



Laois Public Participation Network

April 2022 Newsletter

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SOCIAL INCLUSION WEEK

25th - 29th April 2022

Social Inclusion Week took place on 25th - 29th April. The theme for the week was 'Access for All'.

The events for included:

- **Silver Springtime at Roundwood House**
- **Accessible for All Walk at Emo Court**
- **Coffee Morning and Talk for the Migrant Community**
- **Photo Competition**

Social Media for Impact Training was scheduled to take place during Social Inclusion Week. It is rescheduled to take place Thursday, 12th May.

See page 11 for further details.



Accessible for All Walk at Emo Court



Silver Springtime at Roundwood House



Coffee Morning & Access for All Talk



SOCIAL INCLUSION WEEK EVENT

SILVER SPRINGTIME AT ROUNDWOOD HOUSE

In the grounds of the wonderful Roundwood House, Laois PPN hosted an “Silver Springtime” event for their members in the 55+ age group on Tuesday the 26th of April.



Dan Bergin, Laois PPN Resource Worker said:

“This event was in recognition and as a thank you to the over 55 age group who are the driving force behind so many Community Groups around the County. This age group pass on the love and passion of their respective Community Group and pride in their locality to the next generation, which contributes to making Laois an attractive place to live, work and visit.”



Laois PPN Member Groups were treated to a warm and friendly welcome from Hannah Flynn who told of the rich history of Roundwood House and delicious selection of treats for afternoon tea from her husband Paddy Flynn

Roundwood is an 18th century Irish Country House set at the foot of the Slieve Bloom mountains, known for its' pretty architecture, an impressive Library of Civilisation and "singing chef." The Georgian Country House is a real gem of the Midlands and former winner of the Irish Hotel of the Year Award.

Built in 1731 for a prosperous Quaker family of cloth makers by the of Sharp, it retains much of its charm and feel from its early days. Hannah's parents Frank and Rosemary Keenan bought Roundwood in 1983. PPN Members Groups were delighted to meet Frank near the old coach house which has been transformed into the beautiful Frank's library.



Frank's beautiful library at Roundwood

Dan Bergin Laois PPN Resource Worker said

"The event was part of Laois PPN's Social Inclusion Week. Michael O'Gorman whose work as Chairperson of Down Syndrome Ireland "Laois Branch" contributed to him be named Unsung Hero 2021 at Community & Voluntary Awards was the guest speaker at the event. Laois PPN wish Michael every success with the "Field of Dreams" project, which will improve the quality of lives of people with intellectual disabilities"





Laois branch of Down Syndrome Ireland secured a 4-acre site from Laois County Council to build the centre. The project aims to build a centre of excellence, a training hub, an allotment area, with the eventual plan being to create independent living spaces for people with intellectual disabilities at the property.

Michael Gorman spoke about the 'Field of Dreams' Training Centre of Excellence in Abbeyleix.

"I wish to thank Laois PPN for the opportunity to raise awareness of the "Field of Dreams" Training Centre. I wish to acknowledge and thank community support in Laois to help make the 'Field of Dreams' Training Centre of Excellence in Abbeyleix happen. The centre will equip our members with the different array of skills to find jobs in meaningful paid employment and earn a wage.'



Pictured: Unsung Hero Michael Gorman (Laois branch of Down Syndrome) with Maureen Cullen (Sing for Joy)



Photos: Michael Scully

SOCIAL INCLUSION WEEK EVENT

ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL WALK AT EMO COURT

Laois Public Participation Network (PPN) in collaboration with Laois Sports Partnership were delighted to hold a walk for all ages and abilities on Thursday 28th April as part of Laois PPN Social Inclusion Week. Over 50 participants took part in the walk at Emo Court and Parklands.

Emo Court House is surrounded by beautiful gardens and parkland and it was a wonderful setting for the free woodland walk. The walk was accessible to people with limited mobility including people with wheelchairs. On the day there were 2 different length walks to choose from to cater for people of differing abilities. To conclude the event, all participants were treated to tea/coffee and a sweet treat from the Tea Rooms at Emo Court.





Eimear Bryant from Laois Sports Partnership said:

"Our walk leaders on the day were Donie Molloy and Caroline Cahill. The walk was held in partnership with Laois PPN as part of social inclusion week. It was a great way to bring people together and enjoy the outdoors. It was great to see so many people getting involved. All participants enjoyed tea/coffee and a singalong at the end of the walk."

Laois Sports Partnership continue to complete walks for the next two weeks in Garryhinch and Glenbarrow and are welcoming everyone to come along and join these walks."

To register or for more information for the upcoming walks with Laois Sports Partnership, please contact Eimear Bryant :
ebryant@laoissports.ie / 086-0111722





Dan Bergin Laois PPN Resource Worker said:

There was a fantastic turnout of over 50 participants for our walk at Emo Court. This event which was held in collaboration with Laois Sports Partnership was a resounding success. This event was part of our social inclusion week where our theme was access for all. It was great to see people of all ages and abilities enjoying the walk. Walking has many physical and mental health benefits. Laois PPN would encourage our member groups to look into the wonderful walks programme provided by Laois Sports Partnership.



Photos: Denis Byrne

The walk was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, with members expressing their thanks to Laois PPN and Laois Sports Partnership for organising a great day.



SOCIAL INCLUSION WEEK EVENT

COFFEE MORNING & ACCESS FOR ALL TALK

Laois PPN in collaboration with Laois Integration Network are hosted a Laois Migrant Community Coffee Morning & Access for All Talk on Friday 29th April at the MDA Beale Centre in Mountmellick as part of Laois PPN Social Inclusion Week.

PJ Cleere from Disability Federation Ireland was the guest speaker on the day. PJ explained about access a wide variety of services for people with disabilities.



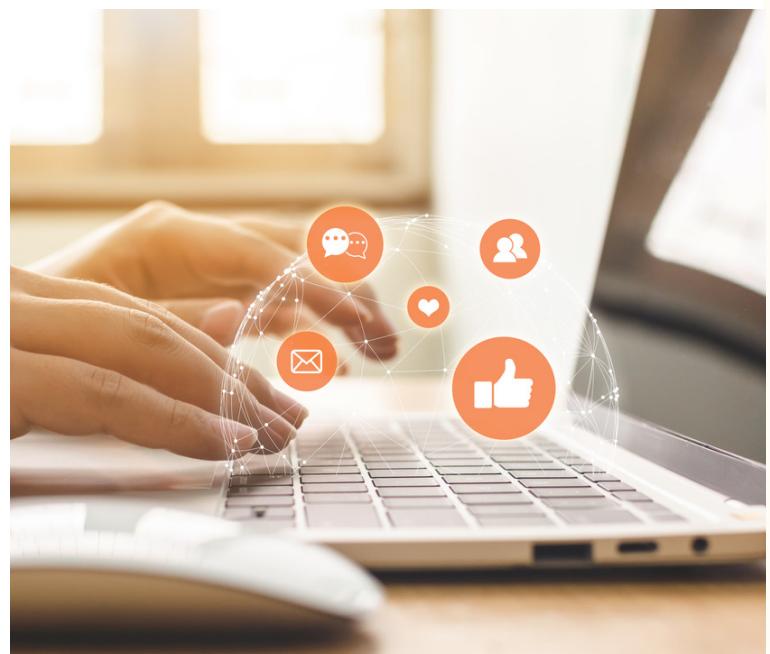
Photos: Michael Scully



SOCIAL MEDIA FOR IMPACT

The workshop has been rescheduled to Thursday 12th May at 7:00pm via Zoom

Laois PPN recognise's the power of Social Media and the part it can play in assisting Community Groups in growing their numbers and getting their message out there into the public domain.



Topics will include:

- Know the limits of social – picking your goals
- Platform Suitability – use the right tool for the job
- Small things that make a big difference – using the tools in a way that won't cause you headaches.

We'll complete the session with a Q&A.

The trainer will be Emily Bourke of The Wheel, where she manages social media strategy and content. She is passionate about clear, interesting, user-friendly content.

Closing date for receipt of registration is Monday 9th of May at 5pm or once all the available places have been filled. Laois PPN will contact all successful applicants prior to the event.

To register your interest
CLICK HERE



LAOIS TO HOST PPN NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Community representatives from all over the country will arrive in Laois this autumn, when Laois hosts the 2022 PPN national conference.

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For the first time, Laois has been officially approved by the Department of Rural and Community Development to host the annual conference.

Delegates from across Ireland will descend on Portlaoise for the key PPN (Public Participation Network) event, which will be held at the Midlands Park Hotel on Friday 21 and Saturday 22 October.

It will be the fourth national PPN conference hosted by a PPN in partnership with their local authority. The annual conference showcases the operation of PPNS nationwide and highlights 'best practice experiences'.



The PPN network allows local authorities to connect with community groups in their counties, through 31 PPNs across the country.

Laois PPN secretariat member Paddy Buggy of the Mountmellick Development Association said it was an honour for Laois PPN to host the conference.

He said: "Laois PPN looks forward to showcasing the work of Laois PPN, our member groups and our wonderful county later this year. Laois PPN will work in partnership with Laois County Council, as our county hosts this important national conference."



Laois County Council Director of Services Donal Brennan said the local authority was delighted that the county was chosen to host the prestigious event.

Mr Brennan said: "With our county's central location and fantastic road and rail infrastructure, Laois is ideally placed to host conferences. Laois County Council will work in collaboration with Laois PPN to welcome representatives from across Ireland to Laois."



LAOIS PPN HOST MIDLANDS REGIONAL PPN MEETING



Laois PPN hosted the first in person Midlands Regional PPN Meeting since before Covid-19.

The MRPPN allows the PPN's of the Midlands to share information and work in collaboration on projects and policies.

The MRPPN is an invaluable network for PPN's based in the Midlands. The meeting of the Midlands Regional PPN took place on Thursday the April 7 in Castle Durrow.



Paddy Buggy of Laois PPN Secretariat Member said: "It was a great privilege to welcome to Laois for our first in person meeting in 2 years the PPN representatives of counties Kildare, Offaly and Westmeath. The event was a great success with topics pertinent to people's lives discussed and actions agreed."



Dan Bergin, Resource Worker with Laois PPN, said: "It was fantastic to be able to meet with our colleagues from the PPNS in Kildare, Offaly and Westmeath in the wonderful setting of Castle Durrow.

"Vincent Booth, Laois PPN Secretariat Member and Secretary of Portlaoise Tidy Towns gave a visual presentation on the transformative work carried out by Portlaoise Tidy Towns in collaboration with Laois County Council over the last 10 years.

"This work cumulated in Portlaoise being recognized nationally in 2021 at the IBAL Awards and the Tidy Town Awards.

"The MRPPN is a great forum for PPN's in the Midlands to share ideas and work together to achieve common goals."

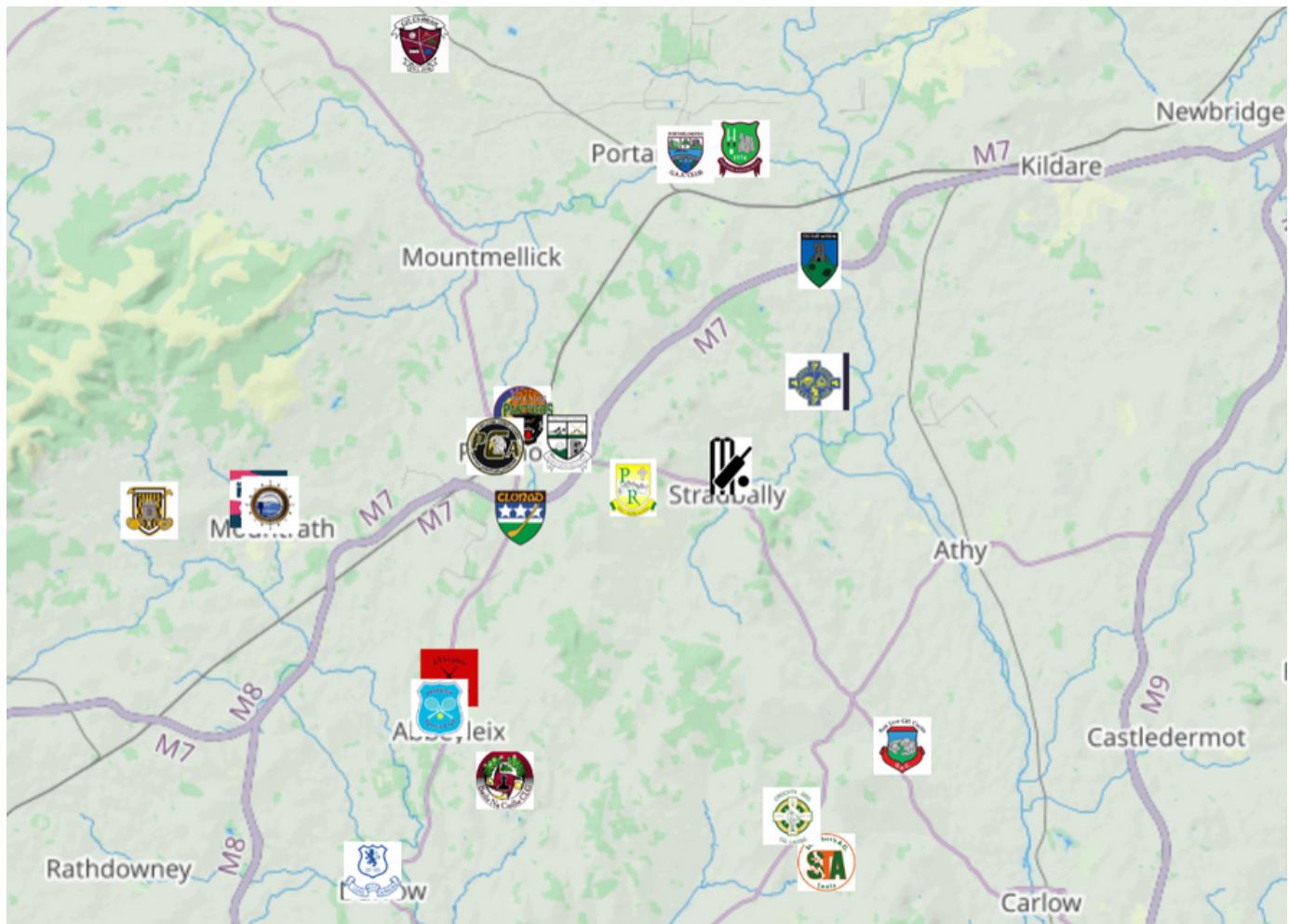


*Pictured: Paddy Buggy, Donal O'Shea, John Oxley, Vincent Booth .
Secretariat Members of Laois PPN*



SPORTS CLUBS AND YOUTH CLUBS

WELCOMING UKRAINIAN NATIONALS



Laois PPN are mapping Sports Clubs & Youth Clubs across Laois who would welcome Ukrainian nationals to be part of their Club.

Laois PPN recognise's the positive physical and mental health benefits of sport and the key role sport and youth clubs can play in supporting people in particular children to integrate in our communities in Laois.

If your Club would like to be part of this initiative,
CLICK HERE



DRCD ANNOUNCE A NEW €15 MILLION COMMUNITY CENTRE FUND

Grants of between €10,000 and €300,000 available for upgrade and refurbishment works to Community Centres

The Department of Rural and Community Development has announced a new €15 million capital fund to support community groups for the upgrade and refurbishment of Community Centres. This is an investment in both rural and urban communities across the Country.

The Community Centres Investment Fund will support community groups with the upgrade and development of their Community Centre facilities.

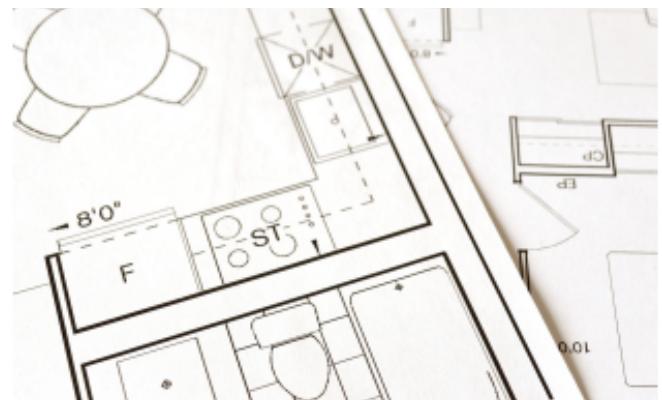
Funding will be available under 3 Categories with grants of between €10k and €300K available:

Category 1: Small scale projects/improvements to facilities - €10,000 to €25,000.

Category 2: Larger scale projects - €25,001 to €100,000.

Category 3: Major projects- €100,001 to €300,000.

Applications under Category 2 and 3 must include a minimum contribution of 5% of the total project costs from the applicants own funds.





Funding is available for capital works such as:

- Works to improve communal facilities such as kitchen and toilet facilities
- Energy retrofitting, new windows / doors / heating systems
- Upgrades to lighting systems and stage areas
- Works to address safety concerns, including as a result of fire safety audits
- Works to improve disability access
- Improvements to assist in providing additional or better services to the community such as Meals for the Elderly & youth facilities
- Works to develop Community Centres as Social Hubs through the development of Community Cinemas, Youth Hubs and Community Libraries
- Essential maintenance works, repairs to roof, etc

There will be a two-stage application process with applicants asked to register their organisation in advance of the formal application process going live.

Applicants need to register as 'users' on the portal in advance of the application process opening on **Tuesday 7th June 2022**. The closing date for applications is **Thursday 14th July 2022**.

The Department will be hosting a number of online information events in May and June 2022 to provide guidance in relation to the application process and details will be released in due course.

[For more information,](#)
[CLICK HERE](#)

OPEN DAY AT SOSAD MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE



SOSAD Laois opened their doors for an Open Day on Friday, April 22, at Shamrock House on the Abbeyleix Road.

Laois PPN were delighted to attend the SOSAD Open Day. Laois PPN were represented by Dan Bergin, Resource Worker and Diane Seale, Support Worker. The centre offers free professional counselling sessions to anyone in need, and is funded by donations raised in Laois, with all that money promised to be used in the Laois branch, one of seven around Ireland.

The centre has two therapy rooms, an office and a kitchen and a garden at the back. There is a private green space where people can do some walk and talk therapy.



Photo: Alf Harvey

On the open day, the Ukraine refugee community visited to take part in yoga, rockpainting and mindfulness sessions, by volunteer and Russian speaker Irina Volia.

Grace Ennis , Co-ordinator of Laois SOSAD said
'The day went really well and I am delighted with the support everyone gave to us. We hope the people in Laois and surrounding areas know that they can reach out to us if they need to as we offer a range of services including 1:1 counselling, walk & talk therapy, a 24hr helpline and a freephone number (1800 901909).

We would like to thank everyone who supported us, including the people who couldn't make it on the day. Everyone seemed to enjoy the activities including mindfulness and stone painting outside. We were delighted that our volunteer Irina was able to incorporate some yoga and mindfulness in Russian for Ukrainian refugees on the day as well. It was a wonderful day overall. '



FESTIVAL OF FLIGHT



The first ever Festival of Flight held to celebrate the rich history of aviation and exploration in Laois has been a resounding success.

The events, which ran from April 7 to 10 included school and family science and arts workshops, a music and poetry event, aircraft technical networking events, tours, films and a commemoration ceremony and drew visitors to the county from across Ireland.

The Portlaoise Plane, the 100 year old artefact built in Portlaoise which was one of the first planes to fly in Ireland, was on public display for the event, in the public square named for James Fitzmaurice, in memory of his great achievement.



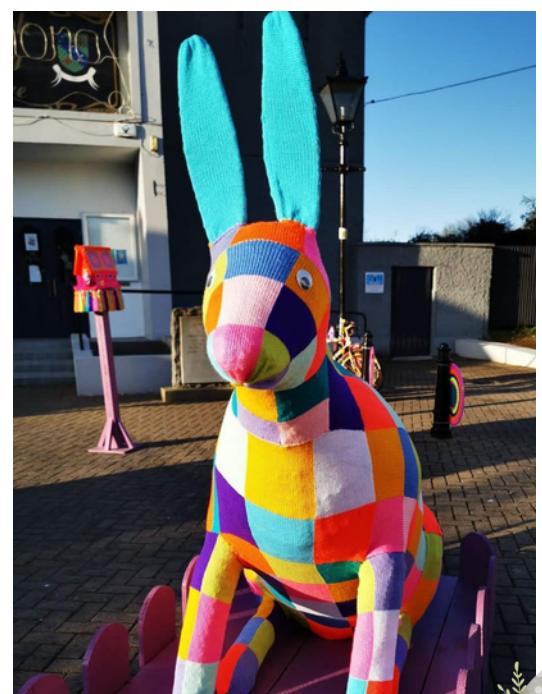
The Col James Fitzmaurice Commemoration committee at the Laois Festival of Flight Ceremony of Commemoration at Fitzmaurice Place, Portlaoise on Sunday 10 April 2022. From left: Tim Costello, Catherine Casey, Louise Fennelly, Michael Parsons, Teddy Fennelly (chairman); Alan Phelan, Ralph James and Sean Murray.

Photo: Alf Harvey.

EASTER EGGCITEMENT THANKS TO YARN

BOMBING MOUNTMELLICK

Mountmellick looked Egg-tastic thanks to the wonderful Yarn Bombing Mountmellick. The group surprised the town with their crafty creations over Easter



ABBEYLEIX TIDY TOWNS HOSTS LAOIS FEDERATION OF TIDY TOWNS SEMINAR

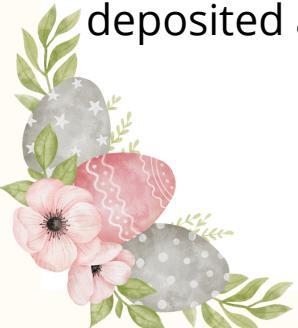
Abbeyleix Tidy Towns hosted the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns Seminar as the 2022 National Tidy Towns Competition was launched. The well-attended event kicked off with a tour of the village and community garden by Abbeyleix Tidy Towns veteran Mary White.

Robbie Quinn from Abbeyleix Tidy Towns gave an inspiring presentation and offered huge insight into how they have become one of the top Tidy Towns groups in the country.

A demonstration of Reverse Vending Machines was made by Colin from the Return for Change campaign from VOICE Ireland. These Reverse Vending Machines will result in a significant reduction in litter from plastic bottles and cans as these will be subject to a refund when deposited at these machines.



Photos: Michael Scully





NEW AGE FRIENDLY COUNTY STRATEGY NEEDS YOUR INPUT....

We are looking for relevant groups to complete a survey across the pillars of the Age friendly Program. This survey will help inform us and help us build a strategy to make Laois a better place to grow old in.

[Click here to submit survey online](#)

[Click here to download Survey](#)

**Please complete your group survey and email to
agefriendly@laoiscoco.ie**

**Alternatively, they can be posted to
Tom Curran
Community Section
Laois County Council
Áras an Chontae
Portlaoise
Co. Laois**

All surveys submitted by 31st May 2022, will be entered into a draw for a €100 Laois Gift card for your group (3 prizes)



FREE EVENT!

COLOUR FUN RUN



3K Fun Run/Walk
1.5K & back along canal

4PM FRIDAY 13TH MAY

STARTING AT VICARSTOWN COMMUNITY HALL R32RX67
WITH LIVE MUSIC FROM PAPER PLANES

- Involving young people from Schools, Family Resource Centres & Youth Reach Groups
 - Creating awareness around Mental Health in a positive way

Further details available from Niamh at 057 866 5010 or niamh@ywilaos.com



An Roinn Leanai, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth





CONTACT US

The Laois Public Participation Network (PPN) Office is open Monday to Friday by appointment only.

You can also contact us by:



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Phone: 057 86 65661 (Office)
086 035 2107 (Dan)



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