

2025

Business Plan





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Foreword from the Chair



Guid freen,

We are delighted to present this Business Plan highlighting the policies and programmes that will have real and positive impact on the Ulster-Scots community and provide tangible, lasting benefits to all. The Ulster-Scots Agency provides many important services and this Business Plan describes the key elements of the work we plan to undertake in 2025 in furtherance of our strategic priorities as set out in the Agency's Corporate Plan 2023 - 2025. Both the Business Plan and Corporate Plans are closely linked and aligned to wider government priorities.

As we reflect on the past year, it's evident that for a very small compliment of staff, we've navigated through unprecedented budgetary and political challenges with resilience, adaptability, and a shared commitment to our mission. Despite the myriad of obstacles, we've remained steadfast in our pursuit of delivering value and high quality services while positively impacting the community we serve.

2025

In 2025 the Agency will continue to operate within a constrained budget. The plan has been developed in a continuing climate of financial, societal and economic uncertainty.

The constrained outlook for public finances will make 2025 one of the most challenging business years during a period of exceptional inflationary increases, creating significant pressure on our community and therefore our grants making service - the largest item of expenditure in our budget. The Agency has worked hard to be as efficient as possible in order to deliver on priority agendas. However, the constrained financial situation will inevitably impact on the scope of what can be delivered.

The Agency continues to equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. The Agency will also continue to play our part in societal and economic recovery while building upon our unique position to provide opportunities for people to learn and connect with others in the wider Ulster-Scots diaspora.

We are certain that by working together we can ensure high quality public services to be delivered in Ulster and in wider society.

Wi'ivry guid wish

Frederick Kettyle

Frederick Kettyle
Chairperson

The Ulster-Scots Agency



Who we are

The Ulster-Scots Agency (Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch) is an agency of the North South Language Body established under the British/Irish Agreement Act 1999 and the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (NI) Order 1999. Its statutory remit is the "promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island". In carrying out its functions, in relation to Ulster-Scots language and cultural issues the Agency may:

- Provide advice for both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sector;
- Undertake research and promotional campaigns; and
- Support projects and grant aid bodies and groups.

The Agency has a board of eight members (currently 3 vacancies), appointed by the North South Ministerial Council. These members, taken together with the sixteen similarly appointed board members of Foras na Gaeilge, comprise the board of the North South Language Body.

The Agency currently has an approved staff complement of 15.77 FTE (Full Time Equivalent).





OUR VISION

The vision of the Ulster-Scots Agency is that Ulster-Scots should flourish as a rich, vibrant and growing culture with a global legacy that is recognised at home and abroad.

OUR MISSION

The Ulster-Scots Agency will inspire, educate and empower people to understand and enjoy their Ulster-Scots identity, while working to continuously improve the governance, financial performance and customer focus of the organization.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS



INSPIRE

The Agency will identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.



EMPOWER

The Agency will equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots heritage, language and culture.



ENGAGE

The Agency will reach out locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots; and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who share our identity.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS



festivals funded with circa
56,000 attending

900+



children attending **23** summer schools

29 small community led events
to celebrate Burns Day



110

music and dance school
programmes delivered.



6TH Annual Leid (language) Week

We welcomed the Forum for Research on Languages of
Scotland and Ulster for the first time since 2000

Inaugural Tartan Dander Day on St Andrews Day, over
2000 in attendance



Over
600

achieved **qualifications** in
Ulster-Scots music and dance
517 in Highland Dance alone.



educational workshops

70+



4th year of the **Ulster-Scots
writing Competition.**

30+ **after-school** workshops
to schools and the
community.

Language classes delivered 20+



20,000

followers on facebook

Pipe Major masterclasses
delivered with Richard Parkes
MBE



www.ulsterscotsagency.com

Key achievements in 2024



2024 has been an incredible year full of positive change for the Ulster-Scots Agency and the wider Ulster-Scots community. It is exciting to be part of these changes despite the budgetary pressures faced by the Agency. Progress against each of our three strategic priorities is considered below.

Inspire

The Agency supported a range of projects to safeguard or promote Ulster-Scots heritage during the year. In the border counties, we continued to work with partners in progressing the Monaghan Peace Campus and Bailieborough Plantation Museum by creating content for the Ulster-Scots aspects. In addition to the physical installation in these museums, the Agency created content for audio-visual and artefact displays. The Monaghan Peace Campus was formally opened by Minister Heather Humphreys TD on 10th May. We also continued to build on our relationships with the Linen Hall Library, Belfast and the Gamble Library at Union Theological College, Belfast, both repositories of major Ulster-Scots collections.



Ulster-Scots heritage was made more visible in the public realm through the unveiling of a new Blue Plaques in conjunction with the Ulster History Circle, seeing a plaque for Field Marshall Alan Brooke in Brookeborough, Co Fermanagh on 6th June. The plaque was unveiled by Viscount Brookeborough, the Lord Lieutenant of the county. Also unveiled was a blue plaque for William Tennant, a Minister, Educator and Founder of Log College in Pennsylvania on 28th October and John Clifford, a published writer in Ulster-Scots poetry and prose from East Antrim in November.

We created a short film on the role of the Ulster-Scots and Scotch-Irish on D-Day, which was viewed 89,000 times. We also developed this into a travelling exhibition. Our static exhibition entitled Ulster's V.C. Heroes of the Great War also found a permanent home at the prestigious Somme Heritage Centre in Newtownards.

Writing in Ulster-Scots has continued to grow, supported by our annual Ulster-Scots Writing Competition, in association with the Linen Hall Library.

Interest in the Agency's school programmes was strong in 2024. Across the nine counties 110 schools were supported for tuition in Ulster-Scots music or dance; 30 schools completed eight weeklong After School Clubs and introductory workshops were also delivered in 70 schools, which should be a positive sign for future growth.

Key achievements in 2024 continued



Empower

We continued to provide capacity building support to the Ulster-Scots community through core funding to the Ulster-Scots Community Network and annual funding to three Ulster-Scots Community Impact Projects in West Tyrone, Mourne and North/West Belfast, which played a vital role in supporting Ulster-Scots groups to access funds, as well as delivering a wide range of cultural outputs.

Applications for music and dance tuition in the community showed strong growth, with 131 grants awarded, although this was curtailed due to budget pressures. Applications for community festivals was strong, with 11 awards made. Our summer schools were again very popular with 23 awarded and nearly 930 children participating.



During 2024, the Agency initiated a new masterclass for current and aspiring Pipe Majors led by Richard Parkes MBE. At the end of two days expert tuition, each participant received a certificate from Richard Parkes, the world's most successful Pipe Major.

Engage

Ulster-Scots was represented at the Hawick Reivers Festival in the Scottish Borders. The Border Reivers was also the basis of an East-West School Twinning between the primary schools in Lisbellaw and Drumlanrig.

The Agency worked in partnership with the Youth Sector such as the Boys Brigade, the Girls Brigade, Scouts and Girlguiding Ulster in order to prepare Ulster-Scots resources. All 4 organisations now offer badges with supporting resources and activity books.

As part of Leid week in November 2024, the Agency was delighted to host the Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ulster (FRLSU). FRLSU covers all the languages in Scotland and Ulster, including Scots/Ulster-Scots, Gaelic/Irish and BSL/ISL. The Agency worked on the conference jointly with Ulster University and USCN attracting circa 80 participants from the British Isles and beyond. The Agency was also delighted to have the British-Irish Council in attendance at Leid Week



Resourcing: 2025 Budget



This business plan is based on a baseline budget of £2,617,476 and includes an uplift of £137,500 before pensions. The budget has been profiled against our key work areas as follows:

Key work areas	2024 Approved Budget (£)	2025 Proposed Budget (£)
Serving the Community	925,994	754,351
Partnership Working	56,060	76,060
Marketing	201,619	211,918
Education	172,500	182,000
Providing a First Class Service	1,122,771	1,225,346
Uplift Additional Staff Costs	138,532	167,801
Uplift Business Development Officers	-	137,500
Total	2,617,476	2,754,976
Additional Pension Contributions DFC	49,230	49,866
Total Budget	2,666,706	2,804,842
Funded by:		
DFC	2,012,337	2,116,191
DTCAGSM	654,369	688,651
Total Budget	2,666,706	2,804,842

The Agency currently has an approved staff complement of 15.77 FTE posts:

- CEO (G7 equivalent)
- 3 Directors (DP equivalent) – Corporate Services; Education & Language; and Development
- 4 Development Officers (SO equivalent)
- 3 SO Corporate Staff (HR/Office Manager; Accountant; and Marketing Officer)
- 3 EO2s (Grants/Marketing/Finance)
- 2 AOs (Admin/Grants)

In the event that the NSMC is available as an approval mechanism, we are proposing a review of senior management grading and an increase of 4 FTE to the existing staff complement to 19.77 posts:

- CEO (G5 equivalent)
- 4 Directors – Policy & Research (G7) Corporate Services; Education & Language; and Development (Currently DP but to be reviewed)
- 1 Policy Officer (DP)
- 6 Development Officers (SO equivalent)
- 3 SO Corporate Staff (HR/Office Manager; Accountant; and Marketing Officer)
- 3 EO2s (Grants/Marketing/Finance)
- 2 AOs (Admin/Grants)

Strategic Priorities for 2025



All indications are that 2025 will be a year of significant financial challenge for the Ulster-Scots Agency. We have worked hard to shield the Ulster-Scots communities through a period of fifteen years of budgetary decline, but more recently that has become increasingly difficult. During 2025 we will work as best we can to balance the significant pressures that we face in terms of diminishing finances, increasing demand from local communities and increasing demand from statutory partners who are facing their own budgetary pressures, while hoping that the new draft Ulster-Scots Strategy and legal changes brought about through the NDNA agreement will start to deliver.

We will work to secure additional funding to deliver support to the community and address strategic priorities as opportunities and capacity allow, particularly targeting funding streams like Peace Plus and the Shared Island Initiative. We will complete the roll out of events supported by £50k secured through Belfast City Council's Belfast 24 programme and continue to prioritise the development of the Belfast Ulster-Scots Hub.

Our programme of activity for the year is built around the Strategic Aims of our 2023-2025 Corporate Plan, *Inspire*, *Empower* and *Engage*.

SA1 – Inspire

The Agency will deliver a range of initiatives to identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture in order to inspire people of all ages to appreciate and engage with our Ulster-Scots identity.

Burns Week in January and Ulster-Scots Language Week in November will remain the flagship events of our annual programme, engaging schools and communities across Ulster, supplemented by Ulster-Scots Day in May and other Ulster-Scots led events as opportunities and resources allow.

Maintaining our programme of support for the delivery of learning about Ulster-Scots in schools will remain a priority, while seeking to enrich delivery with the addition of new complementary learning resources on an ongoing basis.

We will continue to promote Ulster-Scots at large scale events like the Balmoral Show and National Ploughing Championships; and further develop our visibility at Armed Forces Day and other significant civic events.

We will also work on growing our social media following, which now exceeds 20,000 people in worldwide; and seek to convert online support to real world opportunities.

Strategic Priorities for 2025



SA2 - Empower

The Agency will continue to equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

We will work to maintain the support infrastructure that we have at the heart of the Ulster-Scots sector, through the umbrella Ulster-Scots Community Network and our three Community Impact Projects which help to support the hundreds of groups and thousands of volunteers who comprise the Ulster-Scots cultural ecosystem.

We will continue to support our regular annual grant programmes which support community-based music and dance tuition, summer schools and community festivals, but the level of support available in some areas may be reduced. We do not expect to be in a position to open a Small Events grant call in 2025.

Work to develop a Transition Year (TY) Programme for use in schools in Ireland, supported through the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media in the Republic of Ireland, which has been delayed due to staff shortages, will move forward at pace now that all key vacancies have been filled.

SA3 - Engage

The Agency will deliver a range of projects and programmes through which we will reach out, locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who share our identity.

We will work to build relationships with other cultural minority communities in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of Ulster-Scots and promote mutual respect.

Building relationships with our US diaspora and seeking opportunities to promote Ulster-Scots in the context of the 250th anniversary of American Independence will remain a priority. We will also continue to build relationships with stakeholders in Scotland around key areas of work.

The Agency will identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Lead Directorate	Corp. Plan Target
1.1	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to Ulster-Scots Language Week	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA1.13
1.2	Deliver a programme of activity (online and in-person) in relation to key dates in the Ulster-Scots cultural calendar (e.g. Burns, St. Patricks, 4 th July, 12 th July, St. Andrews, Hogmanay)	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA1.14
1.3	Support a programme of activity around Ulster-Scots Day	1 programme	May 2025	Development	CPSA1.2
1.4	Develop a promotional programme for Ulster-Scots around national and international awareness days (IWD, Regional Languages etc)	1 programme	December 2025	DoD/ DEL	CPSA1.14
1.5	Support a programme of large-scale heritage projects promoting aspects of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture	1 programme	December 2025	DoD	CPSA1.16
1.6	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional events and exhibitions	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA1.3
1.7	Deliver a programme of Blue Plaques around Ulster celebrating significant Ulster-Scots figures	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA1
1.8	Promote Ulster-Scots through a multi-channel marketing programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA1
1.9	Support primary schools via the Ulster-Scots Flagship School Programme	5 new Flagship School awards	December 2025	Education	CPSA1.9

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Lead Directorate	Corp. Plan Target
1.10	Deliver a North/South School Twinning Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Education: GB	CPSA2.14
1.11	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots Afterschool Clubs in Primary Schools	1 programme	December 2025	Education: GB	CPSA2.12
1.12	Deliver a programme of educational workshops for schools	1 programme	December 2025	Education: GB	CPSA2.13
1.13	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots music/dance tuition in schools	1 programme	December 2025	Development: DR	CPSA2.16
1.14	Support a programme of partnerships for the preservation and/or promotion of Ulster-Scots heritage assets	1 programme	December 2025	DoD	CPSA1.16
1.15	Deliver the Kelvin Prize in conjunction with the Institute of Physics. In celebration of the world-renowned scientist and Ulster-Scot Lord Kelvin.	1 programme	December 2025	DEL	CPSA1
1.16	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to VE Day 80	1 programme	December 2025	DoD	CPSA1
1.17	Deliver the A Level RE Essay Competition in partnership with Union Theological College	1 competition	December 2025	DEL	CPSA1

SA2 – Empower

The Agency will equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Lead Directorate	Corp. Plan Target
2.1	Deliver Core Funding Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA2
2.2	Deliver Community Impact Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA2.4
2.3	Deliver Music & Dance Tuition Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA2.1
2.4	Deliver Community Festivals Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA2.3
2.5	Deliver Summer School Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA2
2.6	Deliver Financial Assistance Scheme 'Other' Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA2
2.7	Develop a series of learning resources to support the delivery of Agency programmes	1 series of resources	December 2025	Education	CPSA2.1
2.8	Deliver a programme of talks on Ulster-Scots language to schools and community groups	1 programme	December 2025	Education	CPSA2.6
2.9	Support the promotion of Ulster-Scots through a programme of community radio broadcasting	2 broadcast periods	December 2025	Development	CPSA2.9
2.10	Deliver 2 heritage projects in RoI border counties	2 projects	December 2025	Development	CPSA1
2.11	Support 400 learners in achieving recognised qualifications in music and dance	400 accredited learners	December 2025	Education	CPSA2

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Lead Directorate	Corp. Plan Target
2.12	Deliver a programme of events to mark the achievements of Ulster-Scots learners	1 programme	December 2025	Education	CPSA2
2.13	Support delivery of the Richard Parkes MBE Pipe Majors Masterclass	1 masterclass	April 2025	Education	CPSA2
2.14	Develop a Transition Year Programme on Ulster-Scots identity	1 programme	December 2025	Education	CPSA2
2.15	Support delivery of Business Development Officers to 31 December 2025	3 Officers	December 2025	Development	CPSA2.4

Additional Targets in respect of 2021 Baseline Budget Uplift

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Lead Directorate	Corp. Plan Target
2.16	Develop and implement an annual Research Programme	1 programme	December 2025	Policy & Research Team	n/a
2.17	Develop and implement an annual Consultation Plan	1 programme	December 2025	Policy & Research Team	n/a
2.18	Develop and implement an annual Advice and Guidance programme	1 programme	December 2025	Policy & Research Team	n/a
2.19	Develop and implement an annual Language Action Plan	1 plan	December 2025	Language Development Officer	n/a
2.20	Develop and implement an annual Youth Development Plan	1 plan	December 2025	Youth Development Officer	CPSA2

SA3 – Engage

The Agency will reach out locally and globally; to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who have Ulster-Scots roots.

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Lead Directorate	Corp. Plan Target
3.1	Deliver a programme of outreach to other cultural minority communities in Ulster	1 programme	December 2025	Education	CPSA3.6
3.2	Deliver a series of projects in relation to the Border Reivers	2 projects	December 2025	Development	CPSA3
3.3	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots diaspora in the US	2 projects	December 2025	Development	CPSA3.4
3.4	Deliver an East/West School Twinning Programme	1 Programme	December 2025	Education	CPSA3.1
3.5	Support a programme of East/West relationships with Scotland	1 programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA3.3
3.6	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots diaspora in the Commonwealth	1 Programme	December 2025	Development	CPSA3

Monitoring and Reporting



Each activity and target within this Business Plan is owned by a lead Directorate within the organisation. Targets will be incorporated into the annual work plans of individual members of staff or staff reporting to them. Each member of staff will complete a monthly progress report to their line manager detailing progress against agreed targets. Directors will submit a monthly progress report to the Chief Executive.

The Board of the Ulster-Scots Agency will receive regular reports on progress against Business Plan targets.

Sponsor Departments will receive regular progress reports against Business Plan targets within the context of the agreed SLA and regular Accountability Meetings; and regular reports will be submitted for the consideration of the North-South Ministerial Council through periodic Language Sectoral Meetings.

Annually the Agency will issue reporting on performance through the Annual Report and Accounts.



Meet Our Board

FREDDIE KETTYLE

VICE CHAIRPERSON

Freddie Kettle is a farmer and businessman from Virginia, County Cavan. He served as Vice Chairman of the Ulster-Scots Agency previously from 2015 to 2019. He is a former member of Cavan County Council and has previously served on the Management Board of Virginia College and the Cavan VEC.

ALLEN MCADAM

Allen is a UCD Agricultural Science graduate, socio and economic development consultant, entrepreneur and part-time farmer from County Monaghan. He is recognised as an experienced advisor in the field of rural and local development in the border region and has previously held management positions with Lakeland Dairies, Terralift Fertilisers, DCI Energy and Cavan Monaghan LEADER. He is a former board member of the International Fund for Ireland and currently serves as member of numerous other organisations and bodies including as a Trustee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

LAVINIA TILSON

Native from Granard, Co. Longford, Lavinia has lived in Co. Cavan for the last twenty-seven years.

Prior to graduating from Trinity College in 1992 with a B. Ed. degree, she received her secondary education in Ard Scoil Phadraig in Granard followed by completing her Leaving Certificate through the medium of Irish in Coláiste Moibhí. Ms. Tilson commenced her teaching profession in Raphoe, Co. Donegal and is currently a primary teaching principal in Ballyconnell Co. Cavan, a position she has held for over twenty years.

KARYN DEVENNEY

Karyn grew up in the Laggan Valley in East Donegal, where she experienced the traditions and the language of the Ulster-Scots community on a daily basis.

Her father's passion for the Ulster-Scots community has inspired her to develop a deeper appreciation of her background.

Her first teaching position was in St Louise's College on the Falls Road, Belfast, as a Drama and English teacher. This teaching opportunity influenced and shaped her greatly in her profession. She spent 2 years in The Rathgael Centre in Bangor, Co Down working with Young Offenders and Children in Care.

At present, she is the Deputy Principal of a Primary School in Manorcunningham, Co Donegal.

TREVOR WILSON

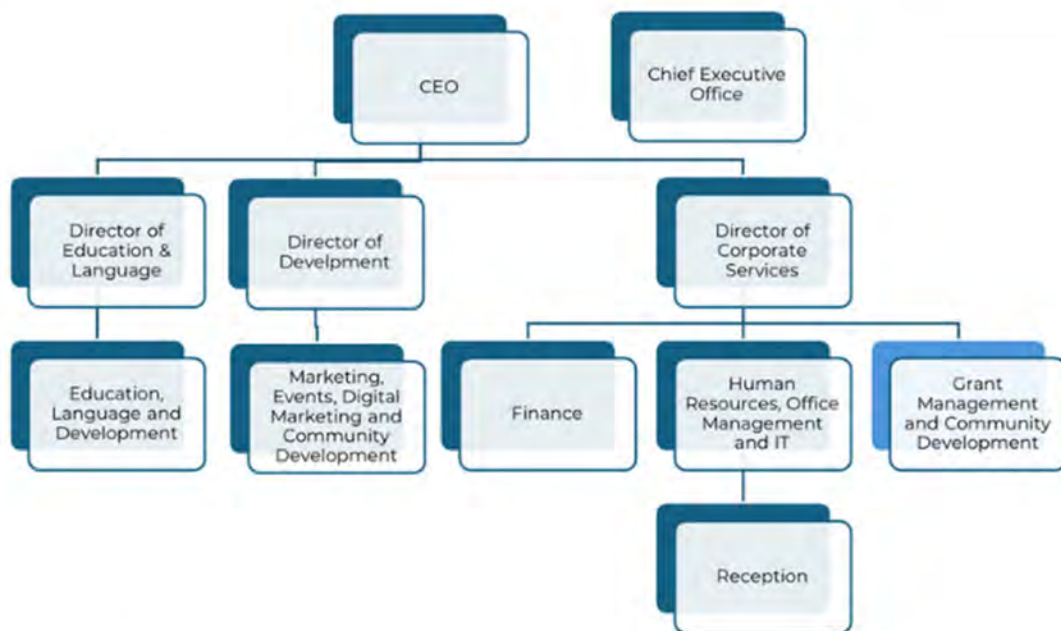
Trevor Wilson has served the people of Cookstown as an Ulster Unionist Councillor since 1989.

He is a past Council Chairman and past Chairman of the Council's Audit committee, Chairman of Cookstown Enterprise Centre, Chairman of Mid Ulster Pipe Band Section and a member of Friends of Killymoon Castle.

Trevor has a lot of experience of serving on Voluntary boards and is a founder member of Fairhill and District Credit Union. He is an avid Northern Ireland football fan and a member of Killymoon Golf club.

Appendix 2

Our Organisational Structure



Our offices

The Agency is headquartered in Belfast, with a regional office in Raphoe, Donegal.

The Corn Exchange
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