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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title:** ANNUAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK PLAN DELIVERY

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### Purpose

To provide an overview of the National Park Plan delivery to date and consider how best to address the challenges of implementation between now and 2012.

### Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) That the Board request the CNP Strategy Group collectively address the issues of delivery of outcomes for the remaining three years of this Park Plan.
- b) That the Board agree to change the format of advisory forums.

### Executive Summary

This paper reviews progress in delivering the National Park Plan over its first two years and identifies key challenges that are likely to affect its future delivery and the achievement of its 5-year outcomes for each Priority for Action. 2009/10 is the mid-year in the delivery period for the current plan, so it is an appropriate time to take stock of what has been achieved and whether partners are collectively on track to deliver the outcomes by 2012.

Three Priorities for Action (Integrating Public Support for Land Management, Making Tourism and Business more Sustainable, Making Housing more Affordable and Sustainable) are considered to have outcomes with the greatest risk of not being achieved by 2012 and consideration of these outcomes by the Strategy Group is recommended.

There is a more general challenge for all delivery partners in delivering actions and outcomes during a period of financial constraint or contraction, and this is a particular challenge for CNPA staff in a co-ordinating role. The paper also proposes changes to the advisory forum mechanisms that support the delivery of the Park Plan to ensure CNPA engages effectively with stakeholders.

## ANNUAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL PARK PLAN DELIVERY – FOR DECISION

### Background

1. This is the first annual review of progress in delivery of the National Park Plan. It incorporates the second 4-monthly report on delivery but takes a broader look at the progress of delivery, the challenges CNPA and partners face in delivering the outcomes, and the ongoing challenges in making the partnership model of delivery work. It is the intention to bring an annual review paper following the completion of each financial year to help steer the work of the CNPA in co-ordinating delivery.
2. This annual review paper is distinct from the National Park Plan Progress Report that we are preparing for 2008/09, as we did for 2007/08, and which will be distributed to partners, stakeholders and other interested parties in June. That report shares the successes that partners have delivered during 2008/09 and highlights case studies in each priority for action.






### Mid-term Health-check of Delivery

3. 2009/10 is the mid-year in the five year period of the first National Park Plan. This year provides a good opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved so far, whether we are collectively on track to deliver the outcomes by 2012, and if not, what action can be taken in the remaining period to improve success. We are undertaking a “health-check” of delivery with partners during the summer of 2009 and will report the implications of the health-check to the Board in the autumn of 2009.

### Achievement of Outcomes and Delivery of Actions

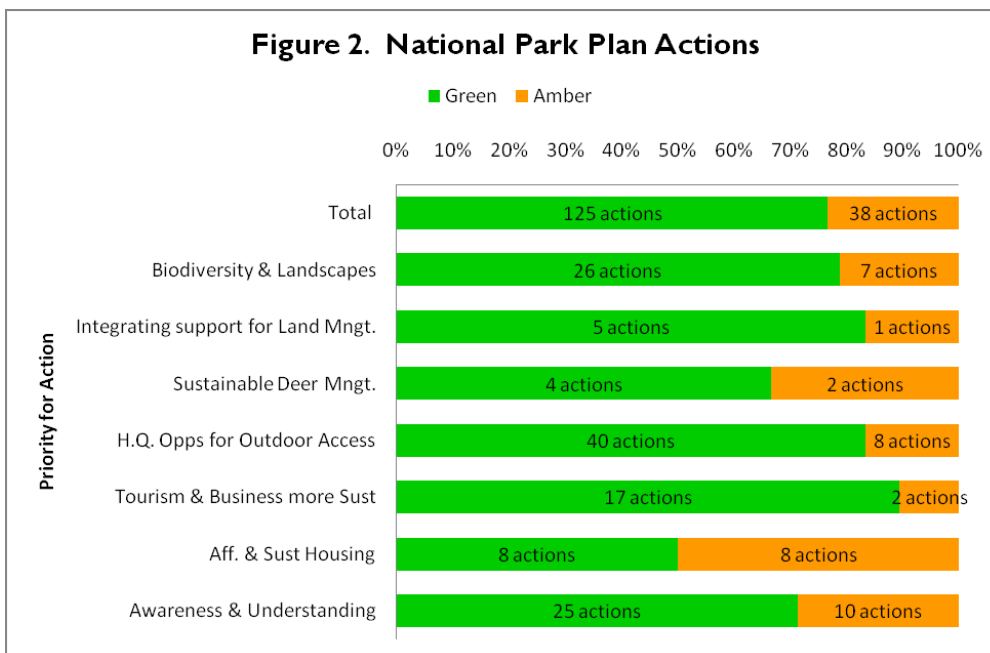
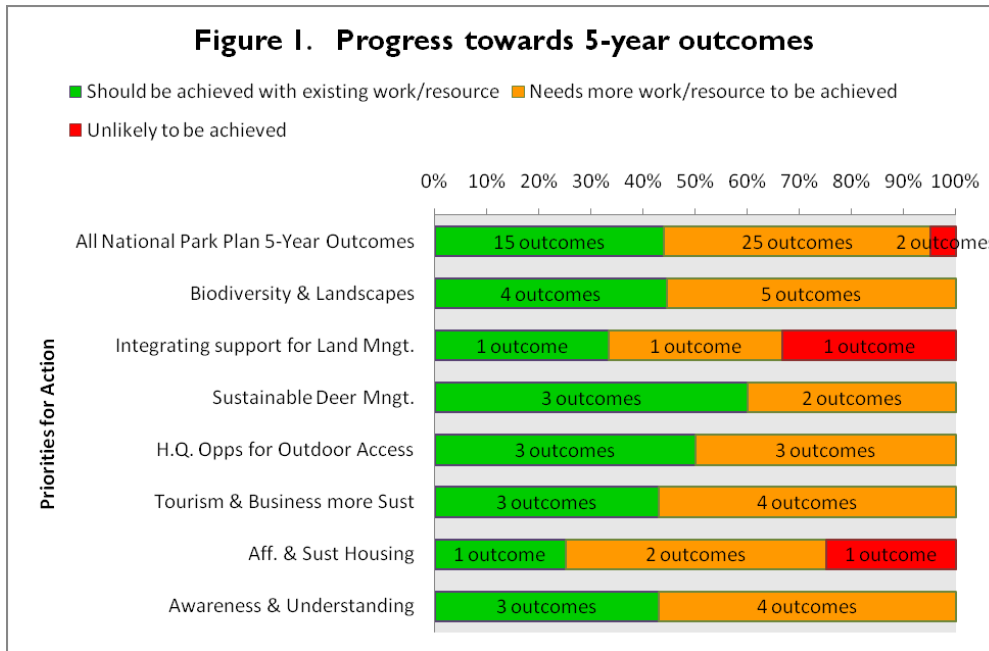
4. This is the second time the Board have been given a summary of progress in delivering the Park Plan. The first time was in the first 4-monthly update on 23 January 2009. In the January 2009 update, both the 5-year outcomes and actions were assessed using the ‘traffic lights’ system of green-amber-red to provide a simple visual summary where:
  - a) **Green** = Progress towards the outcome or action is on track and there is confidence that the outcome or action will be achieved by, or before 2012;
  - b) **Amber** = There is uncertainty about whether the outcome or action will be achieved, or there may be delays in achieving it.
  - c) **Red** = The outcome or action will not, or is unlikely to be achieved.

5. Following the first update, we have adapted our methodology for assessing progress towards the outcomes in the National Park Plan to provide more information and a clearer, more systematic assessment. The assessment of progress in delivering National Park Plan Actions remains unchanged. However, the assessment of progress towards 5-year outcomes is now done using 5 classes associated with a specific definition:

	<b>1 Will not be achieved</b>
	<b>2 Unlikely to be achieved</b>
	<b>3 Needs more work/resource to be achieved</b>
	<b>4 Should be achieved with existing work/resource</b>
	<b>5 Achieved</b>

6. In order to make the assessments across each priority for action as comparable as possible, they are recorded by programme managers in same format:
- a) The number and text associated with the chosen class 1-5 above; followed by
  - b) A short justification for the assessment – why that assessment has been chosen;
  - c) A short summary of any major achievements of the Delivery Team (if not already mentioned above);
  - d) What needs to be done to move the outcome to a number 5 by 2012; and finally
  - e) A statement about the indicator or other data (if relevant).
7. The assessment is undertaken by the respective CNPA officers managing each Priority for Action. Further detail on the reasoning behind the assessment of individual outcomes is provided in the tables of Annex 1.
8. Figures 1 and 2 show the assessment of progress in delivering the National Park Plan's outcomes and actions for each priority for action at May 2009.
9. The CNPA estimates in Figure 1 that 45% of the 5-year outcomes will be achieved by 2012 with existing work and resources, that just over 50% of outcomes will require more work and/or resources to be achieved by 2012, and that 5% (two outcomes) are unlikely to be achieved by 2012 given our current expectations. None of the outcomes are considered to be unachievable by 2012, and none have been fully achieved yet.

10. Figure 2 shows that around 80% of the actions in the Park Plan are considered to be green and on track to be delivered, with around 20% considered to be amber and requiring more attention or alternative action. None of the actions are considered to be red (not achievable) at this time.



11. There is an apparent mismatch between figures 1 and 2. Figure 2 shows clear progress in actions being delivered by partners, but figure 1 shows a greater degree of uncertainty and doubt about whether the outcomes those actions are intended to support will be achieved. There are a number of reasons for this mismatch:

- a) There is inherently more uncertainty about whether outcomes will be achieved than actions will be delivered as the CNPA are making a qualitative judgment about how likely the outcomes will be achieved by 2012.
  - b) The actions set out in the Park Plan are those that it was considered would be required to deliver outcomes when the Park Plan was being prepared more than 2 years ago. Since then, circumstances have changed and in some cases will have reduced the impact of actions, or simply, actions have not had the effects they were intended to. This may mean that new or additional or alternative actions need to be pursued over the remaining years of the Park Plan. These are issues that we will tackle with partners through the mid-term health-check.
  - c) In some extreme cases, circumstances or conditions have changed very substantially. The operation of the SRDP clearly has a direct impact on one of the outcomes for Integrating Public Support for Land Management, but also has secondary effects on outcomes in that priority for action and a range of others. Similarly, the economic slowdown across the country is leading to particularly acute problems for the operation of the housing market due to reduced availability of credit, but has impacts on almost all other outcomes as well.
  - d) There is likely to be a time lag between actions being delivered by partners, and those actions having clear effects on the outcome they help to achieve.
12. The key points that the assessment of progress in delivering the Park Plan's actions and achieving its 5-year outcomes are that:
- a) The delivery partners have been successful in delivering many of the actions in the Park Plan during its first 2 years of implementation;
  - b) Nearly half of the Park Plan's 5-year outcomes are on track to be achieved by 2012 but half are considered likely to require more effort/action or resource than was anticipated when the Park Plan was prepared;
  - c) The mid-term health-check will allow the CNPA and partners to review the effectiveness of current programmed actions and allow future work to be as focussed on achieving the outcomes as possible.
  - d) The operation of SRDP and the economic slowdown have created considerable challenges to achieving some outcomes of the National Park Plan that were not envisaged when it was prepared. These parts of the Plan and the challenges require re-examination by all relevant partners to identify appropriate and realistic responses over the remaining years of this Park Plan.

### ***Successes So Far***

13. Although there is still a lot of work needed to achieve many of the outcomes, there have been many successes during the past two years that should be acknowledged and learnt from. A few examples, and the key points of their success, are outlined below.

***The Cairngorms Wildcat Project***

- a) The Cairngorms Wildcat Project is the first and only wildcat conservation project in the UK. It is a good example of a project targeted at a species identified in SNH's Species Action Framework for which the National Park provides an effective focus for conservation activity and means to bring together the partnership needed. This has created a focus for both funding and partnership, drawing on the existing National Park networks.

***The National Park Brand***

- b) The Cairngorms National Park Brand is still in its early years of use but has already been used by businesses and organisations to help establish their identity and links with the National Park. The brand obviously has greater potential than has been realised so far, but its development and its promotion so far demonstrate a real success through bringing a wide range of public, but mainly private sector interests together and focussing on the benefits it could yield, particularly to businesses working in the National Park.

***The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust***

- c) The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) provides an example of a successful structure that has been developed in one part of the Park and then enlarged and improved to work across the whole Park. It allows a wide range of public sector funders to pool resources as well as being able to secure other forms of funding in its own right. This structure is able to help deliver a wide range of outcomes in the Park Plan more effectively than the sum of its parts.

***Clim-atic***

- d) The Clim-atic project is an example of an opportunity that arose and has been pursued during the past two years that was not anticipated when the Park Plan was prepared. The project is part of a wider European-funded research study that looks at how communities can adapt to climate change through a collection of case studies. The National Park was promoted as a good location for the research and is now the principal Scottish focus within the project.

***Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan Project***

- e) The Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Project is a long-running project that started before the National Park was established. It is another good example of a partnership to which responsibility for delivery of National Park Plan actions can be given, drawing on the partnership resources and expertise to deliver those. It provides all the partners with clear common ground, shared interests, and a mechanism to deliver their objectives.

***Land Based Business Training scheme***

- f) The Land Based Business Training scheme is one of the best examples of a consumer-focussed project organised by the public sector in the National Park. The project has provided a wide range of practical training opportunities for a wide range of businesses in the Park. It has provided one of the most tangible benefits for businesses in the National Park over the past two years.

**Issues to Address**

14. Figure 1 showed the National Park Plan’s seven Priorities for Action and an overview of progress in delivering those outcomes. Each Priority for Action presents its own day to day challenges for delivery, and each has a number of outcomes that the programme managers consider needs more work or resource devoted to it to be achieved. For some Priorities for Action, this extra work or resource is considered likely to become available during the next years of Park Plan delivery.
15. The Park Plan’s delivery partners will all be involved in the mid-term health check that the CNPA will coordinate over the summer of 2009. The health check will identify what additional or alternative actions need to be undertaken over the remaining years of the Park Plan to ensure the achievement of outcomes by 2012. However, three Priorities for Action have outcomes that are considered to present particularly significant challenges for delivery during this National Park Plan timeframe to 2012. They are:
- a) Integrating Public Support for Land Management
  - b) Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable
  - c) Making Housing more Affordable and Sustainable
16. The outcomes for these Priorities for Action are listed in Table 1 below.

<b>Table 1.</b>	
<b>5-Year Outcomes for Integrating Public Support for Land Management</b>	
i.	A diverse, viable and productive land management sector will continue to provide high quality primary produce such as food and timber, whilst delivering public benefits which are compatible with the

	Park's special qualities and will make a growing contribution to employment and the local economy.
ii.	Public support for land management will be better integrated and directed at delivering tangible public benefits.
iii.	The public benefits which land managers are asked to deliver with public sector support in the Park will be informed by sound information and determined through an open process involving land managers, communities and other stakeholders.
<b>5-Year Outcomes for Making Tourism and Business more Sustainable</b>	
i.	An increasing proportion of economic activity will be based on the special qualities of the Park.
ii.	The visitor experience in the National Park will consistently exceed expectations and will drive repeat visits/more business opportunities. The Park will compare well against the rest of Scotland and other National Parks.
iii.	There will be a more even distribution of visitor numbers throughout the year.
iv.	A greater percentage of visitors will contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Park.
v.	A greater percentage of businesses will meet the quality standards and environmental management criteria of the Park brand and achieve commercial advantage through its use.
vi.	There will be an increase in use of local suppliers and produce.
vii.	Communities will feel that quality of life is improving and that they are able to influence the direction of economic growth within the Park.
<b>5-Year Outcomes for Making Housing more Affordable and Sustainable</b>	
i.	There will be a reduction in the gap between housing need and supply in the Park to meet community needs.
ii.	There will be a reduction in the number of businesses identifying housing as a barrier to staff recruitment and retention.
iii.	There will be more good quality private rented sector accommodation available at affordable rents to meet local need.
iv.	New housing will be of a more sustainable design.

17. The Park Plan's outcomes for ***Integrating Public Support for Land Management*** rely heavily on the operation of the SRDP in the National Park. To date the SRDP is not delivering public benefits in a coordinated or targeted way to the extent intended in the National Park Plan. Although there may be opportunities to try to improve this over the next 2-3 years, any improvements that can be made will take time to be realised. Nevertheless, without further development of the land management support system within the Park, it seems unlikely that the outcomes for this Priority for Action could be fully achieved by 2012. Board Paper 3 15/05/09 today has a more detailed assessment and recommendations for this issue.
18. Achieving the Park Plan's outcomes for ***Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable*** presents a different set of challenges over the next 3 years. This Priority for Action, more than any other, is a partnership



between the public and private sector. Of all the priorities for action, this is the one that the public sector is least able to deliver on its own, and the one that relies most on a wide range of private businesses, organisations and individuals. The development and operation of the Cairngorms Business Partnership will be key to its success over the next 2-3 years. In addition, this Priority for Action is the one that is most likely to be directly affected by the impacts of economic recession during 2009 and beyond. While the Priority for Action obviously provides a relevant and useful focus for action during such a period, it is likely that additional economic pressures will challenge all partners.

19. The same economic pressures are one of key reasons we consider the outcomes for the ***Making Housing more Affordable and Sustainable*** Priority for Action to be at risk over the next three years. In simple terms, this priority for action requires a lot of new housing, both affordable and open market, to be built over the next three years. However, developers' access to credit to fund development has diminished, and transactions in the housing market have also slowed dramatically since 2007. The public sector provides subsidy for affordable housing, and substantial levels have been programmed for sites in the National Park. Although this subsidy will help developers to build on sites, it is only one part of their funding, and may not be taken up if they cannot secure other credit. Although we are unsure how long the current economic conditions will last, it is likely that fewer houses will be built over the next three years that was originally anticipated, and that longer term credit constraints will also reduce rates of development.
20. We consider these three Priorities for Action to have the outcomes that will be most difficult to achieve by 2012. It is not yet clear whether they are unachievable – that assessment needs to be made with the all the partners who are involved in delivering them over the next few months. However, we consider them to be so significant that the Board should explicitly ask the National Park Strategy Group to focus their discussions on these Priorities for Action and outcomes at their next meeting.

## **Recommendation**

21. **That the Board request the CNP Strategy Group collectively address the issues of delivery of outcomes for:**
  - a) **Integrating Public Support for Land Management**
  - b) **Making Tourism & Business more Sustainable**
  - c) **Making Housing More Affordable & Sustainable**

## **Partnership and Engagement**

22. Successful implementation of the National Park Plan depends on the effective engagement of partners in a collective sense of responsibility

for the Park. As an enabling organisation and the hub of co-ordination for delivering the Park Plan, much of CNPA officers' time is spent co-ordinating work between partners, both formally and informally. The formal engagement mechanisms put in place to delivery the Plan are the delivery teams and advisory forums.

### ***Delivery Teams***

23. The delivery teams are working well as the forum for co-ordination among partners. Over the last year some changes have been made to a number of delivery teams, to establish a way of working that suits the partners involved and makes the best use of partners' time.
24. There are now five delivery teams grouped around the priorities for action:
  - a) Conserving and Enhancing the Park's natural and cultural heritage; Integrating Public Support for Land Management; Supporting Sustainable Deer Management;
  - b) Providing High Quality Opportunities for Public Access
  - c) Making Business and Tourism More Sustainable
  - d) Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable
  - e) Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park

### ***Advisory Forums***

25. Over the last two years CNPA has run five formal advisory forums:
  - a) Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF)
  - b) Inclusive Cairngorms
  - c) Conserving and Enhancing Advisory Forum
  - d) Living and Working Advisory Forum
  - e) Enjoying and Understanding Advisory Forum
26. The first two of these have developed in response to a clear need and have a specific purpose (statutory remit for LOAF and advising on equalities for Inclusive Cairngorms). The other three were set up on implementation of the National Park Plan, based on the three strategic themes of the plan, and were an evolution of three advisory forums that existed during development of the plan.
27. The LOAF and Inclusive Cairngorms are working well, serving a clear demand for input amongst stakeholders and providing valuable advice to CNPA and other partners. We do not propose to make any changes to these two forums.
28. The other three Park Plan focussed forums however, are not functioning so well and do not appear to be providing the same level of added value to either CNPA or wider stakeholders. The broad themes of the

forums, taken from the Park Plan, have in practice proved too broad and an artificial way to structure engagement with stakeholders – in essence this is not how our stakeholders organise themselves. Experience over the last year has shown declining attendances at advisory forum meetings and an overlap with the delivery teams.

29. Since establishment of the delivery teams, the partners that are most actively engaged have worked principally through the delivery teams, as the mechanism in which they feel able to have most influence. This has resulted in fewer of them attending advisory forums as they do not perceive any added value.

### **Recommendation**

30. **That the Board agree to change the format of advisory forums to:**
- a) **Maintain current arrangements for Inclusive Cairngorms and LOAF; and**
  - b) **In place of the three formal Park Plan advisory forums:**
    - i) **Facilitate a Sustainable Tourism oriented Advisory Forum with the Park business grouping to help meet the demands of tourism business interests and the requirements of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.**
    - ii) **Facilitate a Land Management Forum to meet demand from land managers to engage in current issues and help build effective relationships.**
    - iii) **Offer to facilitate other interest groupings where there is clear demand and added value, using existing stakeholder groupings where possible.**
31. Partner engagement will be focused in the delivery teams and more bilateral liaison and topic or issue focussed seminars or meetings will be used to bring together cross-sections of stakeholders where there is a need to address particular themes or issues
32. We will continue to use other networks, groups and communications to facilitate ongoing engagement (eg Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group, LBAP, AOCC, e-bulletins etc).

### ***The Broader Challenge of Partnership***

33. There are a number of challenges looking ahead that are likely to require active management:
- a) Maintaining the enthusiasm of partners for the Park and the opportunities it presents to them;

- b) Securing funding and investment to deliver actions in times of financial constraint;
  - c) Ensuring added value from partnership rather than substitution
34. These challenges are clearly relevant to all partners. However, the CNPA's role is central to fostering productive partnerships to deliver the National Park Plan. We consider that in order to continue to meet the challenges, the CNPA will need to devote even more attention to maintaining and developing individual relationships with organisations, focussing on delivering the Park Plan's outcomes. This will be over and above the operation of the Priority for Action Delivery Teams.

## **Consultation**

35. The assessments of progress which have informed this paper have been prepared by CNPA programme managers in discussion with partners and delivery teams.

## **Policy Context**

36. This paper is concerned with the delivery of the National Park Plan. It is therefore also central to the 5 strategic and 3 cross-cutting themes of the CNPA Corporate Plan, and to the ability of the National Park Plan and its delivery partners to deliver the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

37. The National Park Plan requires a significant amount of work and resource over the next three years for its outcomes to be delivered by 2012. This will present considerable challenges for all partners as both public and private sectors will face financial constraints over this period.

### ***Presentational Implications***

38. This paper does not raise any particular presentational issues. There has been clear progress in delivering the National Park Plan over its first two years, and notable examples of delivery will be reported the National Park Plan annual progress report for 2008/09. The annual progress report will also highlight future challenges and the mid-term "health-check" for 2009.

### ***Implications for Stakeholders***

39. The implications for other organisations, stakeholders and communities are all tied to the partners' ability to deliver the Park Plan's outcomes over the next 3 years. They will all face financial constraints over the

coming years and will feel the effects of any significant changes to expenditure or effort by others. The National Park Plan offers a mechanism for partners to be more creative and efficient in delivering their own and the National Park Plan's outcomes within the National Park.

## **Next Steps**

40. The next steps are:
- a) To hold a Strategy Group meeting to identify a collective way of dealing with the main delivery issues over the remaining years of this Park Plan;
  - b) For CNPA programme managers and Priority for Action delivery teams to conduct the mid-term "health-check" during the summer of 2009, identifying the practical challenges and any alternative or new action needed to deliver the Park Plan's 5-year outcomes by 2012.

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