



**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Writing publications

at Transport Scotland

(Internal guidance)

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Introduction

This writing guidance will explain the steps you need to follow and provide information on how to produce high quality and accessible documents at Transport Scotland.

A simple checklist of the steps you need to follow to create a Transport Scotland publication is included below. The rest of this guidance provides more detail and information on specific areas.

1. Submit a [publication enquiry form](#) before you begin writing your document.
2. Use the [Transport Scotland publication template](#) to write your document.
3. Follow this guidance and ensure your document meets the criteria in the accessibility checklist in this writing guide.
4. Once your document has been thoroughly proof read and cleared by all relevant parties, send it to the [Digital Engagement Team](#) (Digital Team).
5. The Digital Team will check your document meets our legal accessibility obligations as a public body, and our publishing guidelines. They will not make changes on your behalf but will let you know what changes you need to make. These are likely to relate to accessibility and branding, rather than the actual content.
6. Once everyone is content with the final version, make sure your final publication is sent to the Digital Team and the relevant press officer is copied in. Follow the steps included in this guidance to save a final pdf.
7. A press officer may be in touch with you to discuss any previously agreed PR.
8. The Digital Team will arrange for your document to be published on the Transport Scotland website.

Further information and support

- Read more about working with designers, contractors or third parties to produce a publication in this guidance.
- Visit Saltire for [more information on publications at Transport Scotland](#) or to find our [other corporate templates](#).
- Contact the [Digital Team](#) if you have a question or need advice.

Writing engaging content

You should aim to write engaging content which delivers the required information and keeps your audience interested. Some key tips for writing engaging content include:

- keep it short, simple and clear
- write for your audience
- write for your channel (writing for the web requires a different style to make sure people read your content)
- read over your work and redraft as necessary
- make sure someone checks your work for grammar and spelling
- avoid clichés such as "blue sky thinking" and "step change"
- follow the [writing style guide](#) which includes advice on abbreviations, numbers and more
- write in plain English to make sure the information we provide is clear and concise (try the [A to Z of alternative words](#) or read more about the [Plain English Campaign](#) on their website)

Visit the Saltire guide on [how to write well](#) to learn more.

Meeting accessibility requirements

As a public body, we have a legal requirement to ensure the content we publish is accessible in accordance with the accessibility regulations that came into force for public sector bodies on 23 September 2018.

If there are accessibility issues with content you want to have published on the website, we will not be able to publish it until any identified issues are fixed.

At least one in five people living in Scotland have a long term limiting health problem or disability. We provide information to the people of Scotland and we need to make sure that everyone is able to use this information independently, without any barriers.

Making our content inclusive and accessible ensures it can be used by as many people as possible. This includes those with:

- impaired vision
- motor difficulties
- cognitive impairments or learning disabilities
- deafness or impaired hearing

Accessibility is about making our content work for all users. After all, how many times have you tried to read a document when the text was far too small, or struggled to follow the reading order in a complicated layout? Inclusive and accessible communications benefit everybody, improving user experience for us all.

The publication template has been designed with accessibility in mind. If you use the template and follow the guidance, your document will be more accessible to a greater number of people and this may reduce demand for special accessible versions. If you do require an alternative format or translation, you can read more about these later in this guidance.

Quick tips for improving accessibility in your publication

You should follow these quick tips to create a more accessible document, however you will need to read the rest of the guidance as well, which contains more information and detail:

- use the template and guidance
- write in plain language and avoid jargon
- use a minimum text size of 12 (captions can be size 10)
- write in sentence case and avoid ALL CAPITALS
- use left aligned and unjustified text
- use single spaces between words
- apply heading styles to make sure your document is properly structured (open the view table and check the box for Navigation Pane to review your document structure)
- use subheadings to break up large sections of text
- don't include extra blank lines (try showing paragraph marks in your document to help you spot these)
- use a page break if you need to take a new page
- use bold and italics minimally
- use descriptive links which let the user know where the link will take them
- hyperlink titles directly in the text instead of including bare links as footnotes
- use simple tables with a defined header row and no blank cells
- avoid merging or splitting cells or nesting tables
- make sure all tables, graphs, charts, photos and visuals have a caption
- include clear and useful alt text with any visual or graphic
- think carefully about any visuals to make sure they are clear and legible and avoid including pictures of text where possible
- use black text on a white background as much as possible and make sure any other colours used have sufficient colour contrast (you can use a [colour contrast analyser](#) to check)
- remove any blank pages.

Checking how accessible your document is

You may wish to try the Accessibility Checker which is available in Word. This won't be able to identify all accessibility issues but it will help you to look for and remove any easily identifiable issues. To open the Accessibility Checker:

1. Select File
2. Select Info
3. Select Check for Issues
4. In the drop down menu, select Check Accessibility

Before publishing to the website, we will run a check for accessibility – and any parts of the document that don't meet the regulations will need to be corrected before we can publish it.

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Covers and contents page

Covers

You should enter the publication title and any other relevant details on the template front and back covers provided.

Contents page

An automatic contents page has already been created for you at the start of the template. Once you have finished writing your document, you should right click anywhere within the table of contents, select “Update field” and then select “Update entire table”. This will automatically update the table of contents with the first three levels of your headings and all the corresponding page numbers.

Paragraphs, headings and styles

All the text in your document should have a style applied. All the styles required for your document are available in the style library.

Paragraph text and formatting

- All standard paragraph text should be in the style ‘Normal’. (The template contains two alternative options for emphasised, and quoted text that are explained below.)
- Paragraphs should be unjustified and left aligned. Centred text positions the start of each lines in different places and we have to work harder to read this. Fully justified text creates “rivers of white” which can be distracting and make reading more difficult.
- Write in sentence case. Avoid writing in ALL CAPITALS as this is often read as shouting. Capitals can make identifying the shapes of words harder and some screen readers may treat capitals as acronyms, reading them out letter by letter. Writing in capitals is acceptable for acronyms.
- Avoid using *italics* or **bold** to add emphasis, especially for large sections. Most screen readers will not announce a change to bold or italic to a user.
- You should only add one space between sentences. Adding an extra space can create “rivers of white” which are distracting for readers and may cause longer pauses than necessary between sentences for people using screen readers or other assistive technologies.

- Don't add any extra blank lines. Software such as screen readers will read repeated carriage returns. Using the show/hide paragraphs button ¶ in Word can help you to spot blank lines.
- Insert a page break (by clicking "Insert", and "Page break") to take a new page.
- Remove any blank pages as these make it more difficult for readers to move smoothly through your document.
- Use descriptive, unique and clear link text and make sure all links are in the hyperlink style – these should appear in blue and underlined so they can be easily identified. For example, '[How to apply for a grant](#)' is more descriptive than '[Click here](#)'.
- Avoid using bare links (URLs). For example, visit the [Transport Scotland website](#) is better than visit <https://www.transport.gov.scot/>.

Avoid using text boxes

Don't use text boxes in your publication because information in text boxes is not always recognised by assistive technology such as screen readers.

Emphasis

Instead of using a text box, use the 'Stand out' style from the style gallery if you want to highlight any specific information in your document. Try to use this only where it is really needed.

This is the 'Stand out' style applied to a paragraph.

Quotes and quoted text

All quotes from individuals or groups should be attributed and be contained within double quotation marks. Use the 'Quote' style for quoted text.

"This is the 'Quote' style applied to a paragraph. It can contain a quote from an individual."

It should include a line beneath the quoted text, attributing the quote to that individual.

Headings

It is really important that the headings in your document are applied properly as this helps all users to follow your document and software such as screen readers will use headings to help navigate the document.

We recommend that you open the Navigation Pane in Word while creating your document. This will help you to review your document structure and check your headings. To open this, click on the “View” tab, and check the box for “Navigation Pane”.

How to use headings

Make sure all headings have the right heading style applied from the style library (shown below). You should start a new section with Heading 1. Use Heading 2 for sub-headings, Heading 3 for sub-sub headings, and so on.

Remember not to skip headings as you move down into sub-sections as this can make navigating your document confusing for users.

You should avoid numbering your headings if possible. The first letter of the first word of a title and any names or proper nouns should be capitalised.

If you need to split a heading over two lines, you should use a line break, also known as a “soft return”, so that this only appears as a single heading in your contents and navigation. Press the Shift and Enter key to insert a line break.



Example of the style gallery from this template

Bullets and numbering

Bulleted lists

Bullet points are used to list items and make it easy for a reader to find important information. To insert bullets, just use the bullets button on the toolbar – the default style is the correct one.

You should avoid making bullet points so long that they look like paragraphs and make sure that you are not using bullet points for an entire section. Remember that bulleted lists lose impact when they are used too much.

You should avoid sub bullets where possible and not use any extra lines/returns to space out bullet points.

There are two ways to punctuate bulleted lists. Each individual bulleted list should be consistent within itself but you can use both types of bulleted lists within one document.

Bulleted lists for complete sentences

Bulleted lists can be used for whole, complete sentences.

- This type of bulleted list should start each bullet point with a capital letter.
- This type of bulleted list should end each bullet point with a full stop.

Bulleted lists for short phrases

If you are using a bulleted list for short phrases this should:

- start lower case
- have no punctuation at the end

Numbering

Our house style does not recommend the use of numbered headings or numbered paragraphs. It is better to use the various heading styles to create sections and sub-sections within your document and break up information.

If your document does need numbering, use the numbers button from the toolbar. Numbering can be complicated, especially when using multi-level lists for heading and paragraph numbering and isn't straightforward to get right. It can be difficult to fix numbering errors when they happen.

We can't offer numbering support for your document.

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Images, graphs and tables

Photos

- Photography can play a huge part in communicating your message and you may wish to include photos in your document. However, there are a few things you need to consider before you proceed:
- You must have permission to use the photos and include any required accreditation in the photo caption.
- Photos must be of reasonable quality and not appear pixelated. You will require higher quality photos if your document is being printed.
- You should not use any digital manipulation, such as Photoshop, to distort the meaning of events, alter the impact of genuine material or otherwise seriously mislead audiences. Care should be taken to ensure that images of a real event reflect the event accurately.
- In images, no undue prominence should be given to any branded product or service unless editorially justified.
- Sensitivity surrounding the use of an image should be taken into account. In particular in relation to religion and minority groups. Care should be taken not to reinforce stereotypes.
- Any stock imagery should look natural and not staged or overly processed. Any stock imagery which show locations should look recognisably Scottish unless there is a specific reason not to.
- Images should show people complying with relevant health and safety requirements e.g. PPE requirements.

If you need any help sourcing photography for a publication, the [Communications team](#) may be able to help you. Get in touch for further support and advice.

Graphics and illustrations

Any graphics included in your report should be clear, accessible and engaging.

You should not attempt to create any illustrations or graphics for your document. If you have a specific requirement for a graphic please [get in touch with us](#) to discuss further.

You should not include large amounts of text as part of a graphic as anyone who cannot see the image may miss out on important information and has to rely on very accurate alternative text. It is also difficult to re-size pictures of text without losing quality so if someone zooms in to read the text, it may become blurry and pixelated.

Maps

Any maps of Scotland which are included in your document must meet the [Shetland mapping requirement](#) set out in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.

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Graphs and charts

Graphs and charts should ideally be inserted as charts, not as images. They should be the full width of the screen wherever possible. They must have alternative text and a caption. You can read more about alternative text and captions on the following pages

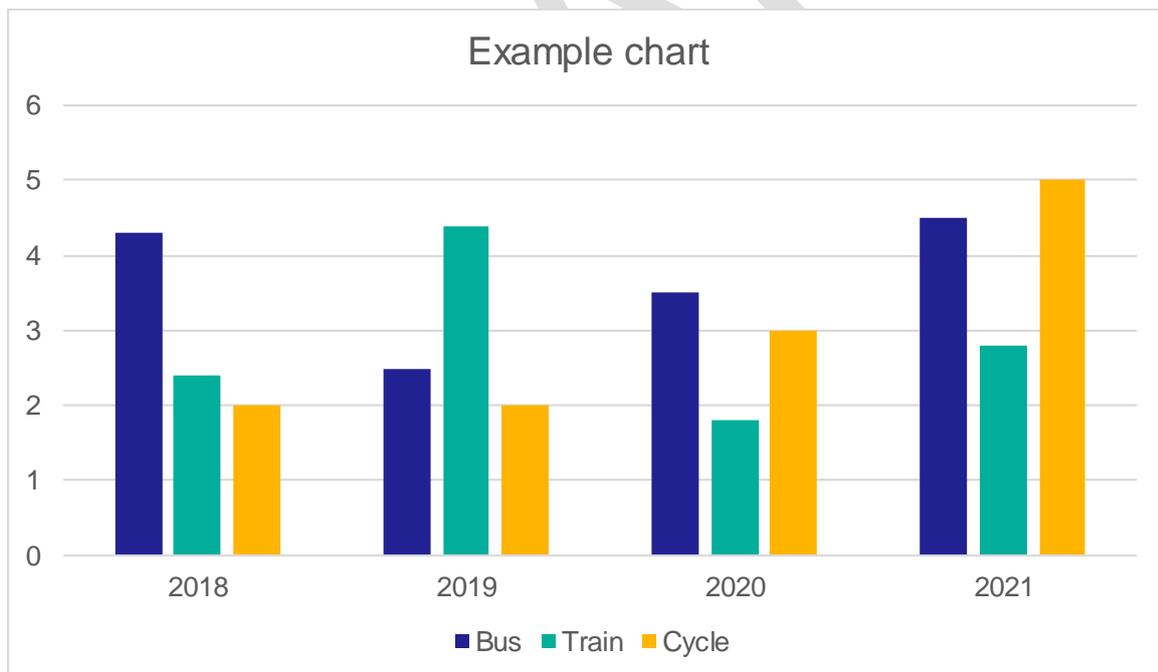
Chart design

If you are using colours in your charts you can pick from the options in the Design tab at the top of the page by clicking “change colours”. The colour options in the list all follow our brand palette.

Supporting data

Do not embed your excel sheets into the charts in the Word document.

Please also submit an Excel sheet with the figures from all of your charts, graphs and tables. Contact the [Digital Team](#) for further advice and guidance.



Example of a chart with TS brand colours

Tables

Generally, you should use tables to present data rather than to help with the layout of your document.

To help improve accessibility, try to keep tables as simple as possible and make sure they have assigned header rows. Avoid blank cells, merged cells, split cells and nesting tables within tables. Screen readers count cells to keep track of their location in a table and use header information to identify rows and columns. If a table is nested inside another table, or if a cell is merged or split, it is more difficult for screen reader users to follow and interpret the information. Blank cells can also be misleading for someone who is using a screen reader as it can appear as though there is nothing more in the table.

All tables should have a caption.

Table design

You should apply the !TS Table style from the Table Style library to any tables in your document.

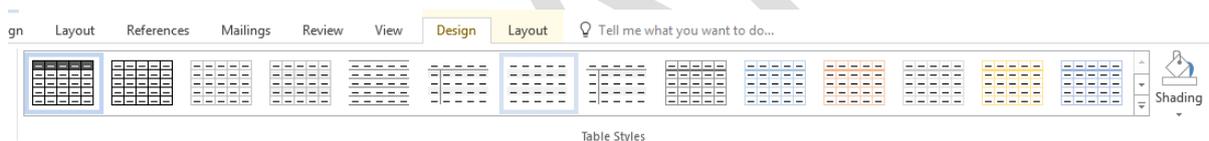


Table Style library

Please see an example table below with the correct style applied. All tables should have a caption.

Column one	Column two	Column three	Column four
1	2	3	4
2	2	2	2
1	1	1	1

Table 1 - Example table

Supporting data

Please also submit an Excel sheet with the figures from all of your charts, graphs and tables.

Colour

Pick colours with enough contrast

It is essential that there is enough contrast between text colour and the background colour. Black text on a white background is always the clearest combination but if you must change colours then lightly coloured text should have a darker background and darkly coloured text should have a light background.

Don't use colour alone to convey meaning

Colour should not be used as the only means of conveying information for example indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element (e.g. answer the question in red) as this is not accessible for some users such as those who are not able to see the screen, some people with visual impairments or colour-blindness and people who use monochrome displays.

You should avoid combining green with red, or blue with yellow, as these can be difficult for people with certain types of colour blindness. This is important to consider for any “traffic light” style colour use.

Our colour palette has been built into the publication template to make it easier for you to create a document which aligns with the Transport Scotland brand.

Size and position

All images should ideally be the full width of the page. If any image needs to be smaller, you should right click on the image, select “Wrap Text” and pick the option “In line with text”.

In rarer circumstances, smaller images like icons can be inset. These should have alternative text but do not need a caption. The reason for this is that when adding captions to an image that has been inset, Word places the caption in a text box. When this is saved as a PDF, the text box doesn’t meet accessibility regulations.

Please remember, you should never stretch any photos or graphics out of proportion.



An example of a full page width image

Alternative text (alt text)

All images must have alt text. The purpose of alt text is to describe images to people who are unable to see them. This includes people who use screen readers, images that don’t display correctly and also includes users who are sight-impaired or otherwise unable to visually identify an image. Alt text matters because it helps to ensure all users, regardless of any visual impairments or issues with bandwidth, can access the image.

If you use an image to convey information that is essential to understanding the content (for example, a diagram that explains something) include alt text that gives screen reader users the same information. If an image is purely decorative or is explained in the text on the page, you can use empty alt text which is indicated by “” (a pair of double quotes with no space).

To add alt text right click on the image and click format picture. Click layout and properties and then alt text. You should add a title and description.

You can read more about [writing alternative text](#) on Saltire.

Captions

All images should have captions to give additional context and provide any required accreditation or source attribution

To insert a caption right click on the image and select insert caption. Select new label and insert the text for the image caption. Select OK. Please note that the automatic numbering can be deleted manually afterwards. The Caption style should be applied from the style library.

You can see an example image with a caption on the previous page.

Send all graphics separately

All images used in the publication must also be sent separately as image files (not just in the Word document) when sending the final version to be published.

Headers, footers and page numbers

Headers

Unless required for alternative purposes the header should not be amended. Your document title can be added by selecting File and entering the Title using the Properties section on the right hand side. This will automatically populate the header with your document title.

Properties ▾	
Size	27.1KB
Pages	12
Words	452
Total Editing Time	42 Minutes
Title	Corporate Publication Guidance

Highlighted section for entering title

Footnotes

Footnotes should be avoided. They are not ideal for web-based content as they are not always recognised by screen reading software which means using them goes against our accessibility obligations as a public body.

Instead of using footnotes you can:

- link the title or phrase that you were going to reference to the website or document online
- simply add the further explanation in the text, either as another sentence, or in brackets

Page numbers

Page numbering has already been set up in the template and shouldn't be changed.

If the page numbering has become lost and you need to re-insert them, page numbers should be bottom right of the page. To insert page numbers select insert, then page number, then bottom of page, then plain number three.

HTML and hardcopies

HTML

HTML provides a digital by default publication, which displays a publication as a web page on the [Transport Scotland website](#). HTML versions of publications are designed to be viewed online and read on screens.

Communications colleagues can help to advise on whether a HTML version of your document is required – and under our legal obligations as a public body, it's highly likely to be needed.

The [Digital Team](#) can support you through the process by putting you in touch with a relevant supplier (typically APS) and providing further advice. If an external supplier does the conversion, you'll need to have budget available to cover the supplier costs.

Hardcopies

Please remember to consider the environment before requesting any printed hardcopies of publications.

If you require hardcopies of your document, the Communications team will discuss your requirements with you and help to advise on specifications such as quantity, format, finish, binding, and more. They can also help you to source quotes for this work from appropriate suppliers. Please note that you will need to have budget available to cover the supplier costs.

We can also lend you a binder to produce a very limited number of lower quality finish hardcopies, if appropriate for your purposes.

Need help?

Please contact the [Digital Team](#) for further advice and guidance.

Alternative formats and translations

Alternative formats are alternative ways of presenting information to help people with different requirements access it. Some examples include Braille, [EasyRead](#), large print and audio. If requested, we must be able to produce translations or alternative versions of our documents. If you decide to commission an expert to translate a document or produce an alternative format you should follow the steps below.

Consider the requirements

There are different types of alternative formats and some will suit one type of impairment more than another. Some examples are included below:

- visual impairments – audio, audio description, Braille, Moon, telephone
- learning disabilities and literacy difficulties – audio, audio description, Easy Read, easy access, Makaton, subtitles
- hearing – British Sign Language, Makaton, subtitling, textphone, SMS
- co-ordination difficulties – large print, audio, audio description, telephone

Think about your audience

You should consider any preferences your audience may have. For example, younger deaf people may respond better to text messages than sub-titled adverts – researching your audience will help you best meet their needs.

Consider the document length

You may wish to consider translating/converting a summary of your document as it can be more time-consuming and tiring to absorb information listening to an audiotape or watching sign language. Additionally, the layout of some alternative formats, such as Easy Read, means the documents are often naturally longer.

Think about the timescales

If you know a translation/alternative format is likely to be needed, you should consider publishing these at the same time as the original. Make sure you allow enough time for production and delivery. For example, an Easy Read document can take six to eight weeks, depending on complexity. In particular, you should consider the need for alternative formats/translations before consultations so the response window is not shortened while an alternative format or translation is produced.

Get in touch

If you need to order an alternative format or a translation, you should [get in touch with us](#) for further advice, and details of suppliers and further support.

Further information

- read more about [accessibility in publications](#) and alternative formats
- visit the [accessibility pages](#) to learn about emails, PowerPoints and more

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Working with designers or contractors

Some contractors and designers will have their own writing style and branding requirements to follow but they must also meet our accessibility requirements, publishing guidelines and use our branding appropriately.

Working with designers

Some of our publications require a more heavily designed document with bespoke illustrations, infographics or covers, for example. These are sent to external suppliers as we do not have capacity to create these in-house.

Get in touch

Before writing your document, you should fill out the [publication enquiry form](#) and send this to the [Digital Team](#).

We'll send you relevant attachments and information, such as a creative brief template and our publishing guidelines, and will support and advise you throughout the process. We'll also be able to help put you in touch with relevant suppliers.

The creative brief, our brand guide and our publishing guidelines for external suppliers must be passed to the supplier before they begin work.

Writing a creative brief

We'll provide you with creative brief template and work with you to complete this. A creative brief is a short one or two page document which outlines our vision and strategy. It helps to make sure everyone is on the same page, provides direction to the creative team who are working on the project, and ultimately ensures the deliverables meet your requirements.

Any creative brief needs to be approved by your team and the Communications team before it is submitted to a supplier.

Timescales and budget

Some suppliers advise on an average of six weeks lead time for designed publications however this will vary, depending on requirements and supplier availability. You will also need to have budget available for this work.

Working with contractors or third parties

You may sometimes commission documents through a third party, such as an independent evaluation of a policy.

Get in touch

Before writing your document, you should fill out the [publication enquiry form](#) and send this to the [Digital Team](#).

We'll be in touch to advise further, provide support and share relevant information, such as our publishing guidelines which will help to make sure your document meets our branding and accessibility requirements.

Our brand guide and our publishing guidelines for external suppliers must be passed to the contractor or third party before they begin work.

Timescales and expectations

Documents commissioned through a third party will differ in terms of requirements and timescales. We'll be able to advise further and provide support for you on a case-by-case basis.

Sending your document for publication on the Transport Scotland website

Once your document is complete and the content has been proof read and cleared, save the final document (with your publication title as the file name) and send the Word document to the [Digital Team](#). We will check your document meets accessibility regulations and our publishing requirements. If your document does not meet these, you may not be able to publish on our website.

Please remember to include any supporting documents and the information required for your publication webpage as detailed below.

Your publication description

You will have submitted a short description of your publication when you completed the publication enquiry form. This is used on the Transport Scotland website and will appear in the search results beside your publication title.

Your publication summary

When you send your final publication you should also include a short summary of your document. This should be a short paragraph or two which will help website users to decide if they wish to continue reading your full document. The Digital Team will add this text to your publication webpage.

Further links and support

Our guidance and templates:

- find our [corporate templates](#) on Saltire
- read more about [creating accessible publications](#) at Transport Scotland
- read [more about accessibility](#) on Saltire
- learn about [Plain English](#) on Saltire
- view the [writing style guide](#)

Further resources:

- try the [Plain English A-Z of alternative words](#)
- try out a [colour contrast checker](#)

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