

# Update on Future Nature Route Map Development

## Agenda Item 7

**National Park Authority Board Meeting  
14th March 2022**

Paper for information

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### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update Board on the progress being made to finalise the Future Nature Route Map: a multi-year year strategic programme for restoring biodiversity in the National Park.
- 1.2 The paper will outline activity and progress since the Board received the [draft Future Nature Route Map](#) in June 2021, which followed the National Park Authority signing the Edinburgh Declaration in December 2020.
- 1.3 The paper includes an update on our strategic operating environment, feedback from recent engagement with staff, Board members, partners and stakeholders on the draft Route Map. Along with an outline Future Nature Delivery Framework, the next steps planned for developing a detailed delivery programme are laid out, aimed at action to address the decline of nature in the National Park and contributing towards tackling the global biodiversity crises.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.2 Board are asked to:

- 2.1.1 Note progress to date,
- 2.1.2 Comment on and support the strategic direction of Future Nature to date, and,
- 2.1.3 Offer their views on how best Board and officers can ensure (i) effective buy-in and (ii) implementation of the Future Nature programme by partners and key stakeholders; particularly in relation to public body partners and private land managers.

### **3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan**

3.2 The Future Nature programme makes a contribution towards delivering the following Outcomes and Priorities of the Partnership Plan and objectives of Our 5-year Plan:

#### **National Park Partnership Plan**

- Outcome 1: Natural Capital, Priority 1.1: Habitats & Priority 1.2: Species
- Outcome 2: Landscape Qualities, Priority 2.1: Landscape & Heritage
- Outcome 3: Climate Change, Priority 3.1: Climate Change
- Outcome 4: Land Partnerships, Priority 4.1: Integrated Land Management
- Outcome 9: Health & Learning, Priority 9.1: Health Improvement, Priority 9.2: Engagement & Learning
- Outcome 10: Placemaking, Priority 10.1: Improving Towns & Villages
- Outcome 11: Sustainable Growth, Priority 11.1: Low Carbon Economy, Priority 11.2: Rural Diversification
- Outcome 12: Sustainable Population, Priority 12.1: Skills & Training
- Outcome 13: Community Empowerment, Priority 13.1: Supporting Capacity of Community Organisations, Priority 13.2: Supporting Community-led Action, Priority 13.3: Supporting Partnership Working

#### **Our 5-year Plan**

- Priority 5: Placemaking and Sustainable Communities
- Priority 7: Policy-making

### **4. Background**

4.1 Following the National Park Authority signing the [Edinburgh Declaration](#) in December 2020, the Board were presented in June 2021 with [papers](#) that outlined Future Nature: an ambitious new strategic approach to expand delivery of nature restoration initiatives across the Park, in the face of a continuing decline in our biodiversity.

4.2 With support from the Board a series of engagement events then took place over the autumn and winter with key partners and stakeholders with a duty or an interest in biodiversity. The aim of these events was to outline the new Future Nature approach being proposed by the National Park Authority and hear views on its development and delivery, with a call for support.

4.3 Over the past few months there have also been important national developments at a political, policy and legislative level which are highly influential to how Future Nature is shaped from here onwards and these are outlined in section 5 below.

## 5 Context

### Future Nature's Strategic Operating Environment

5.1 Since the Board first discussed Future Nature the strategic environment in which we operate has continued to evolve. The overall direction of travel for new policy and legislation is a far greater focus on climate and nature, with some analysis being carried out on why previous policies may have failed to fully deliver what is needed to reverse the global loss of biodiversity. The developments listed below have particular influence on how Future Nature will be shaped and delivered in the coming months and years, as The National Park Authority will have a public duty to deliver them at a Park-wide scale:

5.1.1 Proposed further strengthening of nature restoration policy, governance and legislation through the [Bute House Agreement](#) and resulting [draft Shared Policy Programme](#) between the SNP and Scottish Greens. This programme includes a range of relevant commitments listed in the text box below:

- Secure positive effects for biodiversity from development and deliver natural solutions to climate change in a way that also enhances biodiversity;
- A Natural Environment Bill (2024) putting in place key legislative changes to restore and protect nature, including, but not restricted to, targets for nature restoration that cover land and sea, and an effective, statutory, target-setting monitoring, enforcing and reporting framework;
- Targets based on an overarching goal of preventing any further extinctions of wildlife and halting declines by 2030, and making significant progress in restoring Scotland's natural environment by 2045;
- Outcome targets that accommodate species abundance, distribution & extinction risk, and habitat quality and extent;
- Protect 30% of Scotland's land and seas by 2030, and highly protect 10%;
- Create at least one new National Park by 2025.

5.1.2. Publication soon of important and over-arching national-level documents including [National Planning Framework \(NPF\)4](#) and the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy;

5.1.3. Work beginning on the creation of our next National Park Partnership Plan, Local Development Plan (including Regional Spatial Strategy) and pilot Regional Land Use Partnership (and resulting Regional Land Use Framework);

- 5.1.4. Consultation on a Future Agriculture Bill mapping out the transition to new support system which delivers more for climate and nature, starting in 2026;
  - 5.1.6. Further work by Scottish Government and others on Natural Capital Market Development, and associated Green Finance initiatives.
  - 5.1.7. Recommendations of the [Deer Working Group](#) and the subsequent [response by Scottish Government](#) indicating the need for higher levels of deer management to reduce negative impacts.
- 5.2 Board should note that through active engagement at a senior level with Scottish Government Ministers and officers, our team have had the opportunity to share our experience, learnings and ideas on the constraints and opportunities associated with delivering landscape-scale nature protection and restoration. This includes our experience to date on working with partners to meet the [natural heritage targets](#) set within the current National Park Partnership Plan. Of particular relevance is our engagement with the drafting of the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, which will shortly be the key overarching national strategy that Future Nature will help to deliver.
- 5.3 Board should also be aware that early discussions with our Minister have made clear her expectation that National Parks should be at the forefront of reversing the decline in nature in Scotland. The prospect of a new Environment Bill as well as the process to deliver the commitment to designate a new National Park in Scotland, are highlighted as providing an opportunity to consider how the role that National Parks can play in tackling the nature and climate crises could be strengthened. This could potentially include legislative changes.

## **6. Partner and Stakeholder Engagement Actions**

- 6.1 Between October 2021 and January 2022 a total 14 virtual engagement events took place, with 8 external groupings (40+ participants from 40 organisations) and 6 internal groups (100+ participants from the Board and all service areas across the National Park Authority). The list of external organisations (appendix 1) ranged from public body partners such as Scottish Government, our portfolio sister bodies, local authorities, environmental NGOs, representatives of land managers and local community representatives. Internally, engagement took place with key delivery teams involved in nature conservation activity, but two well-attended 'Lunch & Learn' sessions were also held for all staff and Board members.
- 6.2 The format of these events involved a short PowerPoint presentation (appendix 2) broadly covering the current state of nature in the National Park, the rationale for a new approach and the outline of what and how Future Nature aims to deliver. This was then followed by an open question and answer session, with comments and reflections invited. These points were then captured in summary to provide feedback for further development of the Route Map. The key feedback points and related considerations are outlined below, grouped around a series of main themes.

## Partner & Stakeholder Feedback Themes

### 6.3 Supporting the need to do more for Nature

There was an **over-whelming level of support for the Future Nature vision, rationale, principles and approach**, with many participants commenting on the need for a step-change in our collective approach to restoring nature in the National Park. There was a positive response to nature restoration over conservation becoming a central theme within the Park, and also that the National Park Authority was investing dedicated resources to further this aim. It was also recognised that the international and national policy level agenda is swinging firmly towards focusing on the twin, existential global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and therefore the time is right for bold and ambitious action.

### 6.4 Leading positive change for Nature

Feedback around the Principles in the draft Route Map **highlighted the key leadership role that both the National Park as a place and the National Park Authority as an organisation had in the region**. The need to lead through facilitating action and change, supporting others with expertise and resources, and demonstrating what success looks like on the ground were considered to be important for others to follow.

### 6.5 What is new about Future Nature?

Many participants asked the fundamental question, **'what is Future Nature actually going to do differently from the current approach to nature conservation – and how, when and where?'** It is important to acknowledge that a number of stakeholders questioned the description of Future Nature as a 'new approach' arguing that we have existing successful examples, and it was already the aim of many organisations to work on a landscape restoration scale. Local communities voiced their desire to be able to carry out more local level, nature restoration projects, given the right support and resources to do so.

### 6.6 Ambition vs. Reality

Discussions took place around **the difference between the policy ambition of government bodies, with the reality of achieving actual change** and implementation on the ground; the so-called 'delivery gap'. Reducing or removing enough of the underlying constraints which prevent positive change for nature are needed, alongside new and greater resources in order to close this gap and turn around the decline in nature.

### 6.7 Fundamental constraints to positive change

There was also widespread recognition that **the underlying constraints outlined in the presentation (i.e. systemic, behavioural and cultural constraints) have to date prevented effective protection or restoration of nature and continue to be the key barriers to better progress**, and without finding ways to turn these around, then the decline would continue. This task is hugely complex as 'we' alone do not have the ability to rectify the multitude of historic and current pressures on

nature including sectoral land use and ownership patterns, agricultural and forestry systems focused chiefly on production, and economically driven development that erodes natural capital.

#### 6.8 People vs. Nature?

A common theme, particularly among local communities was ***whether it was in reality possible to find a way to successfully balance development and visitor pressures with the needs of nature*** in the Park. Similarly frustrations about a perceived lack of regulation or enforcement of existing powers to protect nature by statutory agencies were aired, eroding trust and confidence in the ability to deliver beyond the currently unsatisfactory status quo.

#### 6.9 Learning from Success

It was felt by some participants that ***examples of success for nature recovery and a 'Climate and Nature' way of working do already exist in and around the Park***, with The Great Trossachs Forest, INNS<sup>1</sup> control projects and Fisheries Trusts-led riverbank restoration projects all being highlighted. Local strategic plans such as Stirling Council's [Alive with Nature](#) were welcomed, along with the species success stories such as the return of the osprey, White tailed eagle and Eurasian beaver.

#### 6.10 Unfulfilled Potential?

Examples were also discussed of ***projects and partnership working where, to date success had not be proven, or activity was in too early a stage to be proven to be an effective way of delivering nature restoration on the ground***. Deer Management Groups, the Strathard Framework and the forthcoming pilot Regional Land Use Partnership were considered by many to be *potential* delivery vehicles for more ambitious, landscape-scale nature restoration – but they need to demonstrate that they can actually deliver positive change for nature in the Park.

#### 6.11 Teamwork Required

It was widely viewed that effective ***partnership-working offered the greatest chance of success***.

#### 6.12 Bringing Everyone along

Discussions around the Principles in the draft Route Map highlighted ***support for the need for a Just Transition approach<sup>2</sup> to the development and delivery of Future Nature***. This would promote the benefits to all that result from nature restoration, but most closely involve those most impacted in the changes required, particularly the land management community. It is essential that we recognise the challenges of how this community transitions from where we are now, in terms of a

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<sup>1</sup> Invasive Non Native Species

<sup>2</sup> A just transition seeks to ensure that the substantial benefits of a [green economy transition](#) are shared widely, while also supporting those who stand to lose economically – be they countries, regions, industries, communities, workers or consumers.

declining nature, to where we need to be in a nature-rich future, as they could face significant changes to their way of life in the coming years.

## 7. Future Nature Strategic Positioning

- 7.1 Taking a look across the work done to date on the draft Route Map, the strategic operating environment and feedback from partners and stakeholders, it is appropriate to ask the question moving forward what does Future Nature mean for the National Park Authority in terms of priorities and resources against delivery of statutory aims and National Park Partnership Plan outcomes?
- 7.2 It is clear that from the evidence of the decline in biodiversity, the urgency of the position that faces nature (and humanity), and the wide scale and scope of actions needed in order to reverse the fortunes of nature in the National Park, is that **Future Nature should be seen as a 15+ year strategic, iterative programme for the National Park Authority and partners, sitting alongside our other long term globally-focused initiative, Mission Zero.**
- 7.3 We need action for nature now and in the years and decades to come. Whilst it will take us and our partners and stakeholders further time to create a detailed programme of extensive, coordinated action, it does not mean that we can afford to delay opportunities to develop and deliver projects that restore nature now. **We must therefore urgently prioritise action that clearly helps to deliver the vision and outcomes laid out by Future Nature.**
- 7.4 **In terms of national-level action and policy Future Nature will become the mechanism by which to practically deliver at the National Park level the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, integrated with the elements of National Planning Framework 4 and relevant climate change and land use legislation. We should view these national instruments as our *minimum standard* and aim to deliver above and beyond them.**
- 7.5 With a vision focused first on 2030 and then beyond to 2040, it is **proposed that Future Nature be divided into 5 year delivery intervals, with monitoring and reporting aimed at tracking and managing progress, using key indicators and targets.** These will be derived from our National Park Partnership Plan and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

## 8. Future Nature Route Map delivery

- 8.1 The successful engagement programme with partners and stakeholders, combined with a clearer and strengthening policy environment now gives us opportunity to further refine the draft Route Map and set out a delivery framework for developing a more detailed programme of nature restoration activity across the three pathways laid out in the draft. These are:

8.1.1. Action for Nature: Practical Delivery,

8.1.2. Mainstreaming Nature Friendly Processes & Practises and

8.1.3. Engaging and Inspiring Action for Nature.



8.2 The delivery framework is designed to create an overall structure from which to build a detailed programme of actions. It should be looked at as a flexible, iterative structure, which will be explored, tested and trialled. From top to bottom the hierarchical framework shows:

8.2.1. the over-arching **vision**: a near future, rich in nature;

8.2.2. the **objectives** that we are working to achieve in order to make the vision a reality;

8.2.3. the **outcomes** that will result in delivering these objectives;

8.2.4. the **outputs** which are the practical forms of activity;

8.2.5. examples of current or future **key initiatives** taking place in the Park (identified in section 10 of the *draft* Route Map Outline Delivery Plan);

8.2.6 **draft indicators** by which progress (success or failure) can be measured.

Note: **Targets** have not been set at this stage and will follow when further development work is complete.



**Table 1: Future Nature *draft* Delivery Framework**

**Vision:**

*“A resilient nature-rich National Park, where abundant wildlife and a healthy natural environment provide a wealth of benefits through an extensive, well-connected living network.”*



**Objectives:**

1. Ensure the widespread restoration of nature across the National Park by 2040.
2. Reverse the decline in nature in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park by 2030 latest.



**Key Outcomes:**

1. Shifts in land use away from activities and conditions that erode nature and natural capital, (and contribute towards climate change), towards activity and conditions that actively restores nature and climate.
2. Creation of economic and social conditions that reward the valuation and active restoration of nature, by mainstreaming nature (and climate) friendly thought and action into all activities.
3. Local communities, businesses (particularly land-use ones) and visitors benefit from the restoration of nature through employment, skills, a richer visitor experience, participation and knowledge.
4. Resources to restore and invest in nature and natural capital are increased and shared, coming from a range of public and private sources.
5. All those who live, work or visit the National Park know how they can make a positive contribution to the protection and restoration of nature and are supported and empowered to do so.



**Priority Outputs: Practical Delivery**

**Pathway 1: Action for Nature**

1. Supporting local activity and Scottish Government policy that ensures landscape-scale management of herbivore<sup>3</sup> pressures in uplands and forests is low enough to

<sup>3</sup> Wild deer, sheep and feral goats

allow the widespread natural recovery and expansion of native woodlands, and the protection of fragile peat soils.

2. Up scaling Peatland ACTION to create an extensive programme of well-resourced peatland restoration works to ensure that all peatland soils are in a healthy condition, providing a range of public benefits.
3. Developing a strategic and well-resourced programme of Invasive Non Native Species control, with the long-term aim of eliminating INNS from all catchments the National Park.
4. Developing a strategic 'National Park Nature Network' across the National Park which is supported as a major development and improves ecological connectivity and resilience at geographically focused areas, through targeted land (and water) management interventions including woodland expansion, wetland restoration and grassland management.
5. Develop a programme of river and wetland restoration projects to restore natural flow conditions and benefit nature and downstream flood impacts.
6. Develop a 'Future Nature Index' monitoring framework to establish a baseline and indicators for monitoring the health of the Park's habitats, species and ecosystems.



**Key Initiative Examples:**

- Nature-Based Solutions Programme:  
(Inc. The Great Trossachs Forest, Scottish Rainforest, Peatland ACTION, Wild Strathfillan, Strathard Framework, Landscape-scale herbivore management, Carbon Codes, Natural Flood Management, Beavers)
- Protected Sites & Core Nature Areas Programme  
  
(Inc. Landscape-scale herbivore and INNS management, Nature Network connectivity and expansion; Perthshire Natural Connections, B-Lines, Riverwoods, Forth and Clyde Climate Forests)
- Provisional 'Future Nature' Index  
  
(Inc. baseline audit, indicators, monitoring)

**Draft Indicators (TBC):**

- Woodland/Forest coverage area
- Peatland soil status and area
- Ha/Km of Nature Networks created
- Protected Sites condition status
- % of Park under active management for nature (including % of all public estate)
- Water body condition status
- River restoration scheme length
- Deer number/impacts, Feral goat impacts & sheep stocking density (Habitat Impact Assessments)
- \*Number of Land Use businesses & jobs, & skills development opportunities
- Ecosystem health indicators and monitoring process established

## Priority Outputs: Mainstreaming

### Pathway 2: Mainstreaming Nature Friendly Processes & Governance

1. Embedding nature restoration principles and where appropriate projects into all new strategic development plans and policies that cover the National Park.
2. Explore enhanced opportunities for the promotion and application of nature based solutions, natural infrastructure, nature networks and 'nature positive development' in new development through the preparation of our new Local Development Plan, ensuring the application of NPF4 reflects the role of the National Park.
3. Developing a pilot Regional Land Use Partnership and from it delivering a Regional Land Use Framework which creates the correct conditions for collaborative and impactful land use change resulting in greater multiple benefits; including nature restoration.
4. Through engagement with Scottish Government and key partners, use our experience and knowledge to provide leadership, support and input into post - Brexit agricultural subsidy scheme reform.
5. Develop, support and pilot new public and private funding models that support large-scale nature restoration projects in the National Park, such as 'Revere' (i.e. Net Zero with Nature).
6. Support the creation of new and innovative nature-based jobs and skills by engaging with land-based businesses, training providers and research institutions to map out capacity and skills shortages and provide opportunities.



#### Key Initiative Examples:

- Nature Friendly Place Making reflecting NPF4  
  
(Inc. Local Development Plan [+ Regional Spatial Strategy], Net Positive for Nature, Regional Land Use Partnership, Strathard Framework, Wild Strathfillan)
- Nature Restoration Policies & Practises  
  
(Inc. Natural Capital mapping, Protected Sites analysis, Nature-friendly Policy & Process review)
- Investing in Nature & People  
  
(Inc. Net Zero with Nature/Revere, Jobs 4 Nature, Civ-Tech)

#### Draft Indicators (TBC):

- Nature restoration targets identified within new plans and policies
- Local Development Plan delivery metrics
- Nos/Ha/Km of land use change activities driven by Regional Land Use Framework
- £££ directed into nature restoration activities by Regional Land Use Partnership
- Future Nature outcomes clear within post Brexit/CAP schemes
- £££ direct Scottish Government funding for delivery (as per Peatland ACTION model)
- £££ private investment secured for nature restoration programmes (Investment Ready Fund)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Number of Land Use businesses and jobs</li> </ul>
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**Priority Outputs: Engagement**

**Pathway 3: Raising Awareness and Inspiring Action for Nature.**

1. Improving nature (and climate) literacy levels through tailored messaging, campaigns and different media targeting various audiences across the National Park, with a focus on calls to action and behaviour change.
2. Providing high quality nature based visitor experiences which inspire and educate visitors.
3. Develop a pilot education and engagement programme that engages young people and less-well represented communities in the twin climate and nature crises and how they can make a difference.
4. Further develop volunteering opportunities across the National Park to allow people to actively participate in nature restoration (and climate) action.



**Key Initiative Examples:**

- Value & Respect Nature campaigns  
(Inc. Audience & Stakeholder mapping, Nature & Climate Education programme, Nature Literacy campaigns)
- Action for Nature programme  
(Inc. Volunteering Programme, Citizen Science, Nature Legacy and Stewardship campaign)

**Draft Indicators (TBC):**

- Engagement figures across different audiences
- Volunteering activities and outputs
- Types of nature-focused visitor experiences
- Follow-up research to track the impact of engagement on behaviour

## 9. Next steps

- 9.1 The immediate next steps for officers are twofold, comprising of further refining of the Delivery Framework and governance, alongside developing and delivering nature restoration project opportunities on the ground.
- 9.2 Further scoping, consultation and co-production of the Future Nature Delivery Framework is needed, working with partners and stakeholders to create a detailed and coordinated programme, with widespread buy-in. This would in time create a portfolio of possible projects which can then be used to identify potential funding sources, both public and private. Clearly it will not be feasible to scope all the draft initiatives and proposals contained in Future Nature at one time and therefore a delivery longlist will be refined to highlight priority projects with a pipeline for future project development and delivery. We need to be prepared to try and fail with pilot and trial projects but we are not operating from a standing start and with our experience in the Wild Park programme and other projects such as Callander's Landscape, we have a good foundation to build from. Additionally we have near shovel-ready partnership projects, particularly focused around strategic INNS control and riparian tree planting, and by looking to secure additional resources these can be moved towards to delivery, provided that land managers are willing to engage.
- 9.3 **We plan to bring the detail of a scoped out programme of new nature restoration activities to Board later this year, along with an update on delivery on the ground in the Park.**
- 9.4 To help lead this task in part we have welcomed Dominic Hall in the new post of Future Nature Development Manager. Dom will focus primarily on the development of Pathway 1: Action for Nature and will be supported by colleagues from Nature and Land Use and other teams. Also joining the team is Nicola McFarlane who is now our Regional Land Use Partnership Adviser to lead the work in establishing the pilot Regional Land Use Partnership.
- 9.5 Staff will also further scope the requirements for the Mainstreaming and Engagement pathways within the National Park Authority, with a primary focus on embedding within our new strategic suite of plans: the National Park Partnership Plan, 5 Year Plan, Local Development Plan and Regional Land Use Framework.
- 9.6 Discussions about the governance of Future Nature are in early stages, but those staff and partners close to the Wild Park programme have highlighted the need for a new strategic-level steering group to oversee the development and delivery of the programme. This would also need to account for and integrate with new governance and project management structures around the pilot Regional Land Use Partnership, and other strategic developments.
- 9.7 In terms of finalising and publishing the Future Nature Route Map we will also be looking to bring the plan and the call to action behind it to life, using the skills of our Engagement and Innovation Team, with a view to publishing an on-line designed version later this year.

- 9.8 We will also continue to engage further with Scottish Government colleagues and our partners and stakeholders to gain their support and buy-in to the detailed development and delivery process which will help deliver national, regional and local level priorities for nature and people.

## 10. Risks

- 10.1 Risks remain similar to those highlighted to the Board in [June 2021](#). These being a potential lack of Scottish Government, partner and key stakeholder support and buy-in, along with the inevitable resourcing constraints of delivering such an ambitious long term programme. National level policy and process changes, particularly around post Brexit-Common Agricultural Policy changes to subsidy and support systems will be key to influencing delivery, as well as being fundamental to shaping the landscape and farming in the Park in the coming years. This is an important area for senior level engagement at present – to seek to embed Future Nature thinking into developing new agricultural policy.
- 10.2 A key risk to delivery and one which is strongly linked to underlying current constraints, is land manager buy-in. Without land manager support or permission, or in some circumstances the ability to enforce restorative action if deemed necessary (e.g. for damage to biodiversity through unsustainable herbivore numbers or unchecked INNS populations), then action is not possible on private land. This situation requires careful consideration and addressing. Ultimately systemic and behavioural change is essential if we are to effectively see nature restoration taking place across a landscape scale, with multiple land managers both public, charitable and private.
- 10.2 Emerging carbon markets, private investment schemes, rising land prices, new forestry targets and other socio-economic and political factors *could* also impact on project development and delivery. However and as previously stated to Board, there will be as many new opportunities emerging from these changes as there are risks.

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