

impact

spring 2020



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WELCOME

The coronavirus outbreak is presenting us with some of the most significant challenges our community has faced in modern times. We none the less remain devoted to doing all we can to continue working with you and to have as much positive impact as we can on helping people across our rural communities through these uncertain and difficult times.

As a charity we have built our culture on putting people first and prioritising the health and well-being not only of our team but of each and every member of the wider community we support. As part of the national effort to protect our NHS and save lives, our entire team has been working at home since mid March keeping our core projects and services running remotely with admirable positivity and determination.

In addition to continuing our core activities as best we can, we have quickly adapted our approach and diverted some of our resources to try and help mitigate some of the immediate impacts of the crisis. This has included allowing our team paid time off to volunteer to support the response effort, providing free access to information and resources for village halls and opening up our phones for the team to take calls and provide company to lonely or isolated members of the community. We are also pleased to be making use of our barista coffee van to serve free refreshments to hard working volunteers and key workers, including front line NHS staff.

As each Thursday evening passes and we join with neighbours to clap for our brave health and social care workers, we are reminded that this is a time for our community to come together, to protect one another and to reach out and help those who are disproportionately disadvantaged, isolated or disconnected. It's also a time to consider our next steps and how to adapt to a new normal, a normal that values community, health, resilience and our environment. A new normal that is built up from the amazing acts of neighbourliness, kindness and community spirit currently happening in every street across the whole of Leicestershire and Rutland.

Whilst the immediate future for us all remains uncertain, we are working hard at the RCC to evolve and adapt our work to help you to meet the challenges that lie ahead and to make sure you get the support you need from us at the time you need it most.

Sam Howlett
Executive Director

Kevin Butcher
Executive Director

Responding to COVID-19

We are yet to find a single person, group, organisation or business that hasn't suffered significant effects from the global coronavirus outbreak. Whether that is bereavement, impacts on physical or mental health, financial challenges, or simply the fundamental changes to the way we all work, care for others, sustain ourselves and socialise.

The RCC is no exception. Unsurprisingly the outbreak has had some significant impacts on the charity and forced us to make some broad ranging changes to the way we work. We have remained focussed by basing our actions during the crisis around four core objectives:

1. Safeguarding the physical, mental and financial well-being of our team
2. Supporting the national effort to stay home and save lives
3. Continuing safe and effective delivery of our core projects and services
4. Using our skills and resources to help respond to the crisis

Working in liaison with Government, local authorities and partners across the voluntary sector, we have considered how we can contribute to the collective response and diverted some of our resources to help just some of the many whose lives, work or activity have been significantly affected by the crisis.

Preventing loneliness

A mutual priority across the UK has been to ensure isolated and vulnerable individuals are connected within their community and protected as far as possible from suffering unnecessary feelings of loneliness. To help play our part we have established a telephone service offering conversation and companionship to anyone that needs it. Anyone anywhere in Leicestershire or Rutland can give us a call, request a call back or refer someone to us.

Using our resources to help people through



Live since mid March, our website now includes a dedicated area with information, advice, resources and links that should be of help to rural people, groups, facilities and businesses. This includes free access to information sheets and model documents to assist with managing village halls and other community facilities.



As we move through May, we are pleased to have our barista van back on the road, serving free coffee to show our appreciation to some of the many NHS staff, keyworkers and response volunteers who have been working tirelessly throughout the outbreak to keep our rural communities safe, fed, cared for and well.

ruralcc.org.uk/covid-19



rural coffee connect

connecting people one cup at a time

Feeling stuck or alone during the coronavirus outbreak?
The RCC team are here to provide
company and conversation.

We'd love to hear from you for a chat.



01455 856330



Monday - Friday



9am - 4pm

 @YourRCC  @YourRCC  ruralcc.org.uk/covid-19



**COMMUNITY
FUND**

rural coffee connect

connecting people one cup at a time

After much anticipation and planning our Rural Coffee Connect mobile barista café hit the roads in January and we could not be prouder of its initial impact.

We launched the start of our delivery with a series of visits to South Luffenham, Great Glen, Ullesthorpe, Gilmorton and Oakham, which proved to be a great success. Although, of course, a fantastic learning opportunity too; lesson number one – always wear thermals in the winter! Hundreds of free cups of Two Chimps locally supplied, responsibly sourced coffee later and we have now mastered the perfect latte and cappuccino. More importantly we witnessed countless neighbourly conversations and were overjoyed to see the community spirit come to life in these five brilliant communities.

The focus of the Coffee Connect project is to help tackle rural loneliness by providing a safe and welcoming space for people to interact and connect within their communities. We saw just this at our visit in South Luffenham; a local resident who had moved to the area from Essex two months prior to visiting the van explained that joining us for a coffee was the first social event she had attended in the village. She went on to

have a friendly chat with others from her community who shared information of regular social groups and welcomed her to join. It was incredibly rewarding to see this and so many other connections being made amongst the villagers.



Whilst social distancing measures put a temporary halt in our visits with the van, we have persevered with our aim to tackle rural loneliness. We are running a new telephone service offering companionship to anyone feeling alone, isolated or who just wants a coffee and chat. We are available on weekdays between 9am and 4pm to lend an ear and provide friendly conversation. Anyone can call us on **01455 856330** or visit our website to refer someone or request a call back.

Behind the scenes we are working hard to prepare for when the time comes to get back on the road.

ruralcc.org.uk/loneliness

What is loneliness?

Loneliness is often a challenging issue to discuss as people may not always know what they feel is loneliness and also may not want to admit that they are lonely. Loneliness although complex is at its simplest about having a lack of companionship and unmeaningful social relationships. Although lots of services reach out to people and lots of government funding has gone into projects, there is still a stigma about feeling lonely. Loneliness is not about being alone, but more about how a person feels and what they are experiencing. People who are lonely say they feel empty, alone and unwanted. These feelings can be experienced even if there are lots of people around.

People who are lonely may experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety which can fuel feelings of despair and hopelessness. When feeling this way individuals can often retreat into themselves, which makes creating a connection with others extremely difficult, therefore increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

What helps?

Connect with others

Phone calls to friends, family or our team, talking video calls, letters, emails, joining social media groups around hobbies and shared interests

Seek and offer help

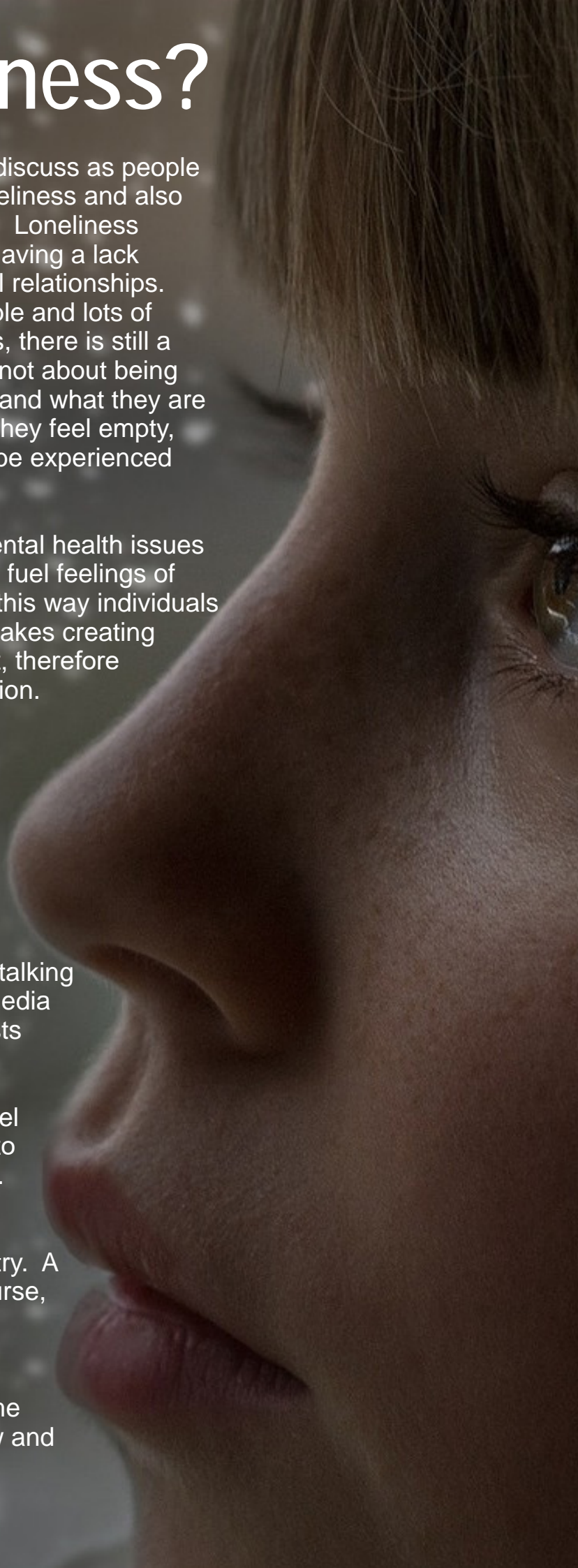
Speak to someone and explain that you feel lonely and need some help. Offering help to someone can also improve your wellbeing.

Find a new hobby or interest

Think of something new you would like to try. A new recipe, learning a language, short course, crafting, gardening, reading or exercise

Get some fresh air or exercise

Make sure you take time to get out for some fresh air each day, even opening a window and breathing is helpful.



Time to Start a Conversation

The RCC is proud to be a key partner for Start a Conversation, the local Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland suicide prevention campaign. Through a raised awareness, and open and honest conversations about suicide, we believe that every person has the potential to make a difference and save a life. The RCC contributes to the campaign by helping to raise awareness, which includes encouraging organisations and individuals to sign up to the Start a Conversation Pledge; by engaging in work with other partners, such as through the local Suicide Audit and Prevention Group; and by delivering Suicide Awareness training (with thanks to funding by Leicestershire County Council).

Back in the autumn, the RCC delivered two half-day Suicide Awareness training sessions, in Barwell and Market Harborough, with 62 people attending either as interested members of the public or as representatives drawn from 29 different local agencies. As one person commented, "this was really great training, a must for all of us who are working with the public". Four further training sessions will be scheduled for delivery this year when safe to do so (when lockdown restrictions are relaxed). Please contact us if interested in attending one of these sessions. We are also able to offer bespoke 'in-house' training within organisations, for which there is a charge. Please contact us if that is of interest.

Asking for help

Talking to someone about how you feel is the first step to getting better. Think about who the best person to talk to might be.

They could be a trusted friend or family member. It could be someone in the community who you see regularly such as a friend, neighbour or even a teacher or sports coach.

You might choose to speak to your GP or call NHS 111.

There is no shame in asking for help and support.




The Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown measures have undoubtedly placed a greater strain on many individuals, as well as on the ability and resources of support services to respond to those in need. The pandemic could have a significant mental health effect, and it has been suggested that the number of deaths by suicide may rise – although this is not inevitable.

Please do be aware of your own mental health and well-being, as well

as that of others, and how and where you can access support if you need it. Information is available at both the RCC and the Start a Conversation websites. Please also contact your GP if concerned about your mental health, or if experiencing symptoms of anxiety and/or depression.

ruralcc.org.uk/awareness

Remember you are not alone

-  Many people have thoughts of suicide.
-  With support and treatment, negative feelings can pass.
-  It is important to know that there is help available and that you are not alone.



It's **not always obvious** someone is feeling suicidal, people can be good at **putting on a brave face**. If you recognise warning signs in someone you know, then it's time to **#StartAConversation**.

- **Try to understand their state of mind**
Ask them how they're feeling.
- **Be a good listener by letting them talk**
Avoid trying to relate to them by saying things like 'We all have bad days'.
- **Ask the suicide question**
By asking someone about suicide you won't put the idea in their head. Don't ask the question in a negative way, such as 'you're not going to do something silly are you?'. Instead ask them calmly and directly, such as 'have you been thinking about suicide?'
- **Let them answer**
Don't judge, or seem shocked or annoyed.
- **Ask if they have a suicide plan**
Having a suicide plan and the means to fulfil it puts someone at high risk and in need of urgent help from their GP or 999.
- **Help and support**
Remember to stay calm and make sure they're not left on their own. Encourage them to talk about their thoughts and feelings, either to yourself, their GP or a helpline.

For more information, support or advice visit
StartAConversation.co.uk





MAKING PLANNING WORK FOR ALL RURAL COMMUNITIES

We offer a broad range of community consultation and technical support services which can help you work with people across your community to plan the future of your area, have greater influence over the way your village or town develops and grows, identify and explore local issues and priorities or gather evidence of need to support project development and fund raising activity



www.ruralcc.org.uk

RCC helps to Play a Part

Last year we were delighted to support South Croxton Parish Council to undertake a programme of community consultation activity on the future development of their village playing field.



The first phase of our work was to plan and facilitate a public consultation event held in the grounds of South Croxton Village Hall on a sunny Saturday morning in June. The event was held to promote the project, recruit a volunteer steering group and to gather views on the playing field and how they would like to see it improved.

Following the event we worked with the new Play a Part Project Steering Group to produce a survey circulated to all households in the village to gain further insight from residents. Questions focussed on exploring how households used the area, its accessibility and their thoughts on the features and equipment on site. The survey also gathered ideas and suggestions to help define a community vision for the future of the facility.

In December, and once the results of the consultation event and household survey had been digested and reviewed, we held a second community event to share our findings and feedback to residents. We also used this event as an opportunity to ask people to consider some options for potential equipment, landscaping and facilities using interactive displays including images of play equipment, designs and material samples from potential suppliers.



Using all of the evidence gathered from the programme of consultation we prepared a report setting out a collective vision for the future development of the playing field. To help take the project forward to its next phase, we also included a series of recommendations including sources of funding and further professional support.

We will be watching with excitement when the community can safely move onto the next phase of this project and successfully redevelop their playing field in line with the needs and vision of local people. We also hope that they will build on our work and create opportunities to bring people back together following COVID-19 to participate in more collective community action to improve their village.

For more information please get in touch via 01455 856330 or info@ruralcc.org.uk

Community



vista



Work. Live. Leicestershire

TACKLING RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT

We could offer you free, tailored support if you're looking for volunteering, work, business start up advice or improved wellbeing

 Call 01455 856330

 Email hello@ruralcc.org.uk



This project is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund

*Participants must meet all eligibility criteria to be considered for entry onto the programme

We **WiLL** be here

This has been a strange period for the Work.Live.Leicestershire (WiLL) partnership. As the project is based around a face to face service you can imagine the barriers that we have had to face as this crisis has unfolded. Suddenly and with little warning we could no longer physically meet and support people, our community outreach stopped and we were struck with uncertainty over when and how we could effectively carry on.

Led remotely by the fantastic programme team at VISTA and with the security of funding from the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, everyone across our amazing partnership has risen to this challenge. We have quickly found ways to reach those of you that need our help and focussed our collective energy on what we can rather than what we cannot do.

At the RCC we have continued our rural outreach activity to find and engage people eligible for the programme using online and social media platforms. Our team have kept in regular contact over the phone with the individuals we are providing with keywork support and we have introduced a new weekly e-newsletter keeping them up to date with useful sources of information and support during the crisis.

Here is a selection of short updates on the activity of some of our delivery partners:



Keeping in touch with participants to catch up, offer support and to assure them that they are not on their own even if they feel they are.

The team are also helping people remotely to update CVs, apply for jobs and circulating information about distance learning options.



For CASE it's business as usual as much as possible during this difficult time. The team is fully equipped and working remotely.

They are happy to be providing advice over the phone, e-mail or video call on self-employment and business start-up ideas.



VAL are working hard to recruit volunteers and mobilise them throughout the community sector to support the COVID-19 response.

They are also supporting people virtually with setting goals, future planning, online courses and help to overcome mental health issues.



Due to social distancing and lockdown LCC run activities, events, classes and clubs supporting people with employability and job search are not able to be held as normal.

To continue support a remote helpline has been running Mon – Thurs from 10am – 2pm.



A live chat service is running from

7am-9pm 7 days a week. Welcome sessions are being run online including best next steps.

Support is also available for those that are self-employed, looking to start up or self-employed and worried about their business.



WEA have launched a new range of virtual training sessions open to project participants.

These include courses to help people into work, to improve health and wellbeing, on healthy eating and sessions on maintaining good financial health.

workliveleicestershire.org.uk

Project Update

Information & Resources

Over 250 village halls make up the largest network of rural facilities in Leicestershire and Rutland and most of these buildings are run entirely by local volunteers.

As part of our role to support those managing village halls and community buildings we provide around 50 information sheets and model documents covering a wide range of management and governance issues including:

Health & hygiene

Insurance

Managing people

Health & safety

Business plans

Service provision

During COVID-19 we are offering these free of charge to village halls in Leicestershire or Rutland. Please visit our website today for more information.

ruralcc.org.uk/buildings



Five Ways to Wellbeing



Amy here. I'm a member of the RCC team and when I'm not at work I love cooking, exercising and all things health and wellbeing.

As a charity our ethos is to support rural communities across Leicestershire and Rutland to be happier, healthier, stronger, and more prosperous places to live and work.

It has been not long over a year since I joined the team and I can honestly say I love the sense of reward I get from my job, particularly interacting with people and seeing the positive impact of our work on people's lives.

Living in friendly, caring communities has never been more important. As a team we have been thinking about what more we could do to spread a little positivity across the rural communities of Leicestershire and Rutland.

We have decided to start sharing a 'Wednesday wellbeing' post across our social media pages with fun, easy tips and ideas as well as information on taking care of yourself and your loved ones using the five ways to wellbeing, promoted by the NHS and the mental health charity Mind. We asked Sam, one of our Executive Directors, to use the five ways to wellbeing during lockdown and send us a series of photos to show how he got on:



Evidence suggests these five steps can improve your mental health and wellbeing, help you to feel more positive and get the most out of life. We would love to interact with you over on our social media pages where you will find out more about the five ways to wellbeing, see our weekly posts and get updates on all our projects and activities.

Follow us by searching:



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community

Markfield Good Neighbours


Since last summer, the RCC has supported the development of a Good Neighbour Scheme in Markfield. The scheme is designed to build on existing good neighbourliness across the community by linking people in need with a local volunteer willing and able to help. Schemes like this not only improve the health of wellbeing of those supported but also help to build stronger social connections across the community.

Early on, it was decided that the scheme would be run under the 'umbrella' of Markfield Community Association, a registered charity. Recruitment of volunteers was steady, time was taken to draft policies and procedures, and in February the steering group tentatively set a launch date for the scheme – the VE Day bank holiday on 8 May.

The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the lockdown measures introduced on 23 March, prompted a significant change of plan. The Community Association took the opportunity to use the embryonic Good Neighbour Scheme to respond to the crisis. Requests for further voluntary help brought an incredible response and, in just a few days, a network of volunteers was set up covering the whole of Markfield and Field Head. Leaflets were delivered to all households offering help and support, but especially for those who in self-isolation or otherwise vulnerable. Over 70 volunteers are signed up to help with shopping, collecting prescriptions, delivering food packs, and to reach out and have reassuring chats with anxious people - and much, much more.



**IT'S
OKAY
TO ASK
FOR
HELP**



Do you need someone to pick you up some milk, a prescription or perhaps you feel lonely and need a chat. We are here to help you!

**YOU WILL NOT BE A
BURDEN!**

Credit is given to Ron and Dawn Grantham for their inspiration and drive to develop and coordinate the Scheme. As Ron says "it is truly amazing how much our volunteers are doing for our community. Their effort and willingness restores my faith in our community". Leicestershire Cares recently recognised Dawn's efforts to coordinate the scheme by awarding her a Certificate of Recognition "for outstanding contribution to the local community during the coronavirus pandemic". Congratulations Dawn!

For information about Good Neighbour Schemes and the support we can offer at the RCC, please contact Mike Wilbur via mwilbur@ruralcc.org.uk

The RCC supported the development of the Markfield scheme thanks to funding provided by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

Celebrating Social Resilience

Sadly due to the virus outbreak we have had to take the difficult decision to pause and rethink the 2020 Rural Awards.

Normally throughout May and June our dedicated team of volunteer judges would be meeting to short-list entries, travelling out across Leicestershire and Rutland to meet our finalists and using these visits to decide our overall award winners. This is simply not possible this year due to the unprecedented social distancing measures and actions we must all take to shield vulnerable members of our community.

We recognise that this is disappointing news for those that have submitted entries this year. By way of recognition we will be issuing all entries with a certificate of thanks for their commitment and contribution to our rural communities and extend the offer to carry over their entry to when we hope to resume the Rural Awards as normal in 2021.

awards



So what about 2020?

The growing levels of togetherness and social resilience we are seeing across our rural communities so far in 2020 have been astounding. Re-branded as the Rural Resilience Awards, we plan to find a safe and appropriate way later this year to recognise and celebrate some of the amazing acts of bravery, kindness and community spirit being shown by people, businesses and groups across rural areas throughout the outbreak.

If you know of a stand out person, group or organisation having a positive impact or helping to respond to the outbreak in your area please get in touch by emailing us via **awards@ruralcc.org.uk**

leicestershire and rutland
rural
resilience awards



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ruralcc.org.uk

Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland)

Unit S09, The Atkins, Lower Bond St, Hinckley, LE10 1QU

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