



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service



ENVIRONMENT (WALES) ACT 2016: SECTION 6 DUTY

March 2020

BACKGROUND

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 21st March 2016. It delivers against the governments commitment to introduce new legislation for the environment and puts into place legislation needed to plan and **manage Wales' natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up way**. The legislation will hopefully mean significant benefits in relation to the economic, social and environmental sustainability within Wales.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 has been developed by the Welsh Government to **support and complement the long-term, well-being objectives outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**. Public bodies that are subject to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are also subject to the Section 6 duty.

The Part 1 - Section 6 (S6) duty was introduced under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 to **improve biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in Wales**, essential to our well-being.

The duty requires that public authorities must seek to **maintain and enhance biodiversity** in the exercise of their functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions. The enhanced biodiversity duty is to recognise the link between biodiversity and the long-term functioning of ecosystems.

It is highlighted that Public authorities with no land will still need to consider each of the aspects of resilience, as their decisions and action can influence ecosystems indirectly, for example, through their procurement policy or through funding decisions and conditions.

To comply with the S6 duty, most public authorities must prepare and publish a plan setting out what action they propose to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote resilience. A report on what the public authority has done to comply with the duty must be published by the end of 2019 and then every three years after this date.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT



Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) is **committed to excellence with a vision to become a world class organisation.** We recognise the increasing importance of the need to protect the environment and conserve the habitats and resources within the area we serve.

As a Service, we cover **4,500 square miles of predominantly rural countryside** which makes up two-thirds of the area of Wales. We cover 6 counties including, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Powys. Within this area we cover **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**, **National Parks** and **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)**.

We are **committed to reducing our negative impact on the environment** which is reflected through our Corporate Plan, our Environmental Policy, guidance documents, strategies and certifications. Our sustainability and environment aims and objectives are outlined within our Annual Environmental Report and 5 year Sustainability and Environment Strategy which are published on our external website.



As a Service, we have made a commitment to be an environmentally responsible Service, and as such achieved the **Level 5 Green Dragon EMS Standard in 2014**. Since then we have been committed to maintaining the highest level available which we have been successful in doing each year to date. To comply with the Standard, we have a wide range of Environmental Procedures and guidance available to all members of Staff via @Work to assist in. This is used to support our Service wide Environmental Management System which ensures continual environmental improvement and raise awareness of environmental sustainability in all our activities.

MAWWFRS is a statutory member at the Public Service Boards under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and reports annually on our Well-being objectives. We remain committed to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and we have embraced our duties and our role as a statutory partner across six Public Service Boards.

BACKGROUND

Our 5 year Corporate Plan contains our Strategic aims and improvement objectives including **Our Environment**. This plan is reviewed annually to allow us to produce meaningful Strategic Aims and improvements and well-being objectives against our Strategic Priorities on an **annual** basis.

Under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Part 1, MAWWFRS, as a Public Authority, are required to prepare and publish a plan setting out our proposed actions to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The following Report highlights what MAWWFRS are currently doing to comply with the Section 6 Duty and to encourage biodiversity to all our sites, however small or large scale.

The Report covers all of the Fire Stations, Training facilities and administration buildings within MAWWFRS estate and will be complying with Group 2 in Table 1 from the S6 Reporting Guidance published by Welsh Government in relation to the Type of Organisations and action relative to their functions.

Our Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2022 outlines our aims and objectives for the next 3 years to encourage biodiversity to all our sites.



BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

The Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2022 sets out the actions which have been specifically identified to meet our objectives **to reverse the decline of biodiversity and our impact on the environment.**

As outlined in our Corporate Plan 2020-2025, MAWWFRS is committed to embracing Sustainability in the delivery of Service excellence. We aim to do this by **reducing energy consumption**, working towards **zero waste to landfill** and **reducing our Service Wide Carbon Footprint** year on year.

Our 5-year Sustainability and Environment Strategy sets out the main principles, proposals and required actions to reduce the environmental impacts of the Service Activities and operations.

The objectives are reviewed annually and are published in our Annual Environmental Report and through Our Environment Corporate Objectives. The Service reports annually on 4 Strategic aims: Our People, Our Communities, Our Environment and Our Future.

Our aim is **to continually improve our working practices and activities** with consideration to our short- and long-term environmental impact. We will continue to strive to reduce our carbon footprint and continue with our research into green sustainable renewable technology for our fleet and buildings, while looking for collaboration opportunities to improve our impact on the environment. We aim to be an environmentally sensitive Fire Service where sustainable development and environmental issues are embedded into all our decision-making processes; enhancing the economic, social and environmental well-being of our communities.

SECTION 2

HIGHLIGHTS, KEY OUTCOMES AND ISSUES

WHAT MAWWFRS ARE CURRENTLY DOING TO COMPLY WITH S6 DUTY

There is a wide range of work being undertaken within MAWWFRS which works towards our environmental objectives. These projects tie in to the S6 Duty as guided by the objectives of the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP).

These objectives are as follows:

OBJECTIVE 1

Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout the decision making at all levels

OBJECTIVE 2

Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management

OBJECTIVE 3

Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation

OBJECTIVE 4

Tackle key pressures on species and habitats

OBJECTIVE 5

Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring

OBJECTIVE 6

Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery

OBJECTIVE 1

ENGAGE AND SUPPORT PARTICIPATION AND UNDERSTANDING TO EMBED BIODIVERSITY THROUGHOUT THE DECISION MAKING AT ALL LEVELS



MAWWFRS produce a 5-year Corporate Plan which outlines our Strategic aims and improvement objectives including Our Environment. This plan is reviewed annually to allow us to produce meaningful strategic aims and improvements and well-being objectives against our Strategic Priorities on an annual basis. There are a number of internal information and decision-making forums and groups within the Service which are used to disseminate information to all members of staff.

The Service employ a Sustainability and Environment Manager whose role includes producing an Annual Environment Report which highlights the Services achievements for the previous financial year. The Sustainability and Environment Manager maintains the Level 5, Green Dragon Environmental Management System for the Service and undertakes internal environmental audits on all Fire Stations on a 3-year range schedule. All Operational staff undergo initial environmental training as part of their Induction Training. The Service also run and maintain 3 Environmental Protection Units which are strategically located to provide maximum protection where needed.

In 2019, a Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group was established to work towards achieving the objectives outlined within the BAP.

Collaboration with External Organisations

Our Community Risk Reduction Team work closely with a number of external organisations throughout Wales to ensure areas of special interest and high-risk Common Land is managed effectively to reduce fire loading and help reintroduce animals to graze the areas. The following list are some examples of the Groups MAWWFRS have worked with in relation to Wildfire and Common Land Management:

- Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Brecon Beacons National Park
- Swansea and Gower commons Group
- Swansea County Council – Environment Department
- Carmarthenshire County Council – Countryside Recreation & Access Unit

Community Safety Projects

Our Community Safety Team have been involved in Arson Reduction measures within Schools to reduce the risk of deliberate fires in grass land. This educates children of the risks of starting fires and the effects that these can have on the environment and habitats in the area.

In March 2020, MAWWFRS, in partnership with Bollo Ltd will showcase a Theatre production to 20 Schools in the high-risk areas of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. This will raise awareness of arson reduction and wildfires to children between the ages of 5 and 11 years old and highlight the impact these activities can have on the climate and local biodiversity.

It is a 40-minute production followed by an interactive workshop with the children, which is co-ordinated by members of the Community Safety Team. <https://bollo.ltd.uk/>

OBJECTIVE 2 SAFEGUARD SPECIES AND HABITATS OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE AND IMPROVE THEIR MANAGEMENT



Greenhouse Gas emissions and reduction targets

Outlined in the Services 5-year Sustainability and Environment Strategy 2015-2020 and our Annual Environmental Report are the Service's reduction targets in terms of Carbon emissions. These are reported on and reviewed annually. Copies of these Service documents are available on our external website.

Bat box locations

In the UK, bats and their roosts are protected by law. It is illegal to damage, destroy or disturb bats or their roosts sites. It is the landowner's responsibility to ensure that the species and their roost is protected whether bats are present or not.

Bat boxes have been installed in Stations at Amman Valley and where bats have been roosting. This was highlighted as a result of an Ecology report in preparation for a new build in Amman Valley and Pontardawe Fire Stations.

Ground Work Maintenance on Service sites

Wild flower beds have been planted at a number of Fire Service locations where there are small areas of green space available. This is to encourage pollinating wildlife at site. There are limited Green Spaces available on the majority of Fire Station land, but where there is, further planting is encouraged.

Any tree or branches which are cut are chipped on site and logs are left onsite to encourage a bug habitat to develop in-situ.

Regular communications and quarterly meetings between our Estates Department and our Grounds Maintenance Contractors are held to ensure best management techniques are in place and alternative methods are considered to encourage biodiversity. This can include replacement of hard borders for example planting a hedge instead of fencing.

OBJECTIVE 3
INCREASE THE RESILIENCE
OF OUR NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT BY
RESTORING DEGRADED
HABITATS AND HABITAT
CREATION



Species Survey / Habitat Management Plan

Species Surveys are carried out on any sites which are undergoing construction for a new build or if a site could be home to certain species of wildlife. This is carried out by external contractors to ensure there is no detrimental impact on biodiversity and to enhance and encourage biodiversity where possible.

As a result of the Surveys, additional designs and innovations have been integrated into fire Stations such as Bat boxes, sedum roof and wildflower beds.

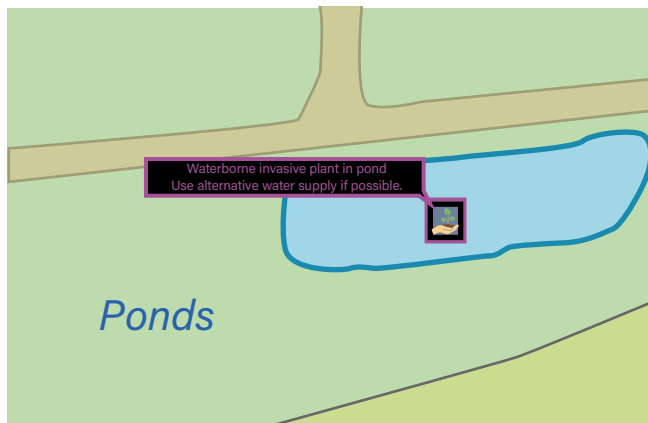
Community Station Projects

In 2016, Newtown Fire Station collaborated with local partnership Group, Cultivate, to plant vegetable and flower beds within the raised beds at the front of Newtown Fire Station. The produce from these beds are maintained by the Local Partnership Group and were available for members of the public to pick. A link to the Cultivate website can be found below.

www.cultivate.uk.com

Machynlleth Fire Station have also undertaken a similar Community Project on land at the front of the Fire Station where the community have planted vegetables in raised beds

OBJECTIVE 4 TACKLE KEY PRESSURES ON SPECIES AND HABITATS



MAWWFRS are keen to reduce the impact of fire on biodiversity across Wales. Through working with external partners, we were able to implement the following programme.

Biodiversity layer on the MDT

MAWWFRS have been collaborating with the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Nature Partnership to map the areas of importance in relation to protected species in Pembrokeshire.

We worked with the Biodiversity Partnership Team within Pembrokeshire Council to plot relevant conservation features and areas of environmental importance on to the Map on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) to help with decision making during incidents. It was decided to concentrate the list that was compiled to the highest 3 areas of importance, which were chosen to be:

- Roosting bat locations
- Nesting ground birds
- Locations of Non-Native Invasive Species in ponds

These locations were plotted onto the MDT to provide information to the crews if attending a fire within the proximity of the above locations.

Similar Projects will be rolled out to other Councils to collaborate on their individual areas with SSSI's, AONBs and Nature Reserves. This will lower the risk of detrimentally impacting local biodiversity and habitats.

Land Management Groups

The introduction of land management groups have been a real success story as it shows that our liaison work is starting to show real benefits. From these initial meetings there have been three new groups started up. These are:

Gower Commons Group

This Group has been formed to work towards implementing management of the Swansea and Gower Commons, Members of this group include MAWWFRS, NRW, SWP, Swansea Council, National Trust, Gower Commoners Association and the Gower Society.

Gower and Swansea Wildfire Group

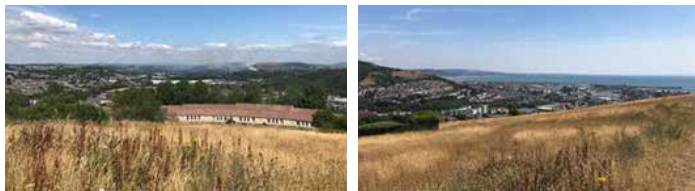
This Wildfire Group was reinstated, and a new Terms of Reference was developed. The Group will work towards the management, prevention and reduction of wildfire in the Gower and Swansea Area. Members of this Group include MAWWFRS, SWP, Gower Commoners Association, The Gower Society, Commons Vision, West Glamorgan Commoners Association.

Brynamman Land Owners / Graziers

This Group has been formed to review land management of the common land in the Brynamman and Brecon Beacons area and to develop land management plans to include fire breaks creations and burn plans. Arson Reduction Team and Fire Liaison Officer attend meetings with the NRW, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Brynamman Graziers association.

Kilvey Hill Patrols

Covert and overt patrols are carried out by MAWWFRS and South Wales Police to deter and apprehend fire setters on Kilvey Hill in Swansea following numerous grass fires in the area in previous years.



Arson Boards have been set up alongside NRW Signs in the area warning of the dangers of wildfires in the hot dry weather. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) flights have also been used as surveillance and as a counter measure with mapping of the area for the Fire Crews.

External Environmental Collaboration and Projects

PONT Cymru

The Service is currently working with PONT Cymru, a not-for-profit organisation which exists to encourage grazing for the benefit of the wildlife and landscape of Wales, to develop a 2-5 year project to manage up to 10 high risk commons throughout Mid and West Wales area to reduce fire loading and reintroduce animals to graze in those areas. This would encourage and enhance biodiversity and will allow access for people to use the areas for recreational use.

Firebreaks and Coastal Heath Project

Collaboration with Overton Gower and West Wales Nature Trust to decide on the best way to protect areas of the cliffs on Gower between Overton and Port Eynon following a large fire. Plans were discussed to manage a large area by means of Fire breaks and land management to ultimately introduce cattle and ponies back to the area to graze. This will maintain the land in a more suitable condition to allow access to the area by the public.



Commons Vision

Commons Vision, to try and bring Common Land back into a compliant state by being managed effectively and have diverse ecology. We are involved with works which aim to deliver multiple outcomes by reducing fire load and encouraging biodiversity improvements on SACs, SSSIs and SINCs which are of local consequence. <https://www.commonsvision.com>



In addition to this, partnerships have been set up in Swansea, Brecon and Pembrokeshire which are working collectively to delivery wider outcomes. In Swansea there is an innovative project to harvest fire load which is then used in the mitigation on contaminated metal mine sites in Wales.

Consideration is also currently being held to reopen old forestry fire ponds within Neath Port Talbot to support Natural Flood Management which will lead to positive and encouraging biodiversity outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 5

IMPROVE OUR EVIDENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND MONITORING



MAWWFRS continually monitor our reporting processes through the Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group, our Annual Environmental Report and via our externally audited Green Dragon EMS.

Analysis of data is undertaken to ensure accuracy in all our activities. Advice and training is encouraged in all areas to ensure understanding of our environmental impact on stations and through our everyday operational activities.

Refurbishments and Construction Work

Any refurbishments and construction work is undertaken in an ecologically sensitive way and in compliance with any planning law and ecology report. The opportunity is taken to build to a BREEAM standard and to include green and sustainable initiatives such as PV Solar Panels.



In 2017 our Aberystwyth Community Fire Station construction project achieved BREEAM Excellent as well as working towards the Enabling Zero Waste scheme run by the Constructing Excellence in Wales initiative. This involved minimising waste during the demolition and new build of the Fire Station. The project demonstrated excellent waste control and management of waste, with the aggregated landfill diversion rate for all phases of the project at 99%.

Green Dragon EMS

Since 2014, MAWWFRS have maintained Level 5 Green Dragon EMS standard year on year. This ensures a range of environmental procedures and guidance is maintained and available to all staff and shows our commitment to continual environmental improvement.

The annual re-assessment helps us to monitor our Environmental Management System through an external audit and ensures compliance and environmental awareness through all our activities.

Site Audits

The Sustainability and Environment Manager carries out internal environmental Audits on a 3-year rotation of all our locations, as well as external surveys of the above ground heating oil tanks to ensure that any defects are picked up before they become issues.



Elite Waste Paper collection scheme / FSC Paper

As of September 2018, the Procurement Department have ensured that the only paper available to purchase from our Stationary list is recycled Steinbeis paper. This paper is certified to Blue Angel and EU-ecolabel, along with secure off-site shredding services by Elite Paper Solutions Ltd, a Welsh social enterprise that employs disabled and economically disadvantage people across the South Wales valleys. The Service receive quarterly updates from Elite to allow us to monitor the amount of confidential waste we have disposed of as well as the positive environmental impacts as a result of using the scheme, such as tree planting.

Steinbeis paper is chemical free and 100% recycled. A link to the website for more information on the product can be found below.

www.steinbeis-papier.de/en/

Plastic Free

The Canteen Room in Carmarthen HQ and Aberystwyth Community Café currently boast to have gone plastic free. Biodegradable products are used as an alternative to plastic.

Service wide, we are looking into holding a Plastic Free Day to encourage a reduction in plastic use and highlight the amount of unnecessary use of single use plastic.

The Service is currently carrying out a trial for individual re-usable water bottles to replace the large number of single use plastic water bottles which are disposed of each year.

Fair Trade / UTZ Products

We are encouraging the purchase of Fair Trade and UTZ Certified products. These items are purchased at our Mess Room in Carmarthen Headquarters, which include items such as sugar, coffee syrups and coffee beans.

Fair Trade Foundation ensures better prices for products, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.

UTZ Certifications shows consumers that products have been sourced in a sustainable manner. All certified suppliers must follow their Code of Conduct, which offers expert guidance on better farming methods, working conditions and care for nature. This in turn leads to better production, better environment and a better life for everyone.



OBJECTIVE 6 PUT IN PLACE A FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT FOR DELIVERY



MAWWFRS employs a Sustainability and Environment Manager who is responsible for reporting and developing reports and targets, including the Biodiversity Action Plan and this S6 Reports.

Various Departments within the Service work closely with a number of external organisations and partners and we believe that collaborative working will assist us and our partners in successfully delivering a shared outcome.

We are committed to finding innovative solutions to improve the way we work to improve firefighter safety, reduce our impact on the environment and ultimately contribute to the well being of our communities and environment.

There are a number of committees within MAWWFRS which monitor and govern various aspects of working practices. The Sustainability and Environment Group meets quarterly and is used as a platform for all environmental and sustainability issues and its members include representatives from throughout the Service Commands and Departments as well as a Fire Authority Member.

The Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group also feeds into the Sustainability & Environment Group Meetings and is a standard agenda item within the Group.

Public Service Board

MAWWFRS is a statutory member of PSBs across 6 Counties which involves a collaborative approach to sharing information between different workstreams under the Well-being of Future Generations Wales Act 2015. Such groups include the Swansea Working with Nature Group and Carmarthen Climate Change Assessment Group.

Natural Resources Wales

The Service works closely with NRW to ensure incidents are managed without having a detrimental impact to the environment. There are 3 Environmental Protection Units available at strategic locations across the Service which are used to reduce the environmental impact as far as is reasonably practicable.



SECTION 3

WHAT WE CAN DO IN THE FUTURE – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



An update for the S6 Duty will be incorporated into the Annual Environmental Report as standard, with a full, detailed Report published every 3 years in line with the Section 6 Reporting guidance.

We will continue with the collaborations and projects outlined above and will aim to do the following:

Awareness

Increase awareness across the Service area of how each member of staff can have an impact of biodiversity and how their Station can assist with the S6 Duty. Plastic Free Days to encourage the use of alternatives or to cut out the use of plastic all together.

Collaboration

We will aim to collaborate with local organisation to improve and encourage biodiversity to our sites and neighbouring land.

Waste

Using the Waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle, ensuring that all Stations and Offices manage their waste accordingly and helping to work towards the Service Objectives of reducing waste to landfill.

Reduce the purchase and consumption of single use plastic within the Service as part of one of our Corporate objectives under Our Environment.

Energy

Reduce the Service's energy consumption and move to a more sustainable energy strategy. Increase our installation of PVs onto Stations and ensure all Stations are fitted with AMRs which will mean more accurate and reliable energy monitoring.

SECTION 3

WHAT WE CAN DO IN THE FUTURE – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

ULEV

Continue to develop out electric vehicle charging infrastructure across Mid and West Wales and increase our fleet of Zero Emissions / Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles improving air quality within the areas which we operate.

Biodiversity and Advice

The Service has developed a 3-year Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 to outline Objectives and Targets to help encourage and maintain species on our sites. This is a 3-year plan with annual updates incorporated into the Annual Environmental Report.

Contact has been made with Local organisations, to provide guidance and advise in relation to developing green areas to encourage pollinators to our sites.

To raise awareness of the location of biodiverse rich areas we intend to monitor if the MDT biodiversity layer for Pembrokeshire is of use to crews and roll this out to other Commands. Interest has already been raised in other Councils in the areas we cover, to carry out similar work in collaboration with their respective Biodiversity Teams.

Encourage Stations and Green Champions to look for opportunities to encourage biodiversity onto Station land where possible. This could include planting native species, wildflower beds to encourage pollinators or encouraging connectivity between habitats such as having a hedge instead of a wall.

Incorporate simple methods, where space allows, onto sites to increase biodiversity. This will include constructing bug hotels to encourage invertebrate and endangered species such as earthworms to site

Procurement

Procedures and guidance are in place to encourage, where possible, local and sustainable Procurement of purchased items. To encourage more Fair Trade / UTZ products and recyclable items.

To encourage the consideration of recycled products before new items.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

MAWWFRS is committed to working towards the objectives outlines within the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP).

MAWWFRS employs a Sustainability and Environment Manager to implement and Report on environmental objectives. This is done though an Annual Environmental Report and our 5-year Sustainability and Environment Strategy. A separate Full Section 6 Duty Report will be published every 3 years in line with the requirements and will report on the Objectives and Targets outlined within our Biodiversity Action Plan 2019. This will include reporting on habitat management and monitoring collaboration opportunities within our local communities.

A Biodiversity Action Plan Group has been established following on from the S6 Duty to help implement and develop the Plan. This Group will help implement biodiversity projects and action and help steer the Service in particular, for non-operational targets.





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Environment (Wales) Act 2016: Section 6 Duty Report

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