

2016 Rural Facilities Monitor

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Planning Information and Delivery Team



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2016 Rural Facilities Monitor

The Rural Facilities Monitor tracks changes in the provision of services in rural areas of Aberdeenshire and has been conducted on an annual basis since 1981. Rural areas are defined as those parts of Aberdeenshire which are outside towns with a population of more than 3,000 people.

Headline Changes

- Between **2015 and 2016** there was a **22% decrease** in the number of rural **post offices** and a **23% decrease** in the number of rural **banks**
- Between **2015 and 2016** there was a net **1% increase** in the number of rural **shops**
- **Since 2000** there has been a **17% decrease** in key rural facilities across Aberdeenshire. The **Banff and Buchan** area experienced the largest decrease at **38%**
- Between 2000 and 2016 we lost **62%** of our rural **petrol stations**, **54%** of our rural **post offices** and **67%** of our rural **banks**



Table 1: Aberdeenshire changes in all facilities 2000-2016

Facility	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Key Facilities							
Shop	450	410	413	416	-8%	1%	1%
Post Office	93	70	55	43	-54%	-39%	-22%
Petrol Station	60	30	25	23	-62%	-23%	-8%
Primary School	121	115	114	114	-6%	-1%	0%
Doctors Surgery	36	34	33	32	-11%	-6%	-3%
Key Facilities Total	760	659	640	628	-17%	-5%	-2%
Other Facilities							
Banks	30	13	13	10	-67%	-23%	-23%
Chemist	23	21	21	21	-9%	0%	0%
Police Station	13	10	9	8	-38%	-20%	-11%
Fire Station	12	12	12	12	0%	0%	0%
Library	20	20	20	20	0%	0%	0%
Mot Garage	59	61	58	57	-3%	-7%	-2%
Secondary School	4	4	4	4	0%	0%	0%
Hall	125	125	125	125	0%	0%	0%
Church	149	127	128	128	-14%	1%	0%
Hotels and Pubs	192	157	126	121	-37%	-23%	-4%
All Facilities Total	1387	1209	1156	1134	-18%	-6%	-2%

Service provision in each settlement varies annually and is dependent on local as well as national factors. Closures may be temporary or permanent; for example

shops and hotels may close for refurbishment one year and re-open the next so a degree of fluctuation is therefore inevitable. Because of this, the monitor also analyses service changes since 2000, allowing a longer term trend to be obtained.

Rural Aberdeenshire

The previous, 2015 Rural Facilities Monitor was the first year that rural communities were defined using the Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification (2013-14) and it therefore only monitored those services in settlements with a population of 3,000 or less.

In earlier reports, facilities in settlements up to 5,000 people were included. In light of this, figures have been backdated to 2000 to account for this change. Data prior to this is available but only at administrative area level and therefore cannot be used as a direct comparison for this report.

Those settlements with a population of over 3,000 that have not been included in the 2016 Rural Facilities Monitor have been listed below:

Table 2: Settlements excluded from the Rural Facilities Monitor by Population

Peterhead	18,450	Banchory	7,520
Fraserburgh	13,140	Turriff	5,060
Inverurie	12,760	Huntly	4,720
Westhill	11,600	Kintore	4,680
Stonehaven	11,370	Kemnay	3,830
Ellon	10,100	Oldmeldrum	3,230
Portlethen	8,200	Newtonhill	3,040
Banff and Macduff	8,050		

Source: National Records for Scotland, 2012 Settlement Population Estimates

Further information on these towns can be found at <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/statistics/Statistics-by-Location/>

A significantly higher proportion of Aberdeenshire’s residents live in rural communities compared to Scotland overall. According to the Scottish Government’s Urban/Rural Classification, 18% of Scotland’s population resided in rural areas compared to 51% in Aberdeenshire.

Rural areas are designated as either being an accessible rural area (an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more) or a remote rural area (an area with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more).

Table 3: The Percentage of the Population in each 6-fold Urban/Rural Category

	Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural	Remote Rural
Aberdeenshire	0.0	30.3	11.9	7.0	37.1	13.7
Scotland	34.5	35.1	9.3	3.4	11.7	6.1

*Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification (2014):
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/11/2763/6>*



According to the Scottish Indicator of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2016, Aberdeenshire generally scores poorly when ranked in terms of “Geographical Access to Services”. This analyses average drive times and public transport journey times from each data zone to key services (GPs, Post offices and Retail Centres).

149 (44%) of Aberdeenshire’s 340 data zones (small-area statistical geography) are ranked within the 20% most deprived in Scotland for service access. 117,906 of Aberdeenshire’s residents, or 45.3%, live in a geographical deprived area. The average and longest recorded public transport journey times for rural data zones are shown below:

- GP’s
 - Average journey time: 17.8 minutes
 - Longest journey time: 42.9 minutes
- Post Offices
 - Average journey time: 12.7 minutes
 - Longest journey time: 38.2 minutes
- Retail Centres:
 - Average journey time: 24.3 minutes
 - Longest journey time: 63.2 minutes

More information on the SIMD in Aberdeenshire is provided in the [2016 Report](#).

While on average, 86% of households in Aberdeenshire own one or more car (Scottish Census, 2011), there are significant local variations. For example, at least 20% of households in Sandhaven, Cuminestown and Boddam do not own a car. This, coupled with the long public transport journey times highlights the crucial role that local facilities play in our rural communities and emphasises the importance of retaining facilities in villages throughout Aberdeenshire.



Changes in Key Facilities

While many services are important in rural areas, some are seen as more critical in terms of their impact on quality of life and convenience and in maintaining the viability of self-contained, rural communities. These are shops, post offices, doctor's surgeries, petrol stations and primary schools. The table below summarises the change in the numbers of key facilities across Aberdeenshire.

Table 4: Changes in Key Facilities by Administrative Area, 2000 - 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banff and Buchan	127	86	84	79	-38%	-8%	-6%
Buchan	135	117	110	111	-18%	-5%	1%
Formartine	84	75	71	67	-20%	-11%	-6%
Garioch	81	65	66	70	-14%	8%	6%
Kincardine and Mearns	108	97	88	85	-21%	-12%	-3%
Marr	225	219	221	216	-4%	-1%	-2%
Aberdeenshire	760	659	640	628	-17%	-5%	-2%

Between 2015 and 2016, there has been a net 2% decrease in rural facilities across Aberdeenshire. This varies throughout the area, ranging from a 6% decrease in Banff & Buchan and Formartine to a 3% decrease in Kincardine & Mearns and a 2% decrease in Marr. Two areas saw an increase in key facilities due to a rise in the number of shops - a minor 1% increase in Buchan and a 6% increase in Garioch.

All six administrative areas in Aberdeenshire have experienced losses in key facilities since 2000, with this producing a 17% decline for the area as a whole. This ranges from a 38% decrease in Banff and Buchan to a 4% decline in Marr, a much larger area that has significantly more facilities.

An analysis of change in the provision of each of these key facilities is presented below, broken down into the six administrative areas of Aberdeenshire.

Shops

Table 5: Changes in Shops, 2000 - 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banff and Buchan	79	54	54	52	-34%	-4%	-4%
Buchan	80	71	69	72	-10%	1%	4%
Formartine	39	37	36	37	-5%	0%	3%
Garioch	46	38	39	43	-7%	13%	10%
Kincardine and Mearns	63	59	59	58	-8%	-2%	-2%
Marr	143	151	156	154	8%	2%	-1%
Aberdeenshire	450	410	413	416	-8%	1%	1%

In the last year there has been an increase of 1% in the number of shops across Aberdeenshire which is the net effect of increases in some areas and decreases in others. Banff and Buchan (-4%), Kincardine and Mearns (-2%) and Marr (-1%) all had minor losses while Formartine (3%), Buchan (4%) and Garioch (10%) saw increases in the number of shops.

Since 2000 there has been a net decrease of 34 shops across Aberdeenshire, equivalent to an 8% reduction over the period. This has been felt most profoundly in Banff and Buchan where there has been a 34% reduction in shops during a 16 year period with decreases being reported of in between -5% (Formartine) and -10% (Buchan) in Aberdeenshire’s five other administrative areas.



Post Offices

Table 6: Changes in Post Offices, 2000 – 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banff and Buchan	14	9	8	7	-50%	-22%	-13%
Buchan	17	14	11	9	-47%	-36%	-18%
Formartine	14	11	9	4	-71%	-64%	-56%
Garioch	12	6	6	6	-50%	0%	0%
Kincardine and Mearns	15	14	8	6	-60%	-57%	-25%
Marr	21	16	13	11	-48%	-31%	-15%
Aberdeenshire	93	70	55	43	-54%	-39%	-22%

There was a decrease of 22% in the number of post offices between 2015 and 2016. 12 permanent post office services have closed down within Aberdeenshire during the past year, ranging from a 56% drop in Formartine to no change in Garioch during the past 12 months.

There are 50 fewer post office facilities in Aberdeenshire in 2016 compared to 2000, a net decrease of 54%. This has been felt most strongly in Formartine which has lost 71% of its post office facilities between 2000 and 2016 and there are now only 4 permanent rural post offices left within this administrative area.

Note that we have defined post offices as being either:

- Local branches – Where the post office service point is located alongside the retail counter and is normally open over the duration of the shop's opening hours
- Traditional branches – A standalone retail space that is dedicated to providing post office services

This excludes outreach services which are typically provided in a village hall, local shop or other community premises on scheduled days/times by a Postmaster visiting from a nearby Post Office branch. As the opening hours of these facilities are very limited they have not been recorded in the monitor. Full details of all post office facilities in Aberdeenshire can be found here <http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder>



Petrol Stations

Table 7: Changes in Petrol Stations, 2000 – 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/ 2016	% change 2013/ 2016	% change 2015/ 2016
Banff and Buchan	15	6	5	4	-73%	-33%	-17%
Buchan	8	3	2	2	-75%	-33%	0%
Formartine	4	1	1	1	-75%	0%	0%
Garioch	5	3	3	3	-40%	0%	0%
Kincardine and Mearns	7	4	1	1	-86%	-75%	0%
Marr	21	13	13	12	-8%	-8%	-8%
Aberdeenshire	60	30	25	23	-62%	-23%	-7%

In the last year, Aberdeenshire lost two rural petrol stations, one in Cairnbulg in the Banff & Buchan area and another in Tarland located in Marr. Although this isn't a huge decrease in numbers during the last year, it is further evidence of the declining presence of petrol stations within our more rural communities.

Petrol stations have exhibited the largest decrease of the five key facilities monitored with a reduction of 37 since 2000, a 62% fall. This has been felt most strongly in Kincardine and Mearns (-86%) and Buchan and Formartine (both -75%).

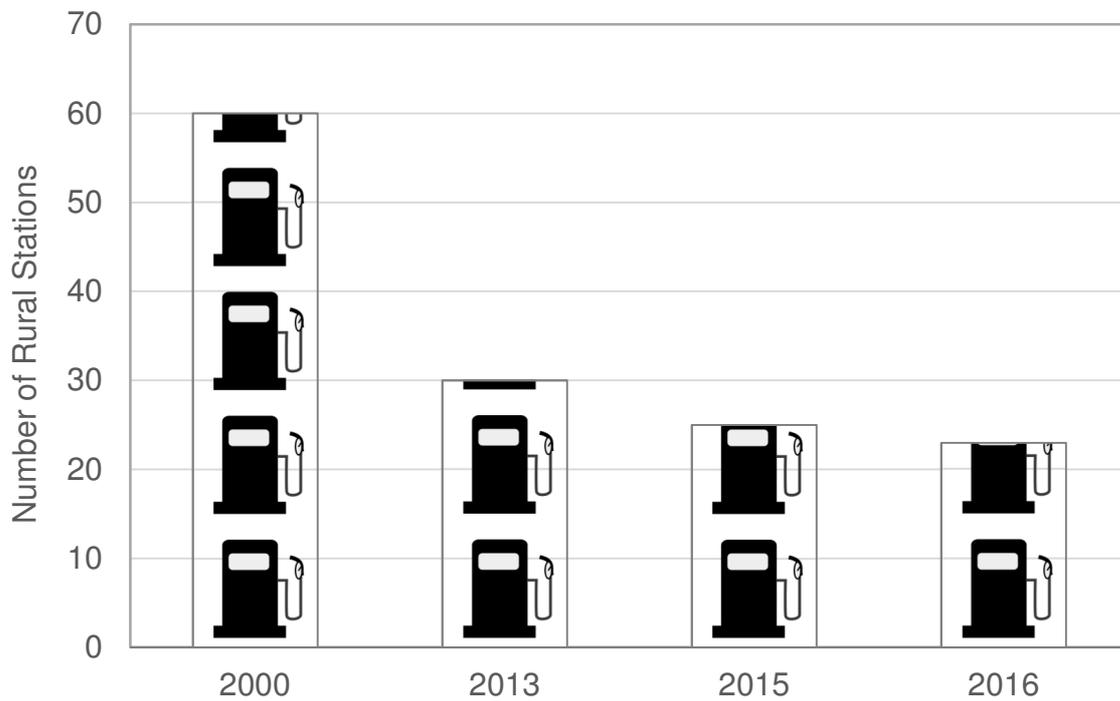
This is a decline that is mirrored at a national scale. The RAC foundation highlights that *“fuel retailing is a high fixed cost, low margin business where high volumes are required to break even. Independent forecourts, especially at remote locations and in*



competition with larger forecourts and supermarkets, have not been able to sell sufficient fuel to remain price competitive”.

The UK Petroleum Industry Association (UKPIA) notes that with declining petrol sales across the UK, (22.87 billion litres in 2007, down to 16.5 billion litres in 2015), strong competition and increasing costs of regulation compliance, many rural petrol stations are now becoming economically unviable.

Figure 1: Number of rural petrol stations in Aberdeenshire between 2000 and 2016



Primary Schools

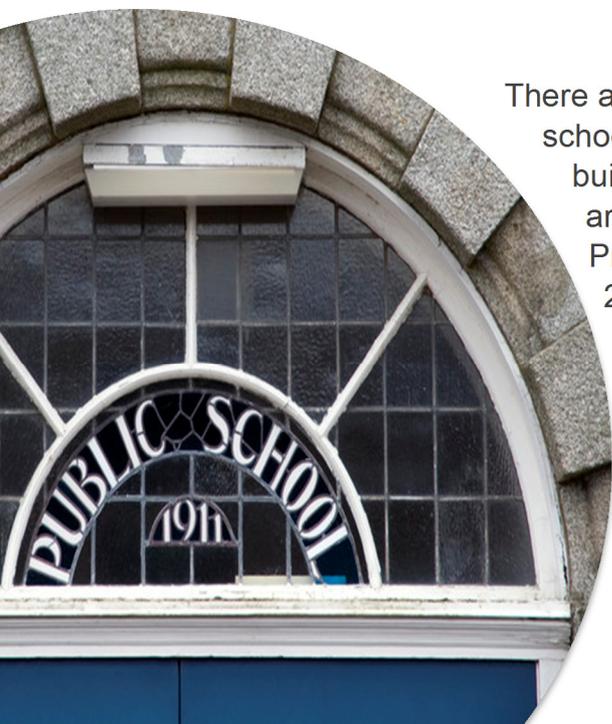
Table 8: Changes in Primary Schools 2000 – 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banff and Buchan	15	13	13	13	-13%	0%	0%
Buchan	20	19	18	18	-10%	-5%	0%
Formartine	21	20	20	20	-5%	0%	0%
Garioch	16	16	16	16	0%	0%	0%
Kincardine and Mearns	18	17	17	17	-6%	0%	0%
Marr	31	30	30	30	-3%	0%	0%
Aberdeenshire	121	115	114	114	-6%	-1%	0%

The number of primary schools in rural Aberdeenshire has fallen by 7 since 2000, a drop of 6%. There has been no change since 2015.

In terms of the reduction in primary schools between 2000 and 2016, Garioch is the only area not to have lost a school during this period. Ardallie Primary School in Buchan was the only rural school to close down in Aberdeenshire between 2013 and 2016 following a consultation period although no pupils have attended the school since 2012.

There are some challenges, however, relating to existing schools and plans have been developed to change several buildings, with a particular focus on those located in rural areas as part of the 21st Century School Improvement Programme. This programme has been running since 2000 and has resulted in the opening of Drumoak Primary School in early 2016 which followed new facilities in Strathburn and Port Errol having opened some years earlier.



Doctor's Surgeries

Table 9: Changes in Doctor's Surgeries, 2000 – 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banff and Buchan	4	4	4	3	-25%	-25%	-25%
Buchan	10	10	10	10	0%	0%	0%
Formartine	6	6	5	5	-17%	-17%	0%
Garioch	2	2	2	2	0%	0%	0%
Kincardine and Mearns	5	3	3	3	-40%	0%	0%
Marr	9	9	9	9	0%	0%	0%
Aberdeenshire	36	34	33	32	-11%	-6%	-3%

Between 2015 and 2016 the number of surgeries in rural Aberdeenshire fell from 33 to 32. This was the result of the closure of the Gardenstown branch of the Banff and Gamrie Medical Group, with services being transferred 8 miles away to Macduff. The reason for the closure of the practice was deemed to be an inability to replace their only GP, who has recently left the area. This is the same rate of decrease as 2014 - 2015, following the closure of the Tarves branch of the Haddo Medical Group.

Looking more long-term between 2000 and 2016, Kincardine and Mearns saw the biggest reduction with the number of GP practices decreasing by 40% from 5 to 3. These closures occurred in Johnshaven in 2005 and in St Cyrus in 2008.

While there have been few practice closures overall, the number of patients assigned to each surgery has been slowly increasing. According to practice details published by ISD Scotland, since 2008, the average practice lists in Grampian have increased by 10%. This compares to a 6% increase on the national average and also practice lists in Grampian in 2014 were typically larger than the Scottish average. This has resulted in increased pressure on local surgeries and a lengthy waiting time for appointments.

Changes in Other Facilities

Apart from the five key facilities, there are many others which can have significant positive benefits in helping to maintain viable and sustainable rural communities.

These include banks, chemists, police stations, fire stations, libraries, MOT garages, secondary schools, halls, churches, hotels and pubs. The change in these facilities over time is shown in Table 10. The only facilities which have not seen a decrease since 2000 are libraries, fire stations and secondary schools. All the others have decreased, ranging from a 2% drop in MOT garages to a 29% drop in hotels and pubs and a 67% drop in the number of banks.

Table 10: Aberdeenshire changes in Other Facilities 2000-2016

Facility	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banks	30	13	13	10	-67%	-23%	-23%
Chemist	23	21	21	21	-9%	0%	0%
Police Station	13	10	9	8	-38%	-20%	-11%
Fire Station	12	12	12	12	0%	0%	0%
Library	20	20	20	20	0%	0%	0%
Mot Garage	59	61	58	57	-3%	-7%	-2%
Secondary School	4	4	4	4	0%	0%	0%
Hall	125	125	125	125	0%	0%	0%
Church	149	127	128	128	-14%	1%	0%
Hotels and Pubs	192	157	126	121	-37%	-23%	-4%
Total	627	550	516	506	-19%	-8%	-2%

Surpassing the losses of petrol stations, banks are the rural facility that has suffered the most in Aberdeenshire during both the past 12 months and also more long-term as shown in the table below.

Banks

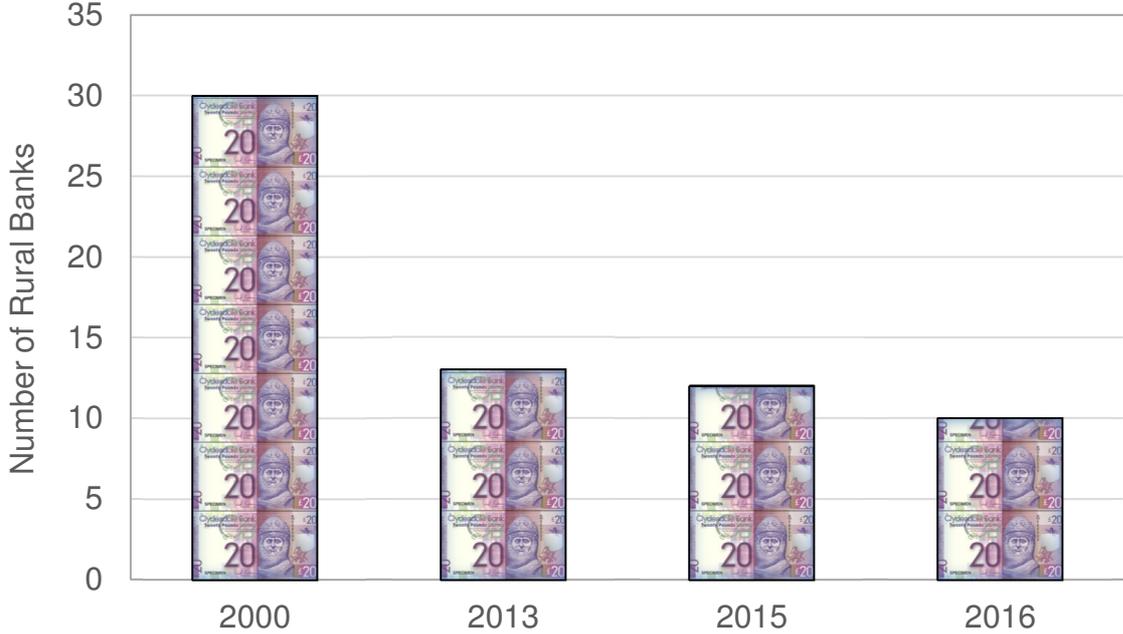
Table 10: Changes in Banks, 2000 - 2016

Admin Area	2000	2013	2015	2016	% change 2000/2016	% change 2013/2016	% change 2015/2016
Banff and Buchan	3	1	1	1	-67%	0%	0%
Buchan	6	3	3	3	-50%	0%	0%
Formartine	3	0	0	0	-100%	0%	0%
Garioch	3	2	1	1	-67%	-50%	0%
Kincardine and Mearns	3	1	1	0	-100%	-100%	-100%
Marr	12	7	7	5	-58%	-29%	-29%
Aberdeenshire	30	13	12	10	-67%	-23%	-23%

Between 2015 and 2016, Kincardine and Mearns lost its last remaining rural bank when the Royal Bank of Scotland Laurencekirk closed its doors in November 2015. In addition, Marr lost two of its banks between 2015 and 2016 with both of these closures occurring in Alford with the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Clydesdale Bank both withdrawing their facilities from the town. Alford is still served by a branch of TSB which remains as the only permanent banking facility, however is only open on a part-time basis.

The declining number of rural banking facilities stretches back much farther with all six administrative areas reporting at least a 50% drop in numbers since 2000. Also, there are fears of further closures with the Bank of Scotland confirming in August that they plan to close branches in New Pitsligo and Portsoy in the near future, which confirms that the trend of removing banking facilities from rural communities shows no signs of abating.

Figure 2: Number of rural banks recorded in Aberdeenshire between 2000 and 2016



However, it should be noted that while many rural communities in Aberdeenshire are no longer served by permanent banking facilities, there are mobile branches in operation throughout our area provided by the Bank of Scotland and RBS.

Details of these services can be found on their respective websites:

<https://www.bankofscotland.co.uk/accessibility/banking-options/mobile-branch/aberdeenshire/>

<http://www.rbs.co.uk/personal/ways-to-bank-with-us/mobile-bank/aberdeenshire.ashx>



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