NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY

REPORT TITLE: INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE AND SERVICE RESILIENCE FOLLOWING A FIRE AT THE WEMBLEY TRANSFER STATION

REPORT OF: HEAD OF STRATEGY AND SERVICES

FOR SUBMISSION TO: AUTHORITY MEETING

DATE: 12 NOVEMBER 2026

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report provides an update on the state of the Authority's service resilience following the recent fire at the Wembley (WTS) Waste Transfer Station. It also provides progress updates on construction of a Waste Transfer Station at Geron Way which provides a long-term facility in the west of the Authority's area. This report also advises on the process to secure a long-term depot for the waste transport fleet and on proposals to relocate Regis Road Reuse and Recycling Centre (RRC) from its current site to a new site on Regis Road. Additionally, the paper updates Members on the successful integration of the Barrowell Green RRC into the Authority's portfolio of Reuse and Recycling Centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Authority is recommended to:

A. Note the update provided on the fire at Wembley Waste Transfer Station and the impacts on service resilience.
B. Delegate authority to the Managing Director following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chairs, for a period of six (6) months and subject to a maximum expenditure of £1.5m to procure, award, enter into and manage such short-term waste services contracts as are necessary to ensure continuity of service.
C. Note the construction and transition update provided on the delivery of a new long-term facility in the west of the area.
D. Note the need and process for securing a long-term depot for the Waste Transport Fleet.
E. Note the successful transfer of Barrowell Green Reuse and Recycling Centre previously operated by Suez on behalf of London Borough of Enfield into the London Energy operation on behalf of the NLWA.
F. Note the update provide on proposals to relocate the current Regis Road RRC to a new location on Regis Road in the London Borough of Camden.

SIGNED:  Head of Strategy and Services

DATE: 02 November 2026

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. The report updates Members on a recent fire at Wembley Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and its impacts on service and resilience. It provides an update on the development of and transition into Geron Way WTS to provide a long-term facility serving the west of the Authority's area. It also advises on the need for and the process being followed to secure a long-term, waste transport depot required to support the operation.

1.2. The report also provides updates on Reuse and Recycling Centre (RRC) infrastructure, with details of a proposal to relocate the Regis Road RRC to an alternative location still on Regis Road and the successful integration of Barrowell Green Reuse and Recycling Centre into the Authority's portfolio of Reuse and Recycling Centres.

2. WEMBLEY WASTE TRANSFER STATION FIRE UPDATE

Strategic Importance

2.1. The Authority entered into a lease for a WTS in Wembley in November 2020. The lease was for up to seven years. Taking on the lease allowed the Authority to vacate a WTS in Hendon to support the London Borough (LB) of Barnet's redevelopment of Brent Cross. At the end of the lease the intention is to move into a new WTS currently under construction by LB Barnet at Geron Way in the borough.

2.2. The Wembley facility is a waste transfer station situated at Hannah Close, Brent. Wembley is one of four waste sites that accept waste collected by the seven constituent Boroughs and is critical in terms of its location, size and hours of permitted operation.

2.3. Table 1 below details the materials accepted at each site. The first three sites are operated by LondonEnergy Ltd (LEL) which is wholly owned by the Authority.

	Residual	Dry Mixed Recycling	Organic	Specialist Recycling	RRC Storage
Wembley	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Hornsey Street	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
EcoPark	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Biffa Edmonton	No	Yes	No	No	No

Table 1: Accepted materials by location

2.4. The graphic below (figure 1) details the location of each site, the operator and operational status.



Figure 1: Site locations, operators and operational status

2.5. The Wembley facility accepted 160,000 tonnes of residual and Dry Mixed Recycling each year from Barnet and Camden. Its location helped reduce travel and queuing times for collection crews and the facility was capable of operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

2.6. This flexibility coupled with its size provided LEL with essential capacity to manage the volatility associated with markets that treat hard to recycle materials (e.g. mattresses, textiles, polystyrene). More importantly the capacity provide at Wembley was a vital part of the business continuity process in the event that the Energy Centre or other WTS was unavailable or partially unavailable.

2.7. Officers are reviewing with LEL the contingency arrangements in the event of further incidents at waste sites used for managing north London's waste.



Figure 2: Photo of Wembley WTS in flames

THE FIRE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

2.8. The fire at Wembley started shortly after 11am on Friday 28 August and is understood to have started in a bay being used temporarily to store cardboard. The London Fire Brigade attended with more than 125 staff, 20 fire appliances and support vehicles.

2.9. The fire was initially brought under control. However, because of the volume of waste materials on site and the presence of thick smoke, the fire continued to smoulder and there remained a risk that it could reignite. London Fire Brigade left the site at 11am on Monday 31 August after confirming that the fire had been fully extinguished and no longer presented a significant risk or re-ignition.

2.10. No injuries were reported. LondonEnergy Limited (LEL) have supported colleagues, offering health assessments with lung function testing, wellbeing support and access to individual counselling. LEL has also identified suitable alternative roles within the organisation for colleagues that worked at Wembley and confirmed that colleagues' pay will be protected during the recovery period.

2.11. Structural and condition surveys have confirmed that the building has sustained substantial damage, and the owner of the building British Land has confirmed that the building is damaged to the extent that it will need to be demolished. British Land have - for reasons of Health and Safety - imposed a complete ban on anybody entering the building.

2.12. A timeline for demolition indicates work to remove the roof and wall cladding which started late-October and will concentrate initially on the areas close to the seat of the fire, when this area has been made safe demolition work will pause for a short period to allow fire investigation to commence, this is expected to be mid-November.

2.13. The period between the fire being extinguished and the fire investigation being conducted may impact the reliability of the investigation itself. The cause of recent fires at Hornsey Street, EcoPark RFPF and other sites, coupled with the speed of ignition, strongly suggested however that a lithium-ion battery was the cause. We will expect results of the fire investigation to be available in December 2026.

2.14. Figure 3 below highlights the damage to the roof which presents a risk of full or partial collapse.



Figure 3: Internal view of the WTS

2.15. Wall panels and cladding (see figure 4 below) were cut and removed by the London Fire Brigade to support firefighting activity, and a number of additional panels are loose following exposure to heat. The supporting frame is badly warped and is no longer capable of supporting the full structure safely.



Figure 4: External view of the fire damaged WTS

Resilience and Contingency

2.16. In the immediate aftermath of the fire LEL took the lead in dealing with site specific issues at Wembley. NLWA officers took the lead in working with boroughs to divert collection crews from the Boroughs of Camden and Barnet to alternate sites to maintain continuity of service to residents. In the short term this included a combination of some collection vehicles travelling direct to the EcoPark, some collection vehicles using the Hornsey Street WTS and an arrangement being entered into with Veolia to allow some material to be dropped off at their depot in Alperton. Collection crews from LB Hackney and LB Haringey have subsequently been asked to reduce the amount of materials delivered to Hornsey Street and in favour of the EcoPark to ease queuing and turnaround times at Hornsey Street WTS.

2.17. While the continuity measures have maintained a full service, they have placed additional pressures on LEL daily operation and on the collection teams particularly at LB Camden and LB Barnet.

2.18. The loss of Wembley WTS has substantially reduced capacity in the system and resilience is now greatly diminished. Hornsey Street WTS has experienced three major fires in the last 12 months all resulting in its a temporary closure of 3 to 5 days. A further incident of similar severity would prove extremely challenging for the Authority and highly disruptive to borough collections teams and residents.

2.19. Officers from the Authority and LEL are working with 3rd party providers to secure transfer capacity in the west of the area. At this moment these are local temporary arrangements that leave the service and the Boroughs that depend on them at risk. Officers are therefore seeking a delegated authority to the Managing Director of the Authority - following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and for a period

to the April 2027 Authority meeting - to make arrangements for the temporary management of waste transfer and related services to support greater continuity of service and service resilience.

2.20. All options to improve resilience have or are continuing to be explored, including liaising with landowners and understanding opportunities for post-demolition use of the Wembley site. However, there is a long lead time for infrastructure and Environment Agency approval is required in the form of an operating permit. Therefore, temporary arrangements will involve use of facilities owned and/or operated by third parties with existing operating permit(s) in place. A temporary delegation would allow officers to secure third party waste acceptance capacity and haulage capacity over the coming months. This is likely to be particularly vital over the Christmas period when waste volumes increase.

Financial Impacts

2.21. Waste treatment capacity at LEL and Biffa (DMR) are not impacted by the fire at Wembley WTS and a such the contingency arrangements described at 2.16 of this report will continue to be focused on waste acceptance capacity in the west of the area. Officers are working to formalise agreements to provide certainty of service and cost, however it is likely that the current arrangements we have in place will change in response to increases and decreases in local third-party waste acceptance capacity.

2.22. Haulage cost for the Authority remains consistent with pre-fire levels. The Authority is incurring additional cost associated with third party waste acceptance which are likely to increase over the Christmas New Year period. These cost are however offset by reduced operational cost of Wembley WTS. Officers have advised British Land that the Authority has paused rent payments in accordance with its rights under the lease. Non-domestic rates and utility cost previously incurred at Wembley are now no longer applicable.

2.23. There are no significant changes in overall forecast as a result of the Wembley Fire. As mentioned at section 2.18 of this report the loss of further infrastructure even on a temporary basis would be significant challenging from a service and financial perspective.

3. LONG TERM WTS SERVING THE WEST OF THE AREA

Background

3.1. The LB Barnet has an obligation set out in a Settlement Agreement (SA) between LB Barnet, the Authority (NLWA) and LondonEnergy Limited (LEL), to provide an alternative WTS when LB Barnet required the previous WTS in Hendon to support their development ambitions, NLWA and LEL agreed to support these plans and to negotiate a SA.

3.2. The SA agreed in September 2017, requires LB Barnet to identify the site of the alternative facility and to fund the cost associated with obtaining land, design, construction and transition to the new facility. The default site named in the SA is Geron Way in Barnet, which is on land owned by the LB Barnet adjacent to the new Brent Cross West rail station.

3.3. The SA was altered in September 2020 to support the early exit from the Hendon, ahead of a new permanent site being secured. To enable this early exit a lease was agreed for a temporary WTS at Hannah Close in LB Brent (Wembley WTS). This was for a period of five years with an option for two additional years. This was beneficial to all parties; it supported early development of the Hendon WTS site and provided the Authority with additional resilience during the key construction phases of the North London Heat and Power Project (NLHPP) at the Edmonton EcoPark.

3.4. Since the SA was altered in September 2020, a number of developments have impacted the feasibility of providing an effective facility at Geron Way. First, there have been changes to Environment Agency fire safety requirements, that the original design at Geron Way did not meet. Second, the Geron Way site was predicated on a reduction in residual waste which has not materialised. The SA protects Camden's position by guaranteeing tonnages at a level Camden had requested as part of setting up the SA, LB Barnet would however have to divert any waste which cannot be accommodated, to alternative Authority sites.

3.5. In October 2023 the SA was further amended to support a two-year extension to the temporary WTS at Hannah Close with a new end date of November 2027. The two-year extension was required to support LB Barnet in pursuing a potential option to build a permanent facility on a portion of the site currently occupied by the Temporary WTS at Hannah Close.

3.6. Conversations with the owners of Hannah Close concluded that it was not commercially viable to build a suitable facility on the site of the Temporary WTS.

3.7. Officers from LB Barnet, NLWA and London Energy Limited had as part of its contingency plan continued to work on a site at Geron Way in parallel to the conversation to stay at a new Wembley site.

3.8. Design for the facility at Geron Way have been agreed and a timeline for construction and transition to the new facility at Geron Way have been produced.

The Current Situation

3.9. Officers had continued to work with LEL, LB Barnet and their contractor McLaughlin Harvey to develop a new design for Geron Way that delivers a compliant site that meets changing design and permitting regulations and delivers against the User Requirement that made up the original SA. LB Barnet are proceeding to the following timeline with their constructor and Authority officers.

July Cabinet (LBB Governance):	22 Jul 2025
Notice to proceed:	19 Aug 2025
Start on site:	13 Sep 2025
Construction complete:	29 Sep 2027
Handover commences:	29 Sep 2027

3.10. The capacity of the site has not been established, however after extensive traffic and waste modelling the facility is expected to meet the minimum throughput requirements set out in the SA. It should be noted that tonnages delivered by LB Barnet and LB Camden into Wembley currently exceed the requirements of the SA. NLWA officers are working with LB Camden and LB Barnet officers to understand the implications excess tonnage over those expected in the SA could be managed and the impacts this might have on their respective operations and the Authorities contingency arrangements.

3.11. A permit application has been submitted to the Environment Agency (EA) and general pre-application feed-back received to date suggests that the proposed design is capable of achieving permittable status. Should the EA require changes to the design before granting a permit the responsibility for making those changes remains with LB Barnet. The same is the case for insurability of the facility.

3.12. The facility is planned to be capable of dealing with residual waste, dry mixed recycling and organic waste. The facility will have the latest fire protection and suppression systems and odour and dust management systems suitable for a site in close proximity to housing and other amenities. Additional Workshops have been set up during November to review fire management arrangements in light of the Wembley and Hornsey Street fires.

3.13. The facility is aiming for Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment (BREEAM) “very good” status.

3.14. Borough vehicles will enter the site at the top right-hand side of figure 5 below and proceed clockwise around the building before being weighed in on one of two weighbridges situated on the left-hand side of the drawing. Vehicles will then be directed through one of two doors situated at the top of the building and into the correct bay for the commodity being transported. Borough vehicles, after tipping, will proceed out of one of two doors at the bottom of the drawing and turn towards two outward bound weighbridges situated on the right-hand side of the drawing before leaving the site.

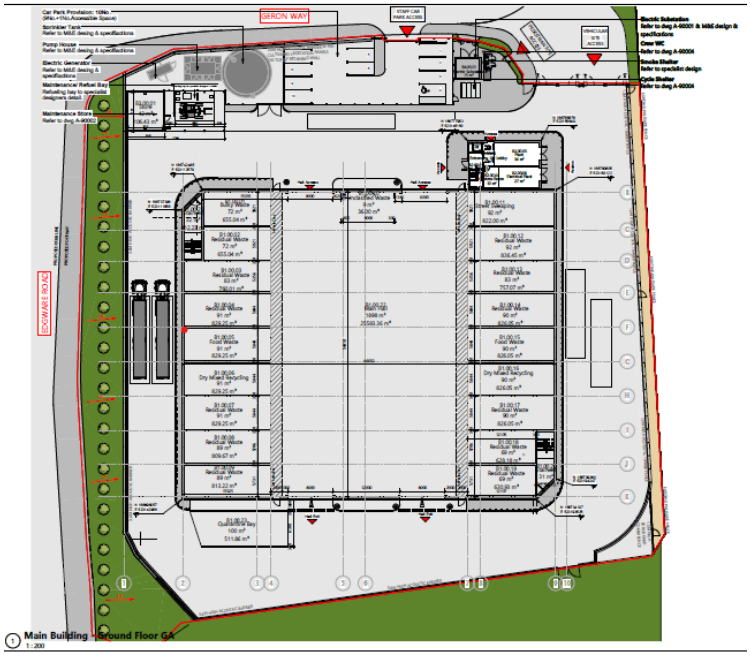


Figure 5 - Site Layout

3.15. The fact that the vehicle route circles the site before entering the tipping hall provides appropriate levels of queuing space within the site, and ensures vehicles are not travelling in the same direction unless in lanes segregated by bollards. Two inbound and outbound weighbridges aids speed of throughput and removes a common single point of failure for older sites.

3.16. Planning permission for the site places restrictions on vehicle movements and operations that limit capacity of the site. Table 2 below sets out planning requirements. As reported at section 3.11 the site is expected to meet the minimum throughput requirements set out in the SA.

	Midnight to 7am	7am to 5pm	5pm to 7pm	7pm to Midnight
Monday - Friday	Site closed	no restrictions	1 vehicle movement only	Site closed
Saturday	Site closed	Open from 7am to 12:30	Site closed	Site closed
Sunday	Site closed	Site closed	Site closed	Site closed

Table 2: Operating hours

3.17. Officers from NLWA, LEL and LB Barnet have agreed additional governance arrangements that incorporate the learning and experience of the successful Eco-Park South project, to manage changes to design during pre-construction and construction phase and the transition into new facilities.

3.18. The facility is well into its construction phase and is progressing positively. The drainage and concrete works are almost complete, and the focus is moving to steel erection for the roof.

3.19. The rent for Geron Way was original agreed in 2017 as part of the original Settlement Agreement. Due to a 10-year gap between the original agreement and the expected date of initial operation that rent was reviewed and agreed between the parties at £1.115m per annum for a period of five years from the site being operational. The rent adjustment took account of an alternative land price index from that set out in the SA, as the original index had been discontinued. The agreement also recognised LB Barnet would take responsibility for funding a wider range of design and construction changes than had originally been set out in the SA.

4. TRANSPORT YARD

4.1. The existing London Energy fleet is responsible for moving waste from WTS to the EcoPark in the case of residual waste, from WTS to Biffa Edmonton for Dry Mixed Recycling and for the removal of materials from the Authority's network of Reuse and Recycling Centres.

4.2. The fleet requirements for the future operation to include Geron Way WTS has been completed. The study set out the need for the LEL fleet to increase slightly to ensure sufficient transport capacity is available across the heavily restricted operating hours at Geron Way. The increase in the LEL fleet will reduce the reliance on 3rd party haulage and will offset the cost of the larger fleet.

4.3. The fleet is currently parked at Hawley Road in the London Borough of Enfield, the current lease with LB Enfield expires in 2030. Officers have attempted to open discussions with LB Enfield since early 2025 on the possibility of extending the current lease until 2035.

4.4. LB Enfield has confirmed that they are conducting a review of land use and are unable to discuss a possible extension until such time as the review is complete. There is currently no timeline for its completion.

4.5. Due to the time required to identify and secure land and make the required alterations to home a large transport fleet. Officers have begun a local search for available land with the requisite planning categorisation.

4.6. Options being considered include: using existing Authority owned land for development, purchase of land and developing for a permanent depot, leasing land on a long-term basis for development. Officers are also continuing to engage with LB Enfield to secure long term use of the current Hawley Road site.

4.7. Officers will provide an update on securing a longer-term transport yard at a future Authority meeting.

5. BARROWELL GREEN REUSE AND RECYCLING CENTRE (RRC)

5.1. Barrowell Green RRC situated Enfield was managed by Suez on behalf of LB Enfield until June 2026. At LB Enfield's request it then transferred to NLWA and is now managed by LEL as part of the Authority's RRC network.

5.2. In February 2024, the Authority had been in discussion with LB Enfield and Members approved the taking over of management of Barrowell Green RRC should LB Enfield formally requesting the transfer.

5.3. The planned April 2024 transfer was delayed while LB Enfield conducted a public procurement among private sector operators. In parallel the Authority provided a detailed estimate of cost should the facility transfer to the Authority. The resulting public procurement demonstrated that the Authority through LEL offers a low cost and high-quality service when compared to commercial operators.

5.4. Following the procurement exercise LB Enfield decided not to pursue proposals from private sector operators and formally requested the site transfer to the Authority. The Authority offers a wide range of benefits these include lower operating cost, strong business continuity and resilience arrangements, improved access to third-party markets, a wider range of recycling and reuse commodities. A Cabinet Member Key Decision to request the transfer was made on 9 December 2025.

5.5. After a planned transition period, the site transferred to the Authority in July 2026, with LEL operating it on the Authority's behalf. Transfer arrangements progressed as planned, including the TUPE transfer of Suez colleagues, the EA permit transfer from Suez to LEL and new IT server facilities.

5.6. Authority officers monitor the service against key performance indicators covering site and material-stream availability, average visit times, complaints and compliments. Barrowell Green is performing well across all measures.

5.7. In September 2026 Councillor Qirjo visited the site with Officers to see first-hand the new operation, to meet with staff and talk to residents using the site.

5.8. From December 2026 LEL will remove the need for north London residents to book an arrival time slot before visiting the facility. This aligns Barrowell Green visitor arrangements with the rest of the Authority's RRC network.

5.9. From December 2026, London Energy will also widen the range of materials accepted at Barrowell Green to include **coffee pods and ink cartridges.** These are items routinely accepted across the rest of our network but not previously collected for recycling at Barrowell Green. Subject to approval from the Environment Agency **Gas Cannisters** and **Paint** will also be accepted.

5.10. Finally, a dedicated **Book** reuse and recycling container will be introduced to support books being reused when in good condition.

6. REGIS ROAD RRC

6.1. Regis Road RRC is situated in LB Camden and is operated by LEL on behalf of the Authority. The current site offers a wide range of recycling and reuse options for residents as well as space for residual waste. The site currently operates 7-days per week from 9am to 4pm including Bank holidays.

6.2. The site is considered a valuable asset by residents and plays a role in delivering priorities set out in the North London Joint Waste Strategy.

6.3. In late 2024, Camden officers approached Authority officers to explore moving the Regis Road RRC from its current location to a new location still on Regis Road to facilitate place shaping aspirations for the Kentish Town area. Yoo Capital is leading the proposals for the Camden Film Quarter – a Masterplan which proposes a new neighbourhood in the Regis Road area of Kentish Town (Figure 6). Within the overall plan the area in yellow highlights the position of the existing Reuse & Recycling Centre.

6.4. The Masterplan will be anchored around new film studios and will include workspace for the screen and creative industries alongside educational facilities linked to film making, with new facilities for the local community. There will also be new homes, with a target of 50% affordable homes across the site.



Figure 6: Camden Film Quarter Area

6.5. NLWA officers are currently working with Camden officers and a design team from Yoo Capital to develop a suitable design for a new RRC on Regis Road. Occupying the ground floor (with adequate headroom) of a shared development with Housing units. See figure 7 below.



Figure 7: Artist impression of proposed RRC with housing

6.6. NLWA with Camden have agreed that the replacement facility should at a minimum provide a like for like offering in terms of space, operating freedoms and commodities offered. It has also been agreed that the current site will only close when the new site is available.

6.7. Authority officers wrote to LB Camden planning on the 5 December 2025, highlighting concerns with the initial design submitted by Yoo Capital. The concerns focused in three key areas, the size of the proposed alternative site and a potential impact on the service offer, the proximity of social housing above a permitted waste facility from fire, odour, noise and a vibration perspective and finally concerns around the management of traffic queuing for the site.

6.8. Officers continue to work constructively with LB Camden colleagues and WSP the project's environmental advisors to develop plans for an alternative facility. Officers will provide additional updates as these plans progress.

6.9. EA applications for new permits take approximately 1 year to be assessed and processed. Officers will submit an application for a new facility when suitable plans that address the concerns already raised have been fully addressed.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are no equality implications associated with this report.

8. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISER

8.1. The report seeks approval to directly award contracts for the provision of waste services following the fire and loss of handling capacity at Wembley WTS. As the proposed contracts exceed the relevant threshold for services, their award is governed by the provisions of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA 2023) and the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.

8.2. Section 41 of the PA 2023 permits the award of an above-threshold contract without prior publication where one of the direct award justifications set out in Schedule 5 to the PA 2023 applies.

8.3. The Authority is relying on the direct award justification relating to urgency, as set out in paragraph 13 and paragraph 14 of Schedule 5 to the PA 2023.

8.4. Paragraph 13 of Schedule 5 provides a justification for the direct award of a public contract where it is strictly necessary to do so by reason of extreme and unavoidable urgency and where the contract cannot be awarded within the time available using a competitive procurement procedure. Paragraph 14 provides that urgency will be unavoidable only where it is not attributable to any act or omission of the Authority and could not reasonably have been foreseen by the Authority.

8.5. Pursuant to section 41(4) of the PA 2023, the Authority must consider whether the proposed suppliers are excluded or excludable suppliers before making any direct award to any given supplier.

8.6. The Authority must be satisfied that the conditions for reliance on the urgency justification are met and must retain sufficient records to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the PA 2023. A clear audit trail should be maintained in the event of any challenge to the proposed direct awards.

8.7. In accordance with the PA 2023, the Authority will be required to publish the relevant procurement notices in respect of the proposed direct awards.

9. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISER

9.1. The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and comments have been incorporated.

List of documents used:

Planning response App 1

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