside on the land.
    c. The area of the land that is the subject of the application must be not less than 50 hectares.
3. The proper ties that are the subject of this policy will be identified and the rates postponement values determined by Council's Valuation Service Provider and will:
    - exclude any potential value, at the date of valuation, that the land may have for residential use or for commercial, industrial, or other non-farming use; and will preserve uniformity and equitable relativity with comparable parcels of farmland, the valuations of which do not contain any such potential value.
4. No objection to the amount of any rates postponement value determined under this policy will be accepted by Council (other than where the objector proves that the rates postponement value does not preserve uniformity with existing roll values of comparable parcels of land having

no potential value for residential use, or for commercial, industrial, or other non-farming use).

5. The Postponement Value will be reviewed after each triennial revaluation and the revised value will be advised to the ratepayer. At that time Council will seek the advice of its valuation service provider as to whether they believe that the land continues to be actively farmed and qualifies under the terms of this policy provision. Council reserves the right to ask the owner to provide evidence showing that the land continues to operate as a farm.
6. The owner must agree to a statutory land charge being entered on the Certificate of Title of the farmland before receiving a postponement of rates.

Termination and repayment of postponed rates

All rates that have been postponed under this policy and have not been remitted become due and payable immediately on:

1. The land ceasing to be farmland;
2. The interest of the owner is passed over to, or becomes vested in, some person or other party other than;
    a. the owner's spouse, son or daughter; or
    b. the executor or administrator of the owner's estate.
3. Where only part of the land is disposed of then only part of the postponed rates will become immediately repayable. The amount repayable will be calculated in accordance with the following formula:

$$\frac{A \times C}{B}$$

Where:

A – is the difference between the rateable value and rates special value of the balance of the land retained by the person who was the occupier on the date on which the rates postponement value was entered on the valuation roll; and

B – is the difference between the rateable value and the special value of the whole of the land immediately before the date of the vesting of that interest in that other person.

That special value shall be specially redetermined if, because of a general revaluation of the district in which the land is situated, the special value appearing on the valuation roll is no longer directly related to the rateable value on the date of the vesting; and

C – is the total amount of the rates postponed immediately before the date of vesting. In all cases the amount of the rates to be repaid will be not less than 20% of the value of the total amount of rates currently postponed.

4. Subject to the land continuing to qualify for the special postponement value, any rates postponed under this policy will be remitted at the expiration of 10 years from the date on which they were assessed.

P21/05 – Residential Rates for Senior Citizens

Background

The payment of rates for senior citizens on a limited income can affect their quality of life. This policy provides senior citizens with the option of postponing their rates to be paid until a sale of the rating unit takes place, or, in the event that they pass away, until the settlement of their estate. This will relieve elderly people of potential financial hardship, and enhance the quality of their lives, including the ability to remain in their home longer with limited income.

Policy Objective

To positively contribute to the quality of life for senior citizens by postponing rates payable.

Scope

This policy applies to General Title Land. Council does not consider the application of this policy appropriate for Māori Freehold Land; because of the nature of Māori Freehold Land, Council does not consider it appropriate to charge postponed rates to the land.

Policy Statements

Council may postpone rates for ratepayers whose primary income is the New Zealand Superannuation Scheme. Any postponed rates will be postponed until:

a. The settlement of the ratepayer's estate following their death; or
b. The ratepayer ceases to be the owner or occupier of the rating unit; or
c. The ratepayer ceases to use the property as their primary residence; or
d. The accrued charges exceed 80% of the rateable value of the property (postponed rates will remain due for payment only on death, sale, or the date specified by Council); or
e. A date specified by the Council.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Postponement under this policy will only apply to ratepayers who are:
    a. eligible to receive the New Zealand Superannuation Scheme, which is, or will be, their primary income; or
    b. on a fixed income. This is defined as "an income from a pension or investment that is set at a particular figure and does not vary like a dividend or rise with the rate of inflation".
2. The rating unit must be used by the ratepayer as their primary residence. This includes, in the case of a family trust owned property, use by a named individual or couple.
3. The ratepayer must not own any property that may be used:
    a. as a holiday home or rental property; or
    b. for commercial activities, such as farming or business.
4. People occupying a unit in a retirement village under a licence to occupy must have the agreement of the owner of the retirement village before applying for postponement of the rates payable on their unit.
5. If a property is still under a mortgage, a written and signed approval must be obtained from the Mortgagee as part of the application. This is because the payment of postponed rates will have priority over mortgage payments.
6. Properties that are the subject of a reverse mortgage are not eligible for rating relief under this policy.
7. Council has the right to decline rates postponement for a property that is in a known hazard zone. This is to minimise any risk of loss to Council.
8. Postponed rates will be registered as a statutory land charge on the rating unit title, meaning that Council will have first claim on the proceeds of any revenue from the sale or lease of the rating unit.
9. If rates are postponed, the ratepayer will still be responsible for the amount of rates equal to the maximum rebate available under the central government Rates Rebate Scheme for the current rating year. Council is able to assist applicants for the Rates Rebate Scheme. If the ratepayer is not eligible for a rates rebate, they will still be responsible for paying this amount, and will be required to enter into a payment arrangement to cover this portion.
10. Council will charge an annual administrative fee on postponed rates.
11. The postponed rates or any part thereof may be paid to Council at any time
12. The property must be insured at the time the application is granted and must be kept insured. Evidence of this must be produced annually.
13. Senior citizens for whom rates are being postponed under this policy must promptly inform Council of any substantial change in their financial status which might affect their eligibility for such postponement.

ML21/01 - Māori Freehold Land Not Used

Background

Following amendments to the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 that come into force 1 July 2021 this policy will apply only to land that remains unused/unoccupied following the granting of a licence to occupy from the Maori Land Court or recognition of an informal arrangement to occupy. The creation of a licence to occupy or an informal arrangement does not create a separate rating unit therefore any unused /unoccupied land remaining (referred to as "the balance of land") does not automatically fall under the amendment to the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 to make unused/unoccupied land "non-rateable".

Occupation licenses are generally used to define a specific area of Māori Freehold Land that the licensee can occupy for the purposes establishing a dwelling. At the termination of the license, the dwelling has to be removed or transferred to the owners of the land.

Informal arrangements are where a person occupies an area of Māori Freehold Land for a period of time; however, has no formal agreement and no rights to permanent occupation.

Policy Objectives

To provide the ability to grant remission for the portions of land not occupied or used that result from the granting of a licence to occupy or an informal arrangement for use on part of the rating unit.

Scope

This policy applies only to Māori Freehold Land and will apply from 1 July in the year of application.

Policy Statement

Council may, upon application from the owners, authorised agents of the owners, or Council itself acting for the owners, agree to remit the rates relating to the balance of land created by a licence to occupy or informal arrangement for a period not exceeding three years.

Conditions and Criteria

1. The balance of land must not be used by any person – for the purposes of this policy land will be defined as "used" if any person, alone or with others carries out any of the following activities on the land as set out in section 96 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 -
    a. leases the land; or does one or more of the following things on the land for profit or other benefit:
    b. resides on the land
    c. depastures or maintains livestock on the land
    d. stores anything on the land
    e. uses the land in any other way
2. Council will have the sole judgment on whether or not to grant the application and may seek such additional information as they may require before making their final decision.
3. If the land comes under use at any point, it will no longer receive remission of rates under this policy.

ML21/02 - Māori Freehold Land used for the purposes of Papakainga or other housing purposes subject to occupation licenses or other informal arrangements

Background

The Far North District Council recognises that occupation licenses, or other informal arrangements, only provide an interim or temporary right to occupy part or all of an area of Māori Freehold Land. This right is only available to the licensee, or informal occupier and does not create an interest that can be transferred or bequeathed as part of an estate.

This form of occupation is different to an occupation order, which provides a permanent right to occupy an area of land and can be passed on to future generations.

Occupation licenses are generally used to define a specific area of Māori Freehold Land that the licensee can occupy for the purposes establishing a dwelling. At the termination of the license, the dwelling has to be removed or transferred to the owners of the land.

Informal arrangements are where a person occupies an area of Māori Freehold Land for a period of time; however, has no formal agreement and no rights to permanent occupation.

The occupier of land that is the subject of an occupation license or informal agreement is generally not required to pay any rental to the owners of the land, i.e. it is not a commercial arrangement.

There is a willingness of occupiers of land that is the subject of these types of arrangements to pay rates in respect of the area of land that they occupy. However, there is a concern that these "parts" may become liable for the UAGC and other non-service-related charges assessed on the basis of a separately used or inhabited part of a rating unit.

This policy statement has been prepared to address these issues. It recognises that papakainga and similar housing on Māori Freehold Land are generally occupied by members of owner's families and no rentals are payable.

The policy is consistent in effect to the treatment of multiple housing on general title land, where the separate parts are occupied on a rent-free basis by members of the owner's family.

To assist the occupiers pay the rates of the parts of a rating unit that are the subject of occupation licenses, Council will issue a separate rate assessment for each part as set out in Section 45 (3) and (4) of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002.

Policy Objectives

1. To put in place processes to allow the residents with occupation licenses or other informal arrangements to pay their portion of rates in respect of the land that they occupy.
2. To assist Māori to establish papakāinga or other housing on Māori Freehold Land.
3. To assist Māori to establish an economic base for future development.

Scope

This policy applies only to **Māori Freehold Land.**

Policy Statement

The Far North District Council recognises that the imposition of multiple UAGCs or other non-service-related charges might act as a disincentive to Māori seeking to occupy Māori Freehold Land for housing purposes.

Council will consider applications for the remission of multiple UAGCs and other charges, with the exception of those that are set for the provision of utilities such as water, sewerage etc., in respect of separately used or inhabited parts of a rating unit where these are the covered by occupation licenses, or other informal arrangements.

Conditions and Criteria

1. The part of the land concerned must be the subject of a licence to occupy or other informal arrangement for the purposes of providing residential housing for the occupier on a rent-free basis.
2. The area of land covered by each arrangement must have a separate valuation issued by Council's valuation service providers and will be issued with a separate rate assessment pursuant to Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 Section 45 (3).
3. The occupier must agree to pay any rates assessed in respect of the part or division of the rating unit that is the subject of the application.
4. No portion of the service charges for utilities will be remitted.
5. Council reserves the right to cancel the remission on the portion of a rating unit upon which rates remain unpaid for a period of more than one month after the due date (due date can apply to the instalment date or an agreed payment plan).
6. Uniform Annual General Charges and other charges on the land will remain in remission so long as the occupation continues to comply with the conditions and criteria of this policy.

REVOKE - ML21/03 - New Users of Māori Freehold Land

Background

The Far North District Council recognises that significant rate arrears due to the challenges of multiple ownership can act as a disincentive to any new use of Māori Freehold Land where a New User could become responsible for the payment of any existing arrears of rates and penalties on the land. This policy has been developed to encourage use of Māori Freehold Land in these circumstances.

Policy Objective

To remove the barrier of rate debt for New Users to be able to use or develop the land.

Scope

This policy applies only to Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statement

Council may postpone the arrears of rates on Māori Freehold Land subject to the land being continuously used by a New User and that person agreeing to pay the rates while they are using the land.

Conditions and criteria

1. The person proposing to use the land must be a New User.
2. Where land has recently moved from multiple ownership to sole ownership, the sole owner will be treated as a New User.
3. Council has the sole discretion as to whether or not to grant the application and may seek additional information before making its final decision.
4. The New User using the land must, upon approval of the application, keep the current and future rates up to date for as long as they continue to use the land.
5. If the current and future rates are not paid within one month of the due dates, or subject to an agreed payment plan, Council reserves the right to reapply the postponed rates to the land.
6. Postponed rates will remain as a charge on the property for a period of six years from the date on which the rate was assessed, after which time they will be remitted.

Proposed Policies for Revocation

Background

Section 109 of the LGA 02 provides for a remission or postponement policy to be revoked. The following policies have been reviewed and are proposed to be revoked for the reasons outlined below.

REVOKE – Now covered by accounting policies: Wastewater Charges on Government Funded Subsidy Schemes

Background

From time to time, Central Government establishes funds to assist the development of wastewater schemes in communities that might not otherwise be able to afford it. The Government subsidy assists in the capital costs of a scheme. This policy ensures that the benefit of the Government subsidy is passed on to ratepayers **in those communities that are of greatest need.**

Policy Objectives

1. To comply with the requirements of Government Funded Subsidy Schemes.
2. To ensure that ratepayers in those communities of greatest need receive a benefit from the subsidy in the form of reduced charges.

Scope

This policy applies to both General Title and Māori Freehold Land.

Policy Statement

The Far North District Council will provide a remission for the capital portion of the wastewater charge for new schemes funded by Government Subsidy where the deprivation index of that community is seven or higher.

Conditions and Criteria

1. Where the policy applies, Council will automatically grant the remission to the rate accounts that qualify.
2. The remission will only apply to the capital portion of each year's rate and is only available to existing properties and their owners at the time that the relevant wastewater scheme became operational.
3. The remission will terminate 10 years after the date at which the sewerage scheme became operational.
4. Where a qualifying property is subdivided, any new rating units that are created over and above the original single rating unit will not be eligible for this remission.

Rationale for revocation – this issue is now addressed by the change to accounting policies from 1 July 2020.

REVOKE - New Users of Māori Freehold Land

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Conditions and criteria

1. The person proposing to use the land must be a New User.
2. Where land has recently moved from multiple ownership to sole ownership, the sole owner will be treated as a New User.
3. Council has the sole discretion as to whether or not to grant the application and may seek additional information before making its final decision.
4. The New User using the land must, upon approval of the application, keep the current and future rates up to date for as long as they continue to use the land.
5. If the current and future rates are not paid within one month of the due dates, or subject to an agreed payment plan, Council reserves the right to reapply the postponed rates to the land.
6. Postponed rates will remain as a charge on the property for a period of six years from the date on which the rate was assessed, after which time they will be remitted.

Rationale for revocation – any arrears can now be written off by the CE under S90 of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 prior to a new user taking over a rating unit.

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