



Chapter 5

EIA Approach and Methodology



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Chapter 5

EIA Approach and Methodology

5.1 Introduction

1. This Chapter sets out an overview of the requirements of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations'). It then outlines the broad approach and methodology undertaken to assess the proposed Development in accordance with the EIA Regulations. Finally, it sets out the assumptions that have been made in undertaking the EIA for the proposed Development.

5.2 Requirement for EIA

2. Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations lists those developments for which an EIA is mandatory, whilst Schedule 2 describes projects for which the need for EIA is judged by Scottish Ministers on a case-by-case basis. The proposed Development falls with Schedule 2, paragraph (a) of the EIA Regulations as:

“a generating station, the construction of which (or operation of which) will require a section 36 consent but which is not a Schedule 1 development.”

3. Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations lists the 'selection criteria' which must be taken into account by Scottish Ministers in determining whether a Schedule 2 development is an EIA development. These selection criteria relate to the nature, scale and location of the proposed development and consequently whether the project is likely to have to have significant effects on the environment.
4. For those developments listed under Schedule 2, the requirement for an EIA can be determined via a screening request made to Scottish Ministers. In this case a screening request to Scottish Ministers was not sought since it was considered that the proposed Development would be of a size and nature that may have potential significant effects. SPR also recognises that the EIA process can play an important role in developing the design of the proposals to minimise adverse environmental effects and maximise positive benefits. SPR has therefore concluded that an EIA is required for this project.
5. Whilst it is considered that the proposed Development has the potential for significant environmental effects, it should be noted that this does not mean that a significant effect is the ultimate conclusion of the EIA. The EIA process promotes the identification of potential adverse effects and either building in appropriate embedded mitigation into the design of the proposal or the incorporation of mitigation measures into the construction and/or operation of the proposals to avoid, reduce and, if possible, remedy any significant adverse effects or further enhance positive effects.

5.3 Requirements of the EIA Regulations

6. The approach to the EIA undertaken in respect of the proposed Development has followed the requirements of the EIA Regulations. An application for an Electricity Act consent for EIA development must be accompanied by an environmental impact assessment report (EIA Report).
7. The EIA Regulations require a description of the likely significant effects on the following factors:
 - population and human health;

- biodiversity;
 - land, soil, water, air and climate; and
 - material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape.
8. The EIA Report must identify, describe and assess the direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed Development and the interaction between those factors. The Regulations also require identification, description and assessment of the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks, so far as relevant to the development, of major accidents and disasters.
9. The EIA Report must include:
- a. a description of the development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;
 - b. a description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment;
 - c. a description of the features of the development and any measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
 - d. a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;
 - e. a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and
 - f. any other information specified in schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the development and to the environmental features likely to be affected.
10. Where a scoping opinion is adopted, the EIA Report must be based on that scoping opinion and must include the information that may reasonably be required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment.
11. Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations sets out the information that must be included in the EIA Report, summarised in **Table 5.1**. This table also identifies where the corresponding information can be found in this EIA Report.

Table 5.1: EIA Report Information

Required Information	Relevant Section in EIA Report
<p>1. Description of the development, including in particular:</p> <p>(a) a description of the location of the development;</p> <p>(b) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases;</p> <p>(b) a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quality of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used; and</p> <p>(c) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases.</p>	<p>A description of the location of the proposed Development is presented in Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution.</p> <p>A description of the proposed Development and its characteristics is presented in Chapter 3: Description of the proposed Development.</p> <p>The predicted individual emissions and residues of the proposed Development are reported in Chapters 7 to 15.</p>
<p>2. A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed Development and its special characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for this choice, taking into account a comparison of the environmental effects.</p>	<p>The alternatives considered are covered under Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution.</p>

Required Information	Relevant Section in EIA Report
<p>3. A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (the “baseline scenario”) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the project as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of relevant information and scientific knowledge</p>	<p>This is described in the baseline section of each technical Chapters in the EIA Report (Chapters 7 to 15), where relevant.</p>
<p>4. A description of the factors specified in item 3 above likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, cultural heritage, including the architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape.</p>	<p>Effects on population and human health are discussed in relation to visual/residential amenity impacts in Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, traffic impacts in Chapter 12: Access, Traffic and Transport, noise impacts in Chapter 13: Noise, air quality impacts in Chapter 15: Other Issues, and socio-economic impacts in Chapter 14: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism.</p> <p>Effects on biodiversity are discussed in Chapter 8: Ecology and Chapter 9: Ornithology.</p> <p>Effects on land and soil are discussed in Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils and Chapter 14: Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism.</p> <p>Effects on material assets and archaeological aspects are discussed in Chapter 11: Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.</p> <p>Effects on landscape are discussed in Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.</p>
<p>5. A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, resulting from:</p> <p>(a) the construction and existence of the development, including, where relevant, demolition works;</p> <p>(b) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources; and</p> <p>(c) the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances and the disposal and recovery of waste;</p> <p>(d) the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for examples due to accidents or disasters);</p> <p>(e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved development, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources;</p> <p>(f) the impact of the development on climate and the vulnerability of the development to climate change; and</p> <p>(g) the technologies and the substance used.</p> <p>The description of the likely significant effects should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development.</p>	<p>The predicted significant effects of the proposed Development are reported as residual effects after relevant mitigation measures in each of the technical Chapters of the EIA Report (Chapters 7 to 15). The methods used to predict significant effects are explained in this Chapter and each individual Chapter as relevant.</p> <p>Effects have been predicted in relation to the project’s construction and permanent use of the land. The operation and nature of these effects and their duration are reported.</p>

Required Information	Relevant Section in EIA Report
6. A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved.	Methods, assumptions and limitations in the EIA process are reported as required in this Chapter and in the relevant technical Chapters of the EIA Report (Chapters 7 to 15).
7. A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce and if possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any monitoring arrangements. That description should explain the extent to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.	The overall approach to mitigation is discussed in this Chapter. Specific mitigation measures are reported in each relevant technical Chapter and are summarised in Chapter 16: Schedule of Commitments .
8. A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the proposed Development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned. Where appropriate, the description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for the proposed response to such emergencies.	The proposed Development is not located in an area of natural disasters, such as extreme weather events, and the construction of the operation of the proposed Development would be managed within the requirements of a number of health and safety regulations including the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. Nonetheless, Chapter 15: Other Issues considers the risk to Human Health as a result of such events. The issue of peat slide and flood risk are considered in Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils .
9. A non-technical summary of the information provided under points 1 to 8	A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is presented as Volume 1 of this EIA Report.
10. A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments in the EIA report	Reference lists are provided in each Chapter (Chapters 7 to 15).

5.3.1 Legislation and guidance

12. The EIA has been completed in accordance with the latest regulations and advice on best practice, including the following:

- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- Scottish Government Planning Advice Note 1/2013: Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Scottish Government Planning Circular 1/2017: Guidance on The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017;
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2004) Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment; and
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (2018) Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidance for Competent Authorities, Consultees and other involved in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process in Scotland (5th Edition).

5.4 EIA and the design process

13. The EIA is treated as an iterative process, rather than a one-off, post-design environmental appraisal. This has allowed the findings from the EIA to be fed into the design process, to avoid, reduce and where possible, mitigate environmental effects. Where potentially adverse environmental effects were identified through preliminary investigations as part of feasibility work, or later in the detailed EIA, consideration was given as to how the project design could be modified to design out adverse environmental effects, or where this was not possible, to identify appropriate mitigation. This process is explained further in **Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution**; and in the subsequent technical assessment Chapters (**Chapters 7 to 15**).

5.5 Determining the scope of the EIA Report

14. The purpose of scoping is to:
- obtain baseline information regarding existing environmental site conditions;
 - establish key environmental issues and identify potential effects to be considered during the EIA;
 - identify those issues which are likely to require more detailed study and those which can be justifiably excluded from further assessment;
 - provide a means of confirming the most appropriate methods of assessment; and
 - ensure that statutory consultees and other bodies with a particular interest in the environment such as community councils are informed of the proposal and provided with an opportunity to make an input at an early stage in the EIA process.
15. SPR previously submitted a scoping opinion request to Scottish Ministers in July 2013 for a windfarm development in a similar location to the proposed Development. This request was made under regulation 7 of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2000. The Scottish Ministers scoping opinion was subsequently issued in October 2013.
16. The 2013 scoping opinion specifically related to a proposed 31 turbine windfarm of 145 m maximum height, with a generating capacity of up to 93 megawatts (MW). Scottish Government advice provides that if the proposal changes substantially prior to application submission, the applicant may wish to consider the need to request a new scoping opinion. Whilst the proposal has changed substantially since receiving the 2013 scoping opinion, no further formal scoping opinion has been sought.
17. SPR requested new scoping advice on the proposed development in February 2020. This request was made directly to consultees rather than from Scottish Ministers. The list of consultees who were consulted however was agreed in advance with the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit. This EIA Report is based upon responses to this scoping advice request, as well as advice and information obtained from the original scoping exercise.
18. Further details on the scoping process undertaken for this EIA is provided in **Chapter 6: Scoping and Consultation** of this EIA Report.

5.6 Approach and methods

5.6.1 Introduction

19. The assessments that have been undertaken as part of the EIA have been based upon the Site and relevant study areas. The Site is the area contained within the redline application boundary shown on **Figure 1.2**. Relevant study areas are determined for each technical discipline and described within the relevant technical chapters (**Chapter 7 to 15**).
20. The EIA Regulations require a description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in Section 5.3 above. Any such effects are identified in the relevant technical Chapters (**Chapter 7 to 15**).
21. Full details of the assessment methodology used by technical disciplines in this EIA Report are provided in each Chapter (**Chapter 7 to 15**). In general terms, assessment criteria have been used to evaluate environmental effects. Significance is generally determined through a combination of the sensitivity of a receptor to an effect and the magnitude of the change. This process is outlined as follows:
- identification of baseline conditions of the Site and its environs, including the sensitivity of receptors which may be affected by changes in the baseline conditions;
 - consideration of the magnitude of potential changes (impact) in the environmental baseline;
 - assessment of the significance of effect taking account sensitivity of receptors and magnitude of impact;

- identification of appropriate mitigation measures; and
- assessment of significance of residual effects taking account of any mitigation measures.

22. Where significant environmental impacts are predicted in the EIA process, the EIA Report provides mitigation measures which would be employed to avoid, reduce and, if possible, remedy these adverse effects. Mitigation measures can be in the form of changes to operational practice, or changes/additions to the proposed design. EIA also considers positive changes or enhancements as a result of the proposed Development.

23. The above approach does not apply to all disciplines addressed in the EIA Report, and alternative approaches are described and justified in the relevant technical Chapters. In most cases these differences are based on guidance from technical discipline industry bodies and institutions.

5.6.2 Baseline conditions

24. A fundamental aspect of EIA is to determine the baseline environmental conditions prevailing at the Site. These form the benchmark against which predicted changes resultant from the proposed Development are assessed to determine the magnitude of any impact. The baseline conditions have been determined by a number of different methods, including desktop studies, Site surveys, use of analytical models and the acquisition of data from third parties.

25. The assessment of each environmental parameter was undertaken in comparison to baseline conditions. This describes the existing environmental conditions at the Site (and in the wider area as pertinent to the particular environmental parameter). Where relevant, the future baseline is considered where changes are considered certain or likely to happen, including nearby consented renewable energy proposals which are not yet present but are expected to be constructed.

26. The sensitivity of the baseline conditions has been defined according to the relative sensitivity of existing environmental features on or in the vicinity of the Site, or by the sensitivity of receptors which would potentially be affected by the proposed Development. Criteria for the determination of sensitivity or importance have been established based on prescribed guidance, legislation, statutory designation and/or professional judgement. The criteria for each environmental parameter are outlined in the EIA Report according to the technical subject area.

27. The baseline for the majority of the Site, being commercial forestry, is a dynamic environment due to the constant variance of the forestry growth / harvest cycle. The dynamic nature of the baseline environment is an important factor when considering the sensitivity of the baseline conditions to change.

28. Relevant windfarms that are operational or under construction are considered to be part of the baseline for the purposes of this EIA Report, unless specifically stated otherwise within relevant technical Chapters.

5.6.3 Consultation

29. Consultation has formed an integral part of the EIA process and both the EIA team and SPR have contacted a number of statutory and non-statutory consultees to determine their views on the proposed Development, collect baseline information and refine survey methodologies. Replies received in response to Scoping are detailed within the relevant technical Chapters of the EIA Report. Consultation has been undertaken with the relevant consultees for the technical disciplines and is reported in **Chapter 6: Scoping and Consultation**, and in the topic specific Chapters of the EIA Report.

30. Engagement with the local community was undertaken through public information days held on 17 and 18 February 2020, as well as an event from 27 July until 3 August 2020, which was held online due to the Covid-19 Pandemic following discussion and agreement with the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit. Further details on this can be found in **Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution** and in the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report submitted as part of the application for consent for the proposed Development.

5.6.4 Assessment of effects

31. The assessment of potential effects, using a range of appropriate methodologies, takes into account the construction and operation of the proposed Development in relation to the Site and its environs. Methodologies for predicting the nature and magnitude of any potential environmental impacts vary according to the technical subject area and are described in the relevant Chapter. Numerical or quantitative methods of assessment are used to predict values which can be compared against published thresholds and indicative criteria contained in relevant guidance and standards.

32. Not all technical subject areas are capable of being assessed numerically or quantitatively, and thus qualitative assessments are used in certain cases. Such assessments rely on previous experience of similar projects, environments and professional judgement of experienced and qualified professionals as detailed in **Chapter 1: Introduction**.

5.6.5 Sensitivity of receptors

33. Criteria for the determination of sensitivity (e.g. 'high', 'medium', or 'low') or of importance (e.g. 'international', 'national', 'regional' or 'authority area') have been established based on prescribed guidance, legislation, statutory designation and/or professional judgement. The criteria for each technical discipline are provided in the relevant Chapter of the EIA Report.

5.6.6 Magnitude of change (impact)

34. The magnitude of change or impact on environmental baseline conditions is identified through detailed consideration of the proposed Development, taking due cognisance of any legislative or policy standards or guidelines, and / or the following factors:

- the nature of the change to which the environment would be affected, e.g. whether the quality is enhanced or impaired;
- the scale or degree of change from the baseline situation;
- whether the impact is temporary or permanent, indirect or direct, short term, medium term or long term;
- any in-combination effects; and
- potential cumulative effects.

35. In some cases, the likelihood of impact occurrence may also be relevant, and where this is a determining feature of the assessment this will be clearly stated.

5.6.7 Mitigation

36. Mitigation is considered as an integral part of the overall design strategy for the proposed Development, as part of an iterative EIA process. Embedded mitigation refers to environmental measures that have been integrated into the design of the project (for example altering and refining the layout of the proposed Development to reduce landscape and visual impact, watercourse crossings or avoid sensitive species and habitats) rather than relying solely on 'add-on' measures to prevent, reduce or remedy any remaining significant environmental effects.

37. SPR adopts an iterative approach whereby mitigation is assessed and considered at all stages of the project. The final design of the proposed Development has evolved over the project planning lifetime as demonstrated in **Chapter 2: Site Description and Design Evolution**, with the project design systematically being optimised during the EIA process in response to increasing knowledge of the Site and potential environmental effects.

38. Some of the environmental measures described within **Chapters 7 to 16** of this EIA Report do not respond directly to likely significant adverse effects but have been included as good practice to reduce the level of adverse effects (or enhance the level of beneficial effects) of the proposed Development. Where relevant, these good practice and enhancement measures are described in the technical Chapters.

39. Where significant environmental effects are predicted, the EIA Report provides additional measures which would be employed to eliminate or ameliorate the effect. Mitigation measures may include the adoption of alternatives and changes/additions to design management or operation to prevent, reduce or, where possible, offset any adverse significant effects.

40. In some cases, whilst mitigation of a specific significant effect may not be possible, it may be appropriate to provide other benefits such as replacement habitat for that which has been disturbed or lost due to the construction of the proposed Development. The adoption of such environmental compensation measures may be used to offset a significant effect and can be effective in reducing the level of adverse effect, or indeed achieving a positive effect, for the project as a whole.

5.6.8 Monitoring

41. Where appropriate, the EIA Report sets out details of any post-consent monitoring which is proposed. This includes, where appropriate, proposals to measure the effectiveness of the identified mitigation measures.

5.6.9 Statement of significance

42. Assessing the significance of effects is based on consideration of the magnitude of the change (impact) relative to the baseline conditions and the sensitivity of the receptor.
43. The significance of an effect is derived from an analysis of:
- the sensitivity of the receiving environment or receptor to change, including its capacity to accommodate the kinds of changes the proposed Development may bring about;
 - the amount and type of change, often referred to as magnitude of the potential impact which includes the timing, scale, size and duration of the impact;
 - the likelihood of the impact occurring - which may range from certainty to a remote possibility;
 - the duration of the effect;
 - the geographical extent of the effect; and
 - the reversibility of the effect.
44. There is no general definition of what constitutes significance. In EIA, the term significance reflects both its literal meaning of 'importance' and its statistical meaning where there is an element of quantification. This combination of judgemental/subjective and quantifiable/objective tests has become the standard approach to understanding and applying the test of 'significance'.
45. The level of effect that is adjudged to be 'significant' is defined in each of the technical Chapters. Any effects associated with the proposed Development are considered to be negative or adverse except where it is stated that they are positive or beneficial.

5.6.10 Consideration of cumulative effects

46. In accordance with the EIA Regulations, the assessment has considered 'cumulative effects' that might arise from the proposed Development in conjunction with other similar projects that are in development, i.e. projects that are not reported in the baseline but have a reasonable expectation of being developed ('reasonably foreseeable'). Likely cumulative effects have been defined for this EIA as the likely effects that the proposed Development may have in combination with other renewable energy developments in the local area which are at application stage or consented but not yet under construction or operational. Cumulative effects are addressed as appropriate throughout **Chapters 7 to 15** of this EIA Report.
47. The study area for considering cumulative effects is specific to each technical discipline, and established in each technical Chapter. The technical discipline which considers the largest cumulative study area is Landscape and Visual, which has considered cumulative effects within approximately 15 km from the Site as detailed in **Table 5.2**.
48. A cut-off date for the inclusion of cumulative renewable energy developments was set at 31 July unless specifically stated otherwise within relevant technical Chapters. Subsequently in early August 2020 changes to the Sanquhar II proposals were submitted to the ECU and these changes have been incorporated into the cumulative assessment.
49. Further information regarding each scheme is provided in **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**.

Table 5.2: Cumulative renewable energy developments within 15 km

Name	Status	Distance
Consented		
Lorg	Consented	adjacent
Sandy Knowe	Consented	3.4 km
Pencloe	Consented	5.3 km
Lethans (2019)	Consented	9.4 km
Glenmuckloch	Consented	9.0 km
Proposals (with submitted/validated Planning Applications or at Appeal)		
Sanquhar II	Proposed	adjacent

Name	Status	Distance
Lorg Increased Tip Height	Proposed	adjacent
Windy Standard 3	Proposed	4.1 km
Cornharrow	Proposed	4.3 km
Pencloe (2019)	Proposed	5.3 km
Shepherds Rig	Proposed	7.6 km

5.6.11 Assumptions, limitations and technical difficulties

50. The EIA process is designed to enable good decision-making based on the best possible available information about the environmental implications of a proposed Development. A number of assumptions have been made during preparation of the EIA Report, which are set out here. Assumptions specific to certain environmental aspects are discussed in the relevant technical Chapters of the EIA Report.

51. Assumptions made during the EIA include:

- the principal land uses adjacent to the Site would remain as they are at the time of the EIA Report submission. In the case of nearby renewable energy projects that are currently in planning or consented but not yet developed, these are included in the cumulative effects assessment;
- proposed renewable energy projects that are not yet in the planning system are not included within the cumulative projects assessed in this EIA Report; and
- information provided by third parties, including publicly available information and databases, is correct at the time of publication.

52. The assessment has been subject to the following limitations:

- where baseline conditions have been subject to physical surveys the data is considered accurate at that date but, owing to the dynamic nature of the environment, conditions may change during the consenting, construction and operational phases; and
- the assessment of cumulative effects has been reliant on the availability of information on other developments.

5.7 References

IEMA (2017). *Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment*.

Scottish Government (2017). *The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended)*.

Scottish Government (2017). *Scottish Planning Series Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017, Guidance on The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017*.

Scottish Government (2013). *Planning Advice Note (PAN) 1/2013 Environmental Impact Assessment (2013)*;

SNH (2018). *A Handbook on Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidance for Competent Authorities, Consultees and other involved in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process in Scotland* (5th Edition).

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