



# SPF VOICE

April 2025

Volume 18 Issue 4

## CONTENT

Featured BPF Futures Voice	P3
SPF Annual Conference recap	P4-10
SPF Policy Insights	P11
Upcoming Events	P12



## Featured BPF Futures Voice

**Lauren Lynch**  
Associate (Solicitor) at CMS

This month's voice has a special feature from one of our BPF Futures conference attendee. Lauren highlights her experience as a young professional in our flagship event. Lauren is also a part of our commercial real estate committee and a corporate contact at CMS for BPF Futures. Read more on page 3.

## SCOTTISH PROPERTY FEDERATION TEAM

**David Melhuish**  
SPF Director  
dmelhuish@bpf.org.uk

**Anamika Dwivedi**  
Senior Policy Officer  
adwivedi@bpf.org.uk

**Josie Sclater**  
Senior Policy Officer  
jsclater@bpf.org.uk

Spaces Lochrin Square  
92-96 Fountain Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH3 9QA

spf@bpf.org.uk  
T: 0131 220 6353



## Welcome from the Chair

**Stuart Oag**  
Director, Drum Property Group

At our recent annual conference held in Glasgow both the Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes and Housing Minister Paul McLennan repeated their intentions to work with the industry to attract greater investment.

This is a necessity and I am pleased therefore to see the long awaited consultation on exemptions for certain properties, or investments, from the proposed long term system of rent controls. The damage that this four year long debate has had on Scottish investment is irrefutable. Figures published just this week by the BPF and Savills shows that in the past year we have had a 0% increase in new planning applications for BtR – 0%! In the midst of a declared housing emergency.

This edition of Voice includes a number of contributions from our Conference Sponsors, Addleshaw Goddard, Robertson Group, City of Edinburgh Council, Dundee City Council, Invest Aberdeen and Glasgow City Council. I repeat my thanks to all our Partners for their support for this event and indeed to our speakers on the day from the worlds of politics, academia, our real estate sector and local government. I am also delighted to report

that the SPF is a sponsor for the Scotland 2050 event to be held at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh on 17 June. This is being organised by one of our member companies, Pentland Communications and it already includes leading political and professional speakers including the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and the leaders of the Scottish Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. You will find further details inside this

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newsletter.  
This month we SPF members will be in Parliament representing our sector on the Leases (Continuation etc...) Bill and the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill. The first concerns updating and amending the law relation to the termination (or continuation) of commercial leases in Scotland. The Natural Environment legislation provides for Scottish Ministers to modify or restate EIA/Habitats regulations. Both can have significant implications for planning applications.

In all of these areas, your engagement, support and commitment are vital to continuing the work of the SPF in representing our sector's interests. Thank you and please do continue to provide your feedback and insights.

*Stuart*

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# BPF Futures Voice



**Lauren Lynch**  
Associate (Solicitor)  
CMS



Glasgow was a hub of activity in April with the SPF Annual Conference kicking off the month. Held in a city known for its rich industrial heritage, economic impact and cultural significance, the Technology and Innovation Centre at the University of Strathclyde was a fitting venue to underscore this year's theme: "Growing Scotland's Economy".

As a junior professional in the industry, attending such a flagship event can be a daunting experience, which is why one of the highlights of the day was the breakfast session hosted exclusively for BPF Futures members. Nicola Barclay, the former CEO of Homes for Scotland and founder of Athena Leadership Coaching and Consulting, led the event which was designed to enhance networking skills and strategic thinking. This session was particularly valuable for someone like me, who was ultimately looking to maximise their conference experience but didn't quite know

where to start. The practical advice and actionable takeaways were immediately applicable, allowing attendees to put their newly acquired skills into practice throughout the Conference. So, after a much-needed caffeine and croissant break, the BPF Futures delegates were ready for a day of purposeful networking and engaging conversation.

..... “ .....  
**This session (BPF Futures Pre-Conference breakfast) was particularly valuable for someone like me, who was ultimately looking to maximise their conference experience but didn't quite know where to start.**  
.....

The main conference was a whirlwind of activity, featuring keynote speakers such as Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes, Professor Sir John Curtice, and Councillor Susan Aitken – who, together, provided a well-rounded commentary of the economic, political, and local

factors that shape the property industry in Scotland. Panels featuring prominent industry figures like Dr. John Boyle of Rettie & Co., Nick Peet of Santander, and Sarah Baillie of Addleshaw Goddard (and many more) gave us food for thought while encouraging active participation in the engaging Q&A sessions - and it wouldn't be an SPF Conference if I didn't mention the lively discussions centred around the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which was naturally the hottest topic of the day!

Having been actively involved with SPF and BPF Futures for nearly 2 years now, there is a noticeable difference in how I'm able to approach these events with confidence. This is ultimately because of the very deliberate encouragement of SPF and BPF in giving the next generation a platform to shape the future of the Scottish property industry and inspiring us to take space. While the SPF and BPF offer something for everyone, I'd really encourage anyone with under 10 years of experience to come along to similar events. And, if it takes your fancy, my shameless plug is to get involved - whether it's influencing policy by joining a committee, examining industry issues in learning sessions, expanding your network at social events, or participating in the mentoring programme, there are numerous opportunities to make a meaningful impact on our industry. So, with all that said, I hope to see many of you at the next one!

# SPF Annual Conference 2025

View the full album on our Flickr account!

## Our biggest conference yet!


On 2 April, we saw a record number of over 300 delegates attend our 17th Annual Conference at the Technology & Innovation Centre at University of Strathclyde- marking it as our biggest conference yet.

This was only possible with the support of our Conference Sponsors: Addleshaw Goddard, Robertson Group, City of Edinburgh Council, Dundee City Council, Invest Aberdeen and Glasgow City Council.

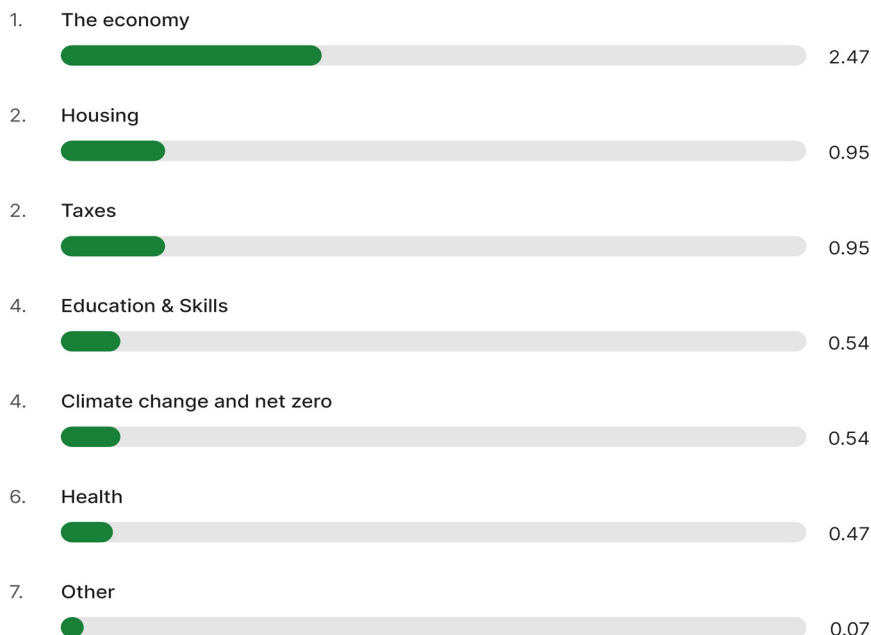
For the first time, we held a pre-conference breakfast led by Nicola Barclay, the former CEO of Homes for Scotland and founder of Athena Leadership Coaching and Consulting to equip BPF Futures members with tips and tricks to efficiently network and enhance their conference experience. In page 2, Lauren shares her experience of this workshop and how it helped her.

Conference compere and the CEO of British Property Federation group, Melanie Leech CBE welcomed delegates to our Annual Conference and before the morning keynote speeches, presented the audience with a question:

## What are the top three key issues that will influence your vote at the next Scottish Elections in 2026?

 What are the top three key issues that will influence your vote at the next Scottish Elections in 2026?

Ranking Poll  169 votes  169 participants







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Page 5



**ROBERTSON**  
SPF Voice April 2025



# Keynote Speakers

## Stuart Oag

SPF Chair & Director at Drum Property Group

Our Chair, Stuart Oag, was introduced by BPF CEO Melanie Leech to make the opening address to a room buzzing of a 300+ strong audience.

The poll at the start of session set the scene for Stuart's speech as he highlighted the contribution of the real estate industry in Scottish Economy. He stressed that urban regeneration & housing are the key component of Scottish Economy. He expressed his surprise and frustration on development viability never been this hard to achieve in his career spanning over 25 years in the industry. Leaving the audience with an open question if 'politics is getting in the way?'

The 3 keys asks for elected representatives and civic leaders from him were: realising and communicating the true cost of policies impacting development, strong leadership to ensure long term decisions and certainty, and lastly, fixing the Housing Bill - a workable rent control system.

## Sir John Curtice

Professor of Politics, University of Strathclyde

John Curtice gave the audience an overall insight on UK politics and things closer to home with the Scottish elections in mind. The impact of global politics, Labour's fall in the Polls since July 2024 and the rise of support for reform were all highlighted in a precis of the most recent opinion polls. In Scotland, SNP still leading the polls with 33% supports, closely followed by Labour with 20% and Reform and Conservatives sitting close with 16 % and 13% support respectively. Reform mostly eating away Conservative voters by 19% followed closely by Labour voters (14%).

In Leadership, John Swinney is still comparetively more favourable than Anas Sarwar in Scotland, leading by 15% as noted in February. Proejctions for Holyrood seats composition showed SNP leading with 55% of the seats, next in line is Labour with 20%.

## Kate Forbes MSP

Deputy First Minister

The DFM walked in just as Sir John was indicating it looks optimistic for SNP, although she did start her speech acknowledging efforts to be made by the SNP to work in partnership and making Scotland an attractive place to invest. Growing investment being one of the priorities of this government, the DFM did state 'housing' as a key priority area among net zero and public infrastructure.

Forbes underlined she had heard the need for clarity from investors on government policy direction and will engage with the industry from the outset of policy development process. She also highlighted the SG's work on non-domestic rates regime and consultation on CoACS and introduction of the 'seeding' relief in LBTT. These were direct asks from SPF members. Forbes also highlighted the upcoming consulation on exemptions from the Housing Bill.



# INVEST **ABERDEEN**

North East Scotland has always been focussed on forging the path ahead, capitalising on opportunities to deliver growth and make our mark on an international scale. This will drive for progression will be supported by the North East Scotland Investment Zone, a 10-year £160million project to boost productivity, accelerate innovation-led business growth and provide more high priority jobs in the region through targeted investment in the priority sectors of Green Energy and Digital Tech.

We continue to be a key player in the energy sector, with significant investments in renewable energy projects and developments. The Energy Transition Zone, a 250-hectare site near the new £420 million Aberdeen South Harbour is a key development for the region. A number of transformational projects have taken shape in Aberdeen, whilst the 'Our Union Street' community-led organisation is reinvigorating our Granite Mile.

In Aberdeenshire, Peterhead Port Authority has invested over £50million to increase industrial and commercial space, of huge benefits to the energy, offshore wind and fishing industries which call the region home.

With £30 billion of public and private infrastructure investment due to be delivered across the region over the next decade, it marks an exciting time to be part of a genuine world-class business location. Invest Aberdeen is the first stop for exploring opportunities in the region, contact us on **enquiriesia@investaberdeen.co.uk or +44 (0)1224 067766.**

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Dundee is a dynamic, ambitious city at the heart of Scotland's economic growth. With a thriving digital and creative sector, world-class research institutions, and a £1.6 billion waterfront regeneration, Dundee is a city that's driving innovation and investment.

Home to pioneering industries, Dundee is a global leader in gaming, life sciences, and renewables, attracting top talent and businesses seeking collaboration, connectivity, and a high quality of life. The city's two universities and cutting-edge research facilities fuel a strong pipeline of skills and innovation, while its strategic location and excellent transport links make it an attractive hub for business.

Dundee is one of the UK's most affordable cities, offering an unbeatable mix of cost-effective business space, high-quality housing, and outstanding lifestyle opportunities.

From a vibrant cultural scene—including the iconic V&A Dundee—to stunning natural surroundings and a thriving hospitality sector, the city offers an exceptional environment for both businesses and individuals to thrive.

With a welcoming business community, a supportive council, and ambitious plans for the future, Dundee is the ideal destination for companies looking to invest, grow, and succeed.

Dundee is open for business—are you ready to be part of it?





# Panel Sessions

## Attracting Residential Investment

**Convenor:** Robin Blacklock, More Homes More Quickly & Dowbrae Real Estate Consultancy;

**Panellists (R-L):** Paul McLennan MSP, Minister for Housing, Dr. John Boyle, Rettie; Jean-Marc Vandevivere, PLATFORM; Sally Thomas, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

The morning keynotes speeches left the audience eager to hear from the Housing

minister. The panel convenor, Robin Blacklock, invited other panellists to speak first to set the scene for Attracting residential investment. Sally Thomas began by asking **'how do we actually attract investment'**? and identified **3 Cs- 'Confidence', 'Cost' and 'Certainty'**. This meant long term, multi-year certainty is required, with RSLs and social housing sectors facing high building costs and requiring funding certainty over a fixed term. This will provide confidence including for private investment to flow and form successful partnerships.

Jean-Marc highlighted the wider social and economic benefit of the Built to Rent sector. PLATFORM's research found for every 100 BTR homes built, £12.1m (GVA) is generated and 51 FTE jobs created during the construction period. Operationally this translates to £1.1m per year (GVA) and 15 FTE jobs. He argued that if Scotland (Glasgow & Edinburgh) were to develop as many BTR homes as Manchester, it would generate **an additional £3bn GVA and 13,000 jobs FTE during construction and £285m per annum (GVA) and 4,000 FTE positions operationally**. These statistics underlined the untapped potential for this asset class that Scotland will miss if housing policy is not improved to restore confidence with investors.

Dr John Boyle added to these statements and highlighted the current barriers to investment, including the Housing Bill. He asked for the **housing sector to be looked at holistically** as there are many underlying issues such as skills, capacity, building costs, planning, and policy issues leading to responsible landlords vacating the sector. In combination this has caused an acute housing availability problem. He stressed as we are in the middle of an on-going housing crisis, we need to work towards a solution together.

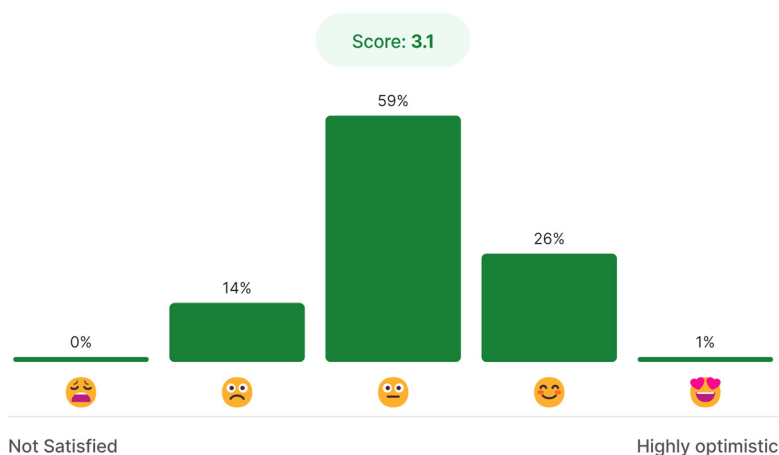
The Minister echoed the message of working together and highlighted initiatives such as the **Housing Investment Taskforce to understand investor's perspectives**. He noted the government had responded to industry calls for a capped CPI + 1% approach that is incorporated in government amendments to the Housing Bill, and that the consultation on exemptions (**which is out now**) will be a step forward in restoring sector confidence.

### We asked you-



How optimistic do you feel after hearing from the panelists on the future of the housing market?

Rating Poll 112 votes 112 participants





# ◆ EDINBURGH ◆

## THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

With its booming economy, fast-growing population, and popularity amongst students and tourists, Edinburgh offers a myriad of opportunities for property developers and investors.

Granton Waterfront has taken a major step forward with the completion of restoration works to the iconic Granton Gas Holder and the securing of £16 million of infrastructure funding for the latest tranche of development, which will bring 847 new homes. Granton Waterfront offers the opportunity to be part of one of the UK's largest regeneration projects.

West Edinburgh, the city's gateway to the world, continues to grow rapidly. Among the plans for West Edinburgh are a 8,500-capacity arena being developed by AEG Europe (operator of London's O2 Arena) and a development of 1,300 mixed-tenure homes by social enterprise Places for People.

One of the most exciting opportunities currently emerging in Edinburgh is Seafield: around 40 hectares of waterfront land located between the award-winning neighbourhood of Leith and Portobello.



Seafield concept image

Currently occupied by car showroom and industrial units, 7N Architects has developed a masterplan for a mixed-use redevelopment of the area that would deliver a vibrant new coastal community providing thousands of homes.

To learn more about opportunities in Edinburgh, contact the City of Edinburgh Council at [invest@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:invest@edinburgh.gov.uk).



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# Attracting Commercial Investment

**Convenor:** Johane Murray, Brodies LLP;

**Panellists (R-L):** Stephen Lewis, HFD Property Group; Elliott Robertson, Robertson Group; Nick Peet, Santander.

Our next panel session focussed on attracting commercial investment to Scotland, a key topic of discussion was the challenges faced by the construction and development sector, particularly around inflation, labour shortages, supply chain disruptions, and rising construction costs. The panel also highlighted the sector's crucial role in the economy, emphasising its contribution to creating valuable workplaces and mixed-use amenity spaces that support economic growth and wider community wellbeing.



## Afternoon Keynote Speeches

### Cllr Susan Aitken

Leader of Glasgow City Council

Cllr Susan Aitken provided an overview of Glasgow's key achievements and challenges as the city celebrates its 850th anniversary this year. Recognised as one of the top European cities for foreign direct investment (FDI), Cllr Aitken outlined several ways the council is working to capitalise on this momentum. These include a firm commitment to

improving the speed and efficiency of planning applications as well as strengthening public-private collaboration particularly through the City Centre Taskforce and the development sub-group.

A key theme of Cllr Aitken's speech was to address vacant and at-risk heritage buildings and repurpose them into residential uses. This supports Glasgow's goal to double its city centre population by 2030 as part of a wider strategy to build a more liveable and sustainable urban centre.

INVEST **ABERDEEN**

**Paul Macari**, Head of Planning and the Economy at Aberdeenshire Council and **Stephen Booth**, Corporate Landlord at Aberdeen City Council followed with a discussion on the economic challenges and the strategies being implemented by both Councils for the Aberdeen and the surrounding region. Key themes included the need for economic diversification beyond oil and gas, with investments to be prioritised in renewable energy, life sciences, and digital technology. The region has been working on collaborations like the Aberdeen City Region Deal, which has led to investments in innovation hubs and digital infrastructure. Despite challenges like workforce shortages and housing costs, Aberdeen is focusing on regional partnerships to promote local economic development and create a sustainable, resilient economy.

## Working Together- Partnerships for Growth

**Convenor:** Jonathan Guthrie, Robertson Group;

**Panellists (R-L):** Daniel Johnson MSP, Scottish Labour; Lorna Edwards, Dundee City Council; Sarah Baillie, Addleshaw Goddard; Kimberly Guthrie, Scotland's Town Partnership.

We concluded the conference with a panel session focused on collaboration. A strong call was made for local authorities and the government to play a more active role in de-risking investment and to accelerate decision-making, helping to unlock private sector funding and share both the risks and rewards particularly important for getting major development projects out of the ground. This sparked a broader discussion on the need for more effective funding models, especially in relation to housing and infrastructure. Public sector investment in infrastructure was emphasised as a critical enabler for unlocking and supporting wider private sector development.

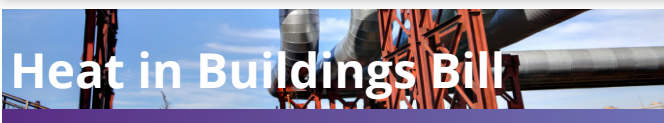




## Housing Bill Exemptions Consultation Published

The much-anticipated consultation to set out the eligibility for potential exemptions from the Housing Bill's proposed system of rent control areas is now open. The consultation relates the detail of Regulations to be made by Scottish Ministers under Section 13 of the Housing Bill now before the Scottish Parliament. Key proposals within the consultation include exemptions for Build to Rent, Mid-Market Rent and for existing properties undergoing significant investment to make substantial property improvements or adaptations to meet energy efficiency requirements. We are keen to hear your views on this crucial consultation which lasts until 18 July. Please contact [spf@bpf.org.uk](mailto:spf@bpf.org.uk). The consultation also seeks views on the ending of Joint Tenancies, and we would welcome your views on this difficult area of tenancy law as well.

The consultation includes reference to what was then the latest quarterly figures produced by BPF and Savills on the BtR construction pipeline. This already demonstrated alarming falls in construction activity in the Scottish BtR sector which we attribute to the uncertainty and loss of investor confidence caused by the long running rent control and Housing Bill debate. Last week, BPF and Savills published updated statistics which our Chair, Stuart Oag references in his introduction to this edition of Voice. This new data, which has been covered widely in the media reveals a 0% increase in new planning applications. In the context of a housing emergency these are clearly alarming figures and illustrate the chilling effect that the rent control debate has had on investment in Scottish build to rent.



## Heat in Buildings Bill

Last month, we heard the acting net-zero secretary Gillian Martin announcing that the draft Heat in Buildings Bill will no longer be put forward in its current form. Following that on 3 April, the Acting Minister for Climate Action, Alasdair Allan MSP announced the government's recommitment to Heat in Buildings Bill.

Following concerns of practicality and costs of enforcing homeowners and businesses to move to a clean heating system by 2030, the government will delay the target until end of 2045.

The main provisions include a boost to heat network development by developing requirements for large, non-domestic premises, including powers to require public sector buildings to connect to district heating when available. Mentioned in the Bill, the Scottish Government will have Powers to set minimum energy efficiency standards for owner/occupier and non-domestic properties, which is subject to further consideration. Our Building Design & Sustainability committee members will be meeting the officials working on this part of the Bill on 3 June.

Also, the regulations will be progressed under existing powers to introduce a minimum energy efficiency standard in the private rented sector to reach an equivalent of EPC C by 2028.

The revised Bill is expected to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament this year with an intention to complete its parliamentary scrutiny in time for the 2026 Holyrood elections.

If members have views on these provisions or would like to discuss this further, feel free to contact [Anamika](#).

## Update to Planning Guidance on Developer Contributions

Following the stop on the work of an Infrastructure Levy last year, the Scottish Government are looking at existing mechanisms to fund infrastructure projects. As a part of this exercise they are looking to update Planning Circular 3/2012 concerning the section 75 planning obligations for developer contributions.

Our Planning and Development Committee met the officials working directly on this guidance on 22 April. Officials updated the committee on the aim to align this guidance with 2019 Act and 'Infrastructure First' approach as mentioned in NPF4. They will be considering how contributions policies will fit with new-style LDPs and Delivery Programmes, and what evidence is required at each stage of the process.

As a part of evidence gathering, they will also check the legitimacy of zone-based contributions policies to address cumulative impacts, and provide guidance on the types of evidence needed to justify these. They will also highlight practice and process improvements to reduce delays and also the guidance on the policy tests may be adjusted.

Our committee's initial concerns were over the alignment with the LDP Delivery Programme and provisions for transitional arrangements, timescales, if development viability will be considered in this guidance. Members also asked if this will present an opportunity to form more strategic partnerships, coordinate delivery of infrastructure projects and improve transparency so that developers will be aware of where these contributions are going.

Our committee members will represent SPF and industry's views in the next roundtable on 14 May.

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## SPF Annual Dinner 2025

After Dinner Speaker:  
**Sarah Smith**  
BBC News, North America Editor

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