

Report on the implementation of Law Commission proposals

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Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 3A of the Law Commissions Act 1965 as inserted by section 1 of the Law Commission Act 2009

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Report on the implementation of Law Commission proposals

Introduction

I am pleased to present this report on the implementation of Law Commission proposals. This is the fourth annual report to be presented following the passing of the Law Commission Act 2009. This Act places the Lord Chancellor under a duty to report to Parliament each year on the extent to which Law Commission proposals have been implemented by the Government. This report covers the period 12 January 2013 to 11 January 2014.

This year has seen a number of Law Commission proposals take effect. The Trusts (Capital and Income) Act 2013 has come into force, as have the amendments to the Companies Act 2006 which streamline the system for registering charges and securities interests granted by companies. In furtherance of the Commission's function to repeal laws that no longer serve any useful purpose, this year has also seen the largest ever Statute Law (Repeals) Act, removing over 800 Acts (and parts of 50 other Acts) from the statute book.

In addition to the proposals which have come into force this year, a number of Law Commission Bills are currently before Parliament. These include the Consumer Rights Bill and the Care Bill. They also include the Co-operative and Public Benefit Societies Bill which is an example of the important work of consolidation undertaken by the Commission.

The new Parliamentary procedure introduced in 2009 has reduced the time and resources required for a non controversial Law Commission Bill to pass through Parliament. The procedure was used for the Trusts (Capital and Income) Act 2013 and also for the recent Inheritance and Trustees' Power Bill. It underpins the Government's improved record on implementation this year.

We continue to operate in a challenging economic environment, but against this backdrop we have made significant progress on implementing the Commission's proposals. The Government holds the excellent work of the Law Commission in very high regard and the progress we have made during this past year demonstrates the continued relevance and resilience of the Commission's work.

The Right Honourable Chris Grayling MP Lord Chancellor

Scope of the report

- Section 3A of the Law Commissions Act 1965, as inserted by section 1 of the Law Commission Act 2009, places a duty on the Lord Chancellor to report to Parliament each year on the extent to which Law Commission proposals have been implemented by the Government.
- 2. This is the fourth annual report to be published by the Government under the Act. The report covers the period 12 January 2013 to 11 January 2014.
- 3. As stipulated by the Act, the report covers Law Commission proposals that have been implemented by the Government during the year, proposals that have not been implemented, including plans for implementation, and decisions taken not to implement proposals.
- 4. The report covers only the reports of the Law Commission of England and Wales, although it notes when these reports were done jointly with the Scottish Law Commission.
- 5. The report addresses Law Commission proposals that are for HM Government to implement. Some proposals are for the Welsh Government to implement in respect for Wales; but for ease of reference these are also noted in the report.

Proposals that have been implemented

Capital and Income in Trusts: Classification and Apportionment¹

- 6. The Trusts (Capital and Income) Act 2013 received Royal Assent on 31 January 2013. The Act has been fully in force since 1 January 2014. The Act derives from the Law Commission's report entitled Capital and Income in Trusts: Classification and Apportionment (published 7 May 2009). The Bill was based on the draft Bill accompanying the Law Commission report, but included modifications arising from responses to the Government's public consultation on the Bill. The Bill followed the procedure for uncontroversial Law Commission Bills.
- 7. The Act addresses three problematic areas of trust law in England and Wales. All three concern situations where a trustee has to determine whether an investment receipt is to be treated as capital or income. Briefly, the effect of the Act is as follows:
 - Four burdensome nineteenth century rules requiring apportionment between capital and income have been disapplied for new trusts.
 - Shares received by all trustees on a tax-exempt corporate demerger are classified
 as capital for trust purposes (at present this is only the case on indirect demergers)
 and the trustees will have power to make a payment to the income beneficiary if
 they consider the circumstances justify it.
 - The Charity Commission can make regulations specifying the terms on which charity trustees can adopt total return investment by passing a resolution to replace the current system of specific applications to the Charity Commission.²

Consumer Insurance Law: Pre-contract Disclosure and Misrepresentation³

- 8. The report was a joint Law Commission and Scottish Law Commission report which addressed the issue of what a consumer must tell an insurer before taking out insurance. Under the previous law, consumers were required to volunteer information about anything which might be material to a "prudent insurer". Where the consumer failed to disclose such information, the insurer could refuse all claims under the policy, treating the insurance contract as having never been in place.
- 9. The Consumer Insurance (Disclosure and Representations) Act 2012 distinguishes between reasonable and careless misrepresentations, for which the insurer must pay all or some of the claim, depending on the nature of the mistake, and deliberate or reckless misrepresentations, for which the insurer may refuse to meet the claim. The Act received Royal Assent in March 2012 and was brought fully into force in April 2013.

¹ Capital and Income in Trusts: Classification and Apportionment (LC 315) (06.03.2009)

² The Charities (Total Return) Regulations 2013 were made by the Charity Commission on 25 October 2013

Consumer Insurance Law: Pre-contract Disclosure and Misrepresentation (LC 319) (15.12.2009)

Company Security Interests⁴

- 10. This project considered how charges and security interests granted by companies over their assets to secure loans should be registered. It also considered how to resolve conflicts between different lenders with securities, and between lenders and borrowers.
- 11. A power to amend the scheme for registration of charges was included in the Companies Act 2006 and many of the Law Commission recommendations for reform were brought into effect through the Companies Act 2006 (Amendment of Part 25) Regulations 2013.
- 12. The new provisions provide for a single UK-wide scheme that applies to all companies incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 and its predecessors. The provisions: create a new online system to register charges for a lower cost; enable Companies House and the Land Registry to share information so that properties only need to be registered once; and remove the need for Companies House staff to check through lengthy paperwork from lenders. This new system offers a more stream-lined and efficient approach.

Statute Law Repeals⁵

13. The Statute Law (Repeals) Act 2013 is the largest Statute Law (Repeals) Act to have been passed to date. It repeals 817 whole Acts and part repeals 50 other Acts. The repeals relate to statutes dating from 1322 to 2010, and include parts of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, Finance Act 2003 and Taxation (International and other Provisions) Act 2010. The Act received Royal Assent on 31 January 2013 and came into force immediately.

Contempt of court – scandalising the court

14. The Law Commission launched its review of the law governing contempt of court during 2012 which covered the common law offence of scandalising the court. In December 2012 the Law Commission's report from its contempt review recommending abolition of the offence of scandalising the court was a major factor in the Government's decision to support an amendment to the Crime and Courts Bill to repeal the offence. The Bill received Royal Assent on 25 April 2013 and the offence of scandalising the court was abolished two months later on 25 June 2013.

⁴ Company Security Interests (LC 296) (31.08.2005)

⁵ 19th Statute Law Repeals Report (LC 333) (04.04.2012)

Proposals that have not yet been implemented

(i) Proposals in the process of implementation

Adult Social Care⁶

- 15. The UK Government and Welsh Government welcomed the Law Commission's final report on Adult Social Care, published 11 May 2011, and agreed to implement the vast majority of the recommendations. The Care Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on 9 May 2013 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill was laid before the National Assembly for Wales in January 2013.
- 16. The Welsh Bill will establish a new legal framework for people that is adults and children care and support in Wales, whilst the UK Government Bill will achieve the same effect but in respect of adults. Both Bills will consolidate dozens of pieces of legislation dating back to the National Assistance Act 1948. The Bills will ensure that the outcomes that matter to people are at the heart of decisions about care and support, put carers on an equivalent footing to those they care for, and provide for new national eligibility arrangements in respect of care and support. Furthermore, the Bills will establish new statutory frameworks for protecting adults at risk from abuse and neglect.

Intestacy and Family Provision Claims on Death⁷

- 17. The Inheritance and Trustees' Powers Bill will change three areas of the law: it will make some reforms to simplify and update the law of intestacy which determines the way in which an estate is distributed in the absence of a will; it will adjust some technical rules relating to the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975 which permits certain family members and dependants to apply to the court to vary the distribution of an estate; and it will amend the Trustee Act 1925 so as to bring trustees' powers to apply funds for the benefit of beneficiaries into line with current practice.
- 18. The Bill implements the majority of the proposals contained in the Law Commission report so as to bring inheritance law into line with the needs and expectations of families. It will make it simpler for people to deal with the practical and financial issues that arise when a family member dies, and also simplifies the administration of trusts.
- 19. The Bill was introduced into the House of Lords in July 2013 and is expected to receive Royal Assent in May 2014.
- 20. The Law Commission's report also dealt with inheritance rights of cohabitants but these were contained in a separate draft Bill as the Law Commission acknowledged that these recommendations raised issues that did not apply to the Inheritance and Trustees' Powers Bill. After careful consideration, the Government decided that the

⁶ Adult Social Care (LC 326) (11.05.2011)

Intestacy and Family Provision Claims on Death (LC 331) (13.12.2011)

Law Commission's recommendations regarding rights for cohabitants upon intestacy would not be implemented during this Parliament. This is consistent with the Government's response to the Law Commission's previous report, *Cohabitation: Financial consequences of relationship breakdown*, and reflects the continuing priority for family justice of completing our significant ongoing reform programme.

Unfair Terms in Contracts and Consumer Remedies for Faulty Goods⁸

21. In January 2014 the Consumer Rights Bill was introduced into Parliament. As well as other provisions the Bill implements the Law Commission's updated advice on unfair terms and several of the recommendations in its 2009 report on Consumer Remedies for Faulty Goods. The Consumer Rights Bill aims to bring together, improve and update consumer law setting out a simple, modern framework of consumer rights.

Unfair terms in consumer contracts

- 22. Since 1994 the courts have had power to assess the fairness of terms in consumer contracts, but may not look at the amount of the price. In 2009 the issue of what constitutes "the price" came to the fore: the Court of Appeal thought that bank charges for unauthorised overdrafts could be assessed for fairness, while the Supreme Court thought that they could not.
- 23. The Law Commission report recommended that the courts should not interfere with prices which are transparent and prominent; however, where charges are tucked into small print, the courts should have the power to assess them for fairness.
- 24. The Government has adopted these recommendations and they have been included in Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Bill.

Consumer remedies for faulty goods

- 25. UK consumers have a legal "right to reject" faulty goods. This means a right to a refund if they act within "a reasonable time".
- 26. In 2009 the Law Commission recommended that the right to reject should be retained in the UK as a short-term remedy of first instance. In normal circumstances, a consumer should have 30 days to return faulty goods and receive a refund. The 30 day period should be flexible, taking into account the nature of the goods bought. The Government accepted this recommendation. The 30 day period, with provision for a shorter period for certain items such as perishable goods, is included in Part 1, Chapter 2 of the draft Consumer Rights Bill.
- 27. To prevent consumers from being locked into a cycle of failed repairs, the report recommended that consumers should be entitled to escape a contract after one failed repair or one failed replacement. This recommendation is also included in the draft Bill.
- 28. The Government has not accepted recommendations to abolish the "deduction for use" provisions or to allow a longer right to reject for goods which will not be used for some time.

Unfair Terms in Contracts (LC 292) (24.02.2005) and Consumer Remedies for Faulty Goods (LC 317) (11.2009)

Consumer Redress for Misleading and Aggressive Practices⁹

- 29. Misleading and aggressive commercial practices are a major problem for consumers. In 2009, research from Consumer Focus showed that almost two-thirds of the population had fallen victim to a misleading or aggressive practice causing an estimated consumer detriment of £3.3 billion a year. Vulnerable housebound and older people face particular problems from high-pressure doorstep selling.
- 30. Although EU Regulations do exist in this area they can only be enforced by the Office of Fair Trading or Trading Standards. Consumers have to rely on private law rights if they want to take action but the Law Commission review found current private law in this area to be fragmented, complex and unclear.
- 31. The Law Commission recommended that consumers should have a new legal right of redress against traders who carry out misleading or aggressive practices. Consumers would be entitled to a refund, or a discount on the price, and damages might be available if the unfair practice caused additional loss. On 6 August 2013 the Government announced its intention to implement the key proposals made in this report. The Government is consulting on the draft regulations implementing the proposals.

Third Parties (Rights against Insurers)¹⁰

- 32. The Third Parties (Rights against Insurers) Act 2010 implements with some modifications the proposals contained within the joint Law Commission and Scottish Law Commission report on this issue. When brought into force, the Act will replace legislation from 1930, streamlining and improving the procedures under which a person with a claim against an insolvent but insured wrongdoer can claim against the insurer. Most importantly, the new Act will allow the claimant to proceed against the insurer directly without first establishing the liability of the insolvent person.
- 33. The 2013 Implementation Report indicated that the Government was working towards implementation of the 2010 Act but had provisionally concluded that it would have to be amended before it could be commenced. On 25 April 2013, the Government announced by way of Written Ministerial Statement¹¹ that the Government intended to introduce legislation when parliamentary time permitted to amend the 2010 Act to include (a) a number of specific insolvency situations¹² and (b) a power for the Secretary of State to add further insolvency situations to the 2010 Act by order should the need arise. The Government is continuing to work closely with the Commission on these proposals and intends to bring the 2010 Act into force as soon as reasonably possible after the necessary amendments have been made.

Onsumer Redress for Misleading and Aggressive Practices (LC 332) (28.03.2012)

¹⁰ Third Parties (Rights against Insurers (LC 272) (31.07.2001)

¹¹ http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/April_2013/25-04-13/12.Justice-ThirdParties.pdf

The Written Ministerial Statement state that the specific insolvency situations omitted [from the 2010 Act] are within the scope of the Third Parties (Rights against Insurers) Act 1930 and the Third Parties (Rights against Insurers) Act 1930 (Northern Ireland). Commencing the 2010 Act without first including them would deprive third parties, such as individuals and businesses, of the protection they now have from the consequences of the insolvency of the person who has incurred a liability to them. These insolvency situations include: administrations (other than those ordered by the court) under the Insolvency Act 1986; debt relief orders in Northern Ireland; and certain subject specific types of administration orders, such as air traffic administration orders and energy administration orders

Renting Homes: Wales¹³

- 34. This project is being implemented by the Welsh Government and is included in this report for completeness.
- 35. In 2012, the Welsh Government asked the Law Commission to update its report Renting Homes: the Final Report, published in 2006. The subsequent report Renting Homes in Wales did this and looked at devolution implications. The Welsh Government White Paper Homes for Wales committed to implementing the updated proposals.
- 36. Implementation of the proposals will entail repealing much of the existing housing legislation applicable to Wales and replacing it with a framework which is intended to be simpler comprising only two forms of occupation contract: secure contracts modelled on the local authority secure tenancy and standard contracts modelled on the current assured shorthold tenancy. Model contracts which are compliant with the requirements of the new legislation will be provided by the Welsh Government. It will be possible to convert existing tenancy agreements into one of these new contracts.

Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies¹⁴

- 37. The Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Bill (prepared in liaison with the Scottish Law Commission) was introduced into the House of Lords in December 2013. For projects such as this which involve a consolidation Bill, the Government gives its agreement to the project at its outset.
- 38. The Bill aims to reproduce the effect of the current legislation while putting the law into a more logical, accessible, clear and modern form. Over time there have been significant developments in company law, the regulation of financial services and changes to EU law. As a result the legislation on societies has become complicated and technical. It is not easy to navigate the various separate enactments on the subject or to understand how the legislation fits together. The consolidation removes spent and obsolete provisions and brings together amendments and additions to the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965.
- 39. The Government's aim is for the Bill to be enacted before the end of the current Session of Parliament.

¹³ Renting Homes: Wales (LC 337) (09.04.2013)

¹⁴ Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Consolidation Bill (LC 341) (19.12.2013)

(ii) Proposals awaiting Government decision on implementation

Contempt of Court (1) – Juror Misconduct and Internet Publications¹⁵

- 40. In December 2013 the Law Commission published a report containing recommendations for law reform relating to contempt by jurors and modern media aspects of contempt by publication. This report is the first of three planned for the review of the law of contempt.
- 41. This report deals with three main areas, namely recommendations to: create a new criminal offence for jurors conducting prohibited research; provide for an exemption of contempt liability for publishers relating to archived online material; and provide a limited exception to the prohibition on jurors revealing their deliberations, in order to reveal miscarriages of justice or to participate in carefully controlled research.
- 42. This project was commenced under the Protocol between the Law Commission and the Lord Chancellor. Provisions to implement recommendations from the report were included in the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill introduced in Parliament in February 2014. The Government plans to provide the Law Commission with an interim response by June 2014, with their final response being presented to the Law Commission by December 2014.

Level Crossings¹⁶

- 43. The report was a joint Law Commission and Scottish Law Commission report and examined the legal framework governing level crossings. It made recommendations to modernise, simplify and clarify the law so as to make the framework more coherent, accessible and up-to-date. In turn this would allow for better regulation, better co-operation between those with duties at level crossings, improving the balance of convenience between all users and making it easier to close level crossings where appropriate, thereby reducing risk. In September 2013, the Commission published a report, draft Bill and draft Health and Safety Regulations.
- 44. This project was commenced under the Protocol between the Law Commission and the Lord Chancellor. The Government plans to provide the Law Commission with a final response by September 2014.

Electronic Communications Code 17

- 45. The Electronic Communications Code sets out the regime that governs the rights of designated electronic communications operators to install and maintain apparatus on public and private land. Today its application extends to the infrastructure forming networks which support broadband, mobile internet and telephone, cable television and landlines. This project focused on private property rights between landowners and electronic communications operators. It did not consider planning law.
- 46. In February 2013, the Law Commission provided a series of recommendations which formed the basis of a revised Electronic Communications Code. The proposed

¹⁵ Contempt of Court – Juror Misconduct and Internet Publications (LC 340) (09.12.2013)

¹⁶ Level Crossings (LC 339) (25.09.2013)

Electronic Communications Code (LC 336) (28.02.2013)

- changes to the Code would set out the legal position in clear terms, provide the clarity that the current Code lacks, and provide an efficient forum for dispute resolution.
- 47. Following the publication of the Law Commission's report on the Electronic Communications Code the Government has considered and analysed the Law Commission's recommendations. As part of this the Department for Culture Media and Sports commissioned a piece of further analysis to study the economic impact of various alternative wayleave regimes.¹⁸
- 48. The Government aims to provide a detailed response to the Commission's report by the end of 2014.

Public Services Ombudsmen¹⁹

- 49. The Law Commission's 2011 report focuses on five ombudsmen: the Parliamentary Commissioner; the Health Service Ombudsman; the Local Government Ombudsman; the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales; and the Housing Ombudsman.
- 50. The report makes a series of recommendations aimed at improving access to the public services ombudsmen, ensuring that they have the freedom to continue their valuable work and improving their independence and accountability.
- 51. The Government will respond to the Law Commission in summer 2014.

Making Land Work: Easements, Covenants and Profits à Prendre²⁰

- 52. The Law Commission's 2011 report on easements, covenants and profits à prendre contained reforms which would simplify and clarify the rules relating to the acquisition of easements by prescription (or long use of land) and implication, as well as the termination of easements by abandonment. Furthermore, the reforms would give greater flexibility to developers when building estates where there would be multiple owners and users. The reforms also included a proposal to extend the jurisdiction of the Lands Chamber of the Upper Tribunal to allow for the discharge and modification of certain easements and profits created post-reform.
- 53. The recommendations are designed to make the law relating to easements, covenants and profits à prendre fit for the needs of the twenty-first century and a modern registration system.
- 54. In the 2013 Implementation Report the Government stated that, although its consideration of this Report had been delayed by work on other priorities, it had met a number of stakeholders to discuss the recommendations in the report and was preparing its response to the Law Commission. During 2013, discussion with stakeholders has continued but the completion of the response to the report has again been delayed by work on other priorities. The Government intends to respond to the report in 2014.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modelling-the-economic-impacts-of-alternative-wayleaveregimes-the-nordicity-report (January 2014)

¹⁹ Public Services Ombudsmen (LC 329) (14.07.2011)

²⁰ Making Land Work: Easements, Covenants and Profits à Prendre (LC 327) (08.06.2011)

The High Court's Jurisdiction in relation to Criminal Proceedings²¹

- 55. The High Court has supervisory power over the Crown Court, but it is limited. It does not include "matters relating to trial on indictment". The reason for this limitation is that it is in the interests of justice for trials to proceed without being delayed by appeals and applications to the High Court.
- 56. There is a lack of clarity as to what "matters relating to trial on indictment" means and this has led to uncertainty and some litigation. There are also some situations in which a party to a trial cannot challenge a ruling but ought to be able to.
- 57. The Law Commission's 2010 report included recommendations to reform the law on judicial review of the Crown Court in criminal proceedings so that judicial review of decisions in a trial on indictment is barred from the time the case goes to the Crown Court for trial to the end of the trial, with the exception of where the judge refuses bail. It also recommended a new statutory appeal for a child or young person, where the trial judge refuses to restrict reporting to protect his or her identity as well as where the trial judge's ruling entails a real and immediate risk to a person's life.
- 58. Although work has been delayed by other priorities the Government has continued to consider the proposal and intends to provide a response to the Law Commission during summer 2014.

Administrative Redress: Public Bodies and the Citizen²²

- 59. The purpose of this project was to review the law in relation to redress from public bodies for substandard administrative action. A key objective was to achieve the correct balance between fairness to aggrieved citizens and appropriate protections to public bodies and the public funds they use.
- 60. The project made a recommendation for the Government to collate and publish data on compensation paid by public bodies subject to a successful pilot. The Government has conducted two pilots and the results of these trials are being considered.

Termination of Tenancies for Tenant Default²³

- 61. This report was published in 2006 and contains recommendations to reform the means by which a landlord can terminate a fixed term commercial or residential tenancy where the tenant has not complied with his or her obligations.
- 62. This is an important issue for many landlords and tenants of residential and commercial properties. With regard to commercial tenancies, the current law is difficult to use, especially for the lay person and the unwary practitioner. It does not support negotiated settlement and provides little protection for mortgagors and chargees.
- 63. In the 2013 Implementation Report the Government stated that it had discussed the proposals with a number of stakeholders and was continuing discussions with the Commission about this report, in relation to commercial tenancies, but that no final decision had been taken. Although work has been delayed by other priorities the

²¹ High Court's jurisdiction in relation to criminal proceedings (LC 324) (27.07.2010)

²² Administrative Redress: Public Bodies and the Citizen (LC 322) (26.05.2010)

²³ Termination of Tenancies for Tenant Default (LC 303) (31.10.2006)

Government has continued to consider the proposals and intends to reach a final decision in 2014. It is also considering whether improvements can be made to the evictions process in the residential sector.

Decisions taken not to implement

Expert Evidence in Criminal Proceedings in England and Wales²⁴

- 64. In November 2013 the Government announced its decision not to take forward the Law Commission's recommendations on expert evidence in criminal proceedings. Whilst the Law Commission took the view that primary legislation was required to bring about the suggested changes, the Government considered that amendments to the Criminal Procedure Rules would be sufficient.
- 65. The Law Commission recommended that a "reliability test" should be introduced for expert evidence, which would have required primary legislation. Rather than take this forward at this time, the Government invited the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee to amend the Rules to require more information from those wishing to adduce expert evidence, placing judges in a better position to refuse to admit evidence which is irrelevant or not credible legislation. The relevant Rule changes were approved on 14th March, and are expected to come into effect later this year. The Advocacy Training Council has also incorporated the recommendations into its training programme.

Partnership Law²⁵

- 66. This report arose from a joint project between the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission. The recommendations sought to reform the law of general partnerships and clarify and modernise the law on limited partnerships, which has been little changed since its introduction in 1907. Two recommendations relating to limited partnerships were implemented by way of the Legislative Reform (Limited Partnerships) Order 2009, namely making a certificate of registration conclusive evidence that a limited partnership has been formed at the date shown on the certificate and requiring all new limited partnerships to include "Limited Partnership", "LP" or equivalent at the end of their names.
- 67. The Government does not expect to implement the remainder of the proposals in England and Wales.

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²⁴ Expert Evidence in Criminal Proceedings in England and Wales (LC 325) (22.03.2011)

²⁵ Partnership Law (LC 283) (18.11.2003)

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