# Mount Blair COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN 2013-2018





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## Mount Blair Community Action Plan

This Community Action Plan summarises community views about:

- Mount Blair now
- the vision for the future of Mount Blair
- the issues that matter most to the community
- our priorities for projects and action

The plan will be our guide for what we – as a community – try to make happen over the next five years.

# Mount Blair Community Development Trust (MBCDT)

The Trust has led the preparation of this Action Plan as a way of finding out what the main priorities of the community are and to help identify the role for the Trust in developing a sustainable community. The Trust worked closely with Mount Blair Community Council (MBCC), representatives from local village halls, the Session House, the local tourist associations, and local councillors from Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) in carrying out the consultation that has informed this Action Plan.

## Local people have their say

The Action Plan has been informed by extensive community engagement carried out over a four month period from June to September 2012.

The process involved:

- stakeholder interviews and meetings with different groups and individuals representing all aspects of the community
- · a community views survey, which was delivered to all households
- preparing a community profile detailing facts and figures about the community
- a Community Futures Event

Thanks to everyone who took part.

104

community views survey forms were returned from our house survey

20

stakeholder meetings and interviews were held with local groups, businesses and support organisations

100+

Over 100 people attended the community futures event

## OUR COMMUNITY NOW-

## Mount Blair Community Profile 2012 Summary

We have summarised below the main facts and figures from the Community Profile and some of the views from the Community Views Survey.

#### Location

The profile takes in the whole of the Mount Blair Community Council area and includes the communities of Kirkmichael, Bridge of Cally, Enochdhu, Straloch, Ballintuim, Drimmie, Blackwater and Glenshee. The area is characterised by high moorland, hill farmland, small estates, forests, rivers and mountains.

#### **Population**

The permanent population is estimated at around 900 and is scattered throughout the area – with Kirkmichael Village in Strathardle the largest settlement and smaller rural settlements at Bridge of Cally, Enochdhu and Ballintuim. The permanent population is added to by people that stay regularly in the area in holiday and second homes.

#### Housing

It is estimated that there are over 600 houses but that around one third of them are not occupied permanently – being either holiday or second homes or empty. There is a high proportion of private rented accommodation mainly on local estates, and relatively low levels of owner occupation and affordable housing – although housing association housing in Kirkmichael has been a notable positive in the last few years.

### Employment and the local economy

Tourism (accommodation, hospitality and outdoor recreation), and land based employment in agriculture and on the estates are the major sectors making up

almost 50% of the local economy. There are high levels of self- employment in the area with many people commuting out to work in nearby towns.

#### Schools and childcare

There is now just one Primary School in the area at Kirkmichael which also has a nursery. Older children go to the High School in Blairgowrie with some also going to Pitlochry.

#### Health services

There are no health services in the area – with the nearest GPs in Blairgowrie and Pitlochry. There are cottage hospitals in both Blairgowrie and Pitlochry – with the main hospitals further afield in Perth and Ninewells in Dundee.





## OUR COMMUNITY NOW

### Community and recreational facilities

- Four village halls in the area, at Kirkmichael, Bridge of Cally, Blackwater and Ballintuim
- Kirkmichael Sesssion House
- Playing field in Kirkmichael and a small play area
- Tennis courts at Kirkmichael Primary School are available for use out of school hours
- Some of the outdoor activity facilities at Cairnwell Mountain Sports, the Compass Christian Centre and the Kindrogan Field Study Centre can sometimes be used by the community when not required by paying guests
- 9 hole golf course at Dalmunzie Hotel and also tennis courts
- Fishing in the Shee Water and River Ardle is available by permit and several of the local estates run shoots
- Glenshee Ski Area for winter sports and summer mountain biking and walking using the ski lifts
- 10 'Munros' (mountains over 3000 ft) and 4 'Corbetts' (mountains over 2500 ft)
- Cateran Trail, a 64 mile long-distance walking route
- · Several forested areas for walking, horse riding and biking
- Kayaking and canoeing at Blackwater and Bridge of Cally
- The Gardens at Dirnanean

### Community groups and organisations

Local groups include: Mount Blair Community Council; Mount Blair Community Development Trust; Village Hall Commitees; Glenshee Tourist Association, Blairgowrie and East Perthshire Tourist Association: Kirkmichael Village in Bloom; Kirkmichael Village Shop; Coffee Tots; Brownies; Youth Club; Pitcarmick Angling Club; Strathardle Archers; Glenshee Curlers; 2 Tug-of-War teams; Zumba; Keep Fit; Pilates; Martial Arts; Country Dancing; Book Swap; Lectures at the Session House; SWRI in 2 different halls; Cally Crafters; Clicking Needles; Jigsaw Club; Fortnightly drop in; Freemasons; Monthly Ecumenical Bible Study; PTA.

#### Community events

Kirkmichael Summer Village Festival; Glenshee Heather Festival; Strathardle Agricultural Show and Highland Gathering; Sheepdog Trials; St. Andrews Day Dance; Cateran Yomp and other events along the Cateran Trail; Blairgowrie and East Perthshire Walking Festival.

#### Roads

The main road running through the area is the A93 road from Perth and Blairgowrie to Glenshee and on to Royal Deeside. The A924 from Pitlochry passes through Kirkmichael providing a link through to the A93 at Bridge of Cally.

### **Transport**

There is a limited bus service between Glenshee and Blairgowrie but no connection from the area to Pitlochry. The main rail station is in Pitlochry.







## **Emergency Services**

- Ambulances are based in Blairgowrie and Pitlochry
- Tayside Mountain Rescue provides volunteer rescue services alongside the Police Search and Rescue Unit and the RAF Mountain Rescue Service
- Two volunteer fire brigade units based in Kirkmichael and Glenshee. These are backed by the retained fire brigade units based in Blairgowrie and Pitlochry
- Police stations in Blairgowrie and Pitlochry. The community policeman visits the glens on a regular basis and holds the occasional 'surgery' at Kirkmichael Village Shop

#### **Environment**

Agriculture, forestry and estate management are the main land uses. The large land owners are the Atholl Estates, Invercauld Estates and the Forestry Commission. There are also 14 smaller estates in the area, all of which provide some employment in either hill farms or field sports.

Most of the northern part of the area is now in the newly extended Cairngorms National Park. About a third of the land is made up of Sites of Special Scientific Interest due to breeding birds of prey. The Caernlochan Special Area of Conservation is noted for its rare plants, rocks, montane habitats and invertebrates. The Scottish Wildlife Trust owns a small piece of land at Brerachan Meadows between the A924 and the Ardle River near Straloch and works to conserve the diversity of wildflowers on the unfarmed land.



### Heritage

Heritage features in the area include:

- Standing Stones and Bronze Age hut circles
- The Parliament Stone in Glenshee
- The Clan MacThomas Gathering Place
- $\bullet\,$  The Bannerfield in Kirkmichael where the Earl of Mar raised his banner during the 1715 uprising
- Drove Roads converging on Kirkmichael and the site of the old highland market at Sillerburn, Kirkmichael which was by the fifteenth century, one of the largest cattle markets in Scotland
- A rich heritage of archaeological sites including Pitcarmick type houses which are unique to this area



## OUR COMMUNITY NOW

## Community Views Survey – likes and dislikes

Like	% of Responses
Rural Nature – scenery, peace and quiet, wildlife	84
Community Spirit	35
Local services and facilities	21
Location	13
Recreation	12
Everything	3
Nothing	1

### What people said

- It's a beautiful rural area with outstanding scenery
- Wonderful landscape, unspoiled natural beauty and tranquillity
- The remote landscape we like mountains snow, forests and no street lights
- Its simpler slower pace of life
- The sense of community knowing most people, good neighbourliness and in general people are prepared to put effort in to benefit the whole community
- The camaraderie of the long established local residents who share the history of the area and work well together
- The ability of local and incoming people to get together
- The friendliness of the Glenners
- Community facilities such as Village Halls and local shops
- Strathardle Highland Games and Heather Festival the community events and the fact that everyone chats to you
- Ease of access to Blairgowrie, Perth, Dundee and the main road system
- Being 30 minutes from both Blairgowrie and Pitlochry preserves a feeling of remoteness, but only 1 hour from Perth or Dundee allows access to city facilities when needed
- Proximity to major transport links and within reasonable distance of all major Scottish cities
- It's a reasonable distance from civilisation!
- The balance of tourism and environmental interests with hill farming and traditional estate management





Dislike	% of Responses
Traffic and safety	30
Lack of public transport, remoteness and access to services	30
Environment	17
Community organisation	16
Fragility of the local economy	15
Housing and Population	12
Nothing	11
Lack of good broadband connection	7

### What people said

- Motorbikes an ongoing problem racing 70+mph, and dangerous driving and overtaking
- The A924 becoming busier from Pitlochry with very wide coaches and very fast lorries
- The amount of logging lorries using the A93 as a main route south
- Public transport is very poor you cannot get to Perth or Dundee College or to and from Pitlochry Station for example
- I feel we are unnecessarily cut off from Pitlochry (nearest train station and major throughway to the north) there is no public transport that goes this way
- Distance time from emergency services ...difficulty accessing medical care
- Few sporting facilities or sporting clubs closer than Pitlochry or Blairgowrie
- Disappearing amenities e.g. Straloch School
- Lack of public toilets from Bridge of Cally to Spittal
- Threat of the windfarm is pretty disconcerting
- The forests that you are allowed in are owned by the Forestry Commission and a lot of the trees are non native
- The derelict church at Kirkmichael
- Lack of community feel
- Its difficult for people to find out about what is going on
- Lack of local jobs feeling particularly vulnerable to fuel prices
- Just like to see it better developed for tourism and locals
- We struggle to encourage visitors from Blairgowrie and Pitlochr.
- I worry that the Kirkmichael shop could close if people do not use it more
- High number of houses that spend most of the time empty which has a knock on effect on everyone trying to run a business, facilities, clubs etc
- There are a lot of second homes that are not visited often
- The poor broadband, mobile phone, TV and radio services in the area



## MOUNT BLAIR OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### Mount Blair Community Vision

This statement has been prepared to summarise the main aspirations for the future as expressed by local people and organisations.

#### Living and Working in the Glens

We will aim to sustain a good population of people who want to live and work in the Glens.

#### Making the most of our natural resources

To achieve our vision of a sustainable community we will look to make best use of our natural resources – developing the area as a hub for outdoor recreation, making the most of our local forests for wood fuel and recreation, developing a network of local and well connected paths, producing and promoting high quality local food and crafts, supporting country sports, and generating employment opportunities linked to managing the land.

#### Infrastructure, services and housing

To make it sustainable to live and work in the Glens we will develop good access to affordable housing, vital services, community facilities, and good communication and transport systems.

#### Reducing our carbon footprint and lowering our costs of living

At the heart of our vision is a sense that our efforts to encourage walking and cycling, the use of renewable energy and our natural resources, community transport solutions, and supporting local produce and local crafts and arts will all contribute to lowering our carbon footprint as well as the often high costs of rural living.

#### A role for the community

The community will have had a strong role in bringing this about through working in partnership with a wide range of public, voluntary and private organisations to ensure a healthy and balanced future for the community.

This land is your land, this land is my land From Bridge of Cally to Blacklunans Strathardle forests, Glenshee mountains This land was made for you and me.



As sung by pupils from Kirkmichael Primary School at the Community Open Day, 14th September 2012.

## MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

These are the main strategies and priorities the community will work towards achieving in partnership with public agencies and other supporters.

#### Outdoor recreation and tourism

The main assets of the area are its natural resources. They provide great opportunities for walking, all terrain cycling, horseriding, winter sports and country sports as well as other specialist outdoor activities like orienteering and geocaching. There is a real opportunity to develop the outdoor infrastructure (e.g. accommodation etc.) and promote the area more.

#### Main priorities:

- Develop and promote the local paths network
- Develop local forests for recreational use
- Marketing and promotion of the area as a hub for outdoor recreation (lay-bys, picnic areas, signage, leaflets, events)
- Develop infrastructure to support outdoor recreation



The area has a rich heritage linked in particular to its central role in Scotland's cattle droving history – the cattle market in Kirkmichael used to be the largest in the country. This heritage has been the inspiration for the development of the Cateran Trail but there are more opportunities to promote and interpret local heritage including the area's agricultural past.

The area already has a growing number of artists and craft workers and this could be encouraged and supported and would again contribute to the local economy and interest in the area for visitors.

#### Main priorities:

- Develop a local archive project
- Work with local arts and crafts and other businesses to provide support and explore the potential to develop workspace/studio space
- Develop and promote local produce
- Market and promote these aspects of the area through local events and interpretation

## Community and recreational facilities

The area needs to sustain a number of village halls that can offer good venues for local groups and community activities and events. This is particularly important in an area that is relatively remote from other facilities and centres. There is also the need to upgrade poor quality play and sports provision in the area – for existing residents and families and as a way of making the area attractive for visitors and potential future residents.

#### Main priorities:

- New Village Hall in Kirkmichael
- Development and support for other Village Halls
- Upgrade of Play Area and Sports Facilities in Kirkmichael





## MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

## Infrastructure and renewable energy

The remoteness of the area makes it expensive to live in and to travel elsewhere. Residents and local businesses identify lack of access to high speed broadband and the high cost of fuel as two of the main problems. Improving broadband speeds would be of benefit to the many self employed people in the area or that might be attracted to the area. The high cost of oil has sparked discussion about the idea of an oil purchasing collective to try and obtain best price using joint purchasing power, while many would like to see the community develop its own sources of fuel by making best use of the local forests for wood fuel.

#### Main priorities:

- Improve Broadband
- Develop wood fuel/biomass community initiative
- · Establish collective buying scheme for oil

### Access to services and transport

The consultation for this Action Plan has helped to highlight the need to develop access to emergency health care in the area with people showing concern for the journey time for ambulances and the lack of doctors in the area.

In general there was seen to be a need to retain and support vital services like the schools and post offices and shops.

Access to other services, facilities and opportunities outside the area was also highlighted with residents suggesting there was a need for better transport links to Blairgowrie and Pitlochry to connect with rail services, schools, shops, and medical and recreational activities.

#### Main priorities:

- Develop Emergency Medical Services in the area
- Improve public transport and/or develop community transport and car sharing initiatives
- Ensure retention of the Primary School and Nursery
- Develop childcare services in the area

## Roads, traffic, lay-bys and signage

There was real concern expressed about the speed and type of traffic – particularly but not exclusively on the A93. The use of local roads by motorbikes, heavy lorries and coaches was seen as causing safety problems for local residents and visitors.

There has been some recent traffic speed reduction measures in the small settlements of the area but some measures could be improved on, with the addition too of more signage at the many dangerous bends in the area.

Improved road signage to the area and the upgrade of lay-bys in the area to include interpretation/picnic facilities were seen as positive steps that would encourage people into the area and to stop rather than pass through.

#### Main priorities:

- speed reduction measures on the A93 and the A924
- Improve traffic safety and calming measures generally throughout the area and particularly in Ballintuim and Bridge of CallyTraffic
- Improve road signage and lay-bys

## Housing and jobs

The development of affordable housing in Kirkmichael has been a success and of great benefit to the area. However the area still has a relatively high proportion of private rented and tied housing.

The community would like to work closely with the local estates to develop housing and job opportunities. The aim should be that both are developed to sustain a viable community of people that can continue to live and work in the Glens.

#### Main priorities:

- More affordable housing and follow on alternatives to tied housing
- More support for new entrants on farms and other land based job opportunities





## A more detailed guide to action

Theme 1: Outdoor recreation and tourism		
Priority 1	<ul> <li>Develop and promote the local paths network</li> <li>Identify main priorities for paths improvements</li> <li>Work with Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust to develop priority paths projects</li> <li>This should include: local circular routes (e.g. at Bridge of Cally using part of the Cateran Trail); improvements to the Cateran Trail as it enters Kirkmichael; developing links to Dunkeld and Pitlochry)</li> </ul>	
Priority 2	<ul> <li>Develop local forests for recreational use</li> <li>Work with Forestry Commission Scotland to develop plans for increased recreational use of local forests</li> <li>Develop appropriate partnership or community ownership capacity to raise funds to implement proposals</li> <li>This should include making Kindrogan Forest more useable for mountain biking as well as walking</li> </ul>	
Priority 3	<ul> <li>Marketing and promotion of the area as a hub for outdoor recreation</li> <li>Community, businesses, tourism associations, estates to work closely together to develop a coordinated approach to marketing the area</li> <li>Develop a suite of marketing material to promote opportunities for outdoor recreation</li> <li>Develop information and interpretation within the area – signs, interpretation panels</li> <li>Organise events that help to attract people to the area to enjoy outdoor activities</li> </ul>	
Priority 4	<ul> <li>Develop infrastructure to support outdoor recreation access</li> <li>Look at the need for additional accommodation linked to use of paths (e.g. bunkhouse accommodation)</li> <li>Look at the need to improve access to paths e.g. through improved parking, picnic areas, interpretation and information at lay-bys</li> </ul>	
Action by	Form a new local paths and outdoor recreation group under the auspices of Mount Blair Community Development Trust (MBCDT) to take these priorities forward and bring together key interests in the area.  Work closely with Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust, local tourism associations, hotels, outdoor recreation providers, and VisitScotland.	



# ACTION

Theme 2: Local heritage, culture, and produce – our sense of place		
Priority 1	Develop local archive project  • Support the development of the MBCDT archive project  • Explore other ways of making heritage a stronger feature of the area and something that is accessible to visitors	
Priority 2	<ul> <li>Arts and Crafts Workspace/Studio Space</li> <li>Work with local arts and crafts people and other businesses to explore the need for small workspace and studio facilities in the area</li> <li>Identify suitable places for this type of development which could be a significant tourist attraction – suggestions include the old Blackwater Inn or the old Church in Kirkmichael</li> </ul>	
Priority 3	Develop and promote local produce  • Work with local estates, hotels and B&Bs, and local shops to make local produce available in the area and to support its promotion nationally	
Priority 4	<ul> <li>Marketing and Promotion</li> <li>Use this 'sense of place' that comes from our heritage, culture, land and produce to promote the area to visitors</li> <li>Incorporate and feature these aspects of the area in local events.</li> </ul>	
Action by	Archive Project – MBCDT  Arts and Crafts Workspace – MBCDT and local arts/crafts businesses  Local produce initiative – MBCDT, local estates, local hospitality sector  Marketing and Promotion – Tourism Associations, MBCDT, local estates and local events committees	

Theme 3: Community and recreational facilities		
Priority 1	<ul> <li>Support the development of Village Halls</li> <li>Support Kirkmichael Village Hall Committee to develop new hall and associated services and activities</li> <li>Support Blackwater Hall in developing new toilet provision and other improvements</li> <li>Support Ballintuim Village Hall to make improvements to car parking area, install renewable and cost effective heating and other upgrades</li> <li>Support Bridge of Cally Village Hall to improve heating system and other upgrades</li> </ul>	
Priority 2	<ul> <li>Upgrade Play Area and Sports Facilities in Kirkmichael</li> <li>Develop proposals for improved facilities</li> <li>Identify where facilities would best be improved and located (either in existing or new locations)</li> <li>Support funding applications for improvement/s</li> </ul>	
Action by	Village Hall Committees on improvements to the village halls.  MBCDT to work with school, youth club, sports teams, village hall committees to look at ways of improving play and sports facilities.	



Theme 4: Infrastructure and renewable energy		
Priority 1	High Speed Broadband  • Explore ways of upgrading telephone exchanges and cable systems	
Priority 2	Community Wood Fuel Initiative  Carry out a feasibility study on the opportunity to use local forests for wood fuel  Work closely with Forest Commission Scotland to look at the best ways of implementing any proposed scheme	
Priority 3	Collective Oil Purchasing Scheme  • The consultation has shown that there is interest in pursuing this project  • MBCDT to progress this project learning from similar projects in other rural communities	
Action by	Mount Blair Community Development Trust take action on the Wood Fuel Initiative and Oil Purchasing Scheme  Mount Blair Community Council to make representation on behalf of the community for improved broadband services	

Theme 5:	Theme 5: Access to services and transport		
Priority 1	Develop local medical emergency services  • Work to locate public access portable defibrillators in the area  • Organise training for volunteers on their use  • Organise First Responders local network		
Priority 2	<ul> <li>Improve transport options – public, community, car sharing</li> <li>Explore options for community mini bus and/or car sharing scheme</li> <li>Lobby bus providers and Perth and Kinross Council to create a public transport link to Pitlochry and improve services to Blairgowrie</li> </ul>		
Priority 3	<ul> <li>Ensure retention of the primary school, nursery and other vital services</li> <li>The community should keep abreast of any policy changes that might affect the retention of vital services and work to ensure they are maintained and supported as much as possible</li> <li>Local use of local services should be encouraged and should include supporting the post offices, shops and petrol station</li> </ul>		
Priority 4	Support the development of other needed services  • The development of local childcare provision or supporting easier access to nearby provision was noted as an issue within this consultation and should be further explored and encouraged		
Action by	MBCC and MBCDT to jointly work to develop proposals for Defibrillators and/or First Response type service working with Ambulance and other NHS services.  MBCDT to explore community transport and car sharing schemes.  MBCC to lobby for the development of public transport links to Pitlochry and Blairgowrie with bus service providers and PKC.  MBCC to monitor plans for provision of vital services and their retention.  MBCDT to support the development of other needed service such as childcare.		

# ACTION

Theme 6: Roads, traffic, lay-bys and signage		
Priority 1	Traffic speed reduction measures on the A93 and the A924  • Work with the police, Transport Scotland and Perth and Kinross Council to address these issues	
Priority 2	Improve traffic safety and calming measures  • Key projects should be progressed include:  - Relocation of 30mph signs in Ballintuim to beyond the caravan park  - More signage of dangerous bends in the area  - Improving safe access out of Bridge of Cally Village Hall car park	
Priority 3	<ul> <li>Improve road signage and lay-bys</li> <li>Identify ways of improving road signage including tourist route and visitor attraction signage to the area</li> <li>Develop and implement proposals for improving the quality of lay-bys in the area to include interpretation and information about the area</li> </ul>	
Action by	MBCC – representation concerning priorities 1 and 2.  MBCDT – working with Tourism Associations to improve road signage to the area and lay-bys in the area.  Working with Perth and Kinross Council, VisitScotland, Transport Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Government.	

Theme 7: Housing and jobs		
Priority 1	More affordable housing and follow on alternatives to tied housing  • Work with local housing associations and Perth and Kinross Council to develop housing and support initiatives to cater for people that may otherwise have to leave the community when they leave their employment-related housing	
Priority 2	More support for new entrants on farms and other land based job opportunities  Open up dialogue with local estates about how the community can support initiatives which benefit provision of local housing, land based employment and spin offs for the local economy linked to e.g. local produce, use of woodland, farming, country sports etc  Develop partnership projects	
Action by	Local Jobs and Housing Group – a new joint working group of MBCC and MBCDT – working with local estates and housing providers (housing association, Perth and Kinross Council).	

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

## Working together

The projects and this Action Plan will require that local community organisations – the Community Council, Community Development Trust, Village Hall Committees, Session House, and other interest groups – all take action either on their own or in concerted effort to develop projects and make representation on behalf of the community.

The Action Plan will hopefully be of benefit to all these organisations in progressing community aspirations and addressing needs.

To achieve results we will need to and want to work closely with a range of public, private and third sector partners – Perth and Kinross Council, Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, NHS, Tayside Police, Transport Scotland, VisitScotland, local landowners and businesses, as well as voluntary and charitable organisations.

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## Mount Blair Community Action Plan 2013–2018

This Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of the Mount Blair community over the next 5 years as determined by extensive community consultation and engagement carried out over a four month period in 2012.

The Plan contains:

- a summary of our Community Profile
- our main likes and dislikes as identified in our Community Views Household Survey
- Our Vision Statement for the Future of Mount Blair
- The main themes and priorities for action
- Information on how you can stay in touch and get involved

The Plan is for the whole community and is jointly owned by all the organisations and individuals that took part in its preparation. We will be working together to ensure its implementation over the next 5 years.

Thanks to all those who took their time to share their views and take part, and to all who gave their time voluntarily to participate in the Steering Group.

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SHR COMMUN







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