

# Comhairle Contae **Lú** **Louth** County Council



**Louth Library Service  
Development Programme  
2020-2025**

## Foreword, Chief Executive Officer, Joan Martin



Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025 sets out the vision, mission, values, principles, strategic objectives and priorities of the Libraries Section for the next five years. Prepared by the Library Team under the direction of Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services and Yvonne O'Brien, County Librarian, the Programme was abruptly stalled in March 2020 due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. While Louth Library Service closed the doors to the public for 16 weeks until June 8th, library staff continued to respond to the needs of the community in multiple ways throughout this period.

The value of the Library Service that was evident prior to the Pandemic was re-emphasised throughout as usage of online resources increased by 70% in Louth Libraries. Library staff responded to the needs of the community by operating the Louth Community Call Helpline, establishing a housebound service and creating new online content to support the wellbeing of the community during COVID-19. While the Pandemic may see Library Services delivered differently in the medium term, Louth Library Service's focus as a responsive service to the needs of the community remains.

Further evidence of the value of the service is the level and quality of stakeholder engagement in the consultation stage of this Programme.

This is a very positive time for Louth Library Service on a number of fronts. The coming years will see the service grow and develop in terms of trained staff, accessibility, targeted services, spaces and resources to support social inclusion and skills development.

The Programme recognises the diverse nature of the population and the need to have a relevant and responsive Library Service. It reinforces the position of Louth Library Service as a catalyst to community engagement, literacy, lifelong learning, economic development, entrepreneurship and self-development through cultural, educational and recreational activities, resources and services. Ultimately the Programme is a response to the people of Louth, and how they want to experience the many and varied attributes of this valuable resource. I look forward to seeing the service grow and develop in exciting ways in response to the needs of the people across Louth.

This Programme was adopted by the Council on November 16th 2020, as required by the Local Government Act 2001



## Foreword, Cathaoirleach, Councillor Dolores Minogue

It is my pleasure to welcome Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025, which will shape the future of Library Services for the next five years. Libraries are a key frontline service of the Council and play an important role in the community. In my role as Cathaoirleach of Louth County Council, I regularly meet people of all ages and backgrounds who use libraries for different reasons – to study, to use a computer, to meet friends at book clubs, to trace their family tree, to research the history of their areas, and of course to borrow books. What is truly wonderful is that membership and use of the Library Service is free of charge and everyone is welcome. Louth Library Service is an innovative service and we are lucky to have 'My Open Library' operating in Ardee and planned for Drogheda. This facility reflects our commitment to the people of Louth and is a response to the needs of the community by providing access to the service outside staffed hours for study, leisure and as a meeting space for the community. I look forward to the implementation of this Programme and no doubt the people of Louth will flourish supported by the Library Service.



## Foreword, Louth County Librarian, Yvonne O'Brien

Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025 is the result of extensive consultation with our stakeholders including users and non-users of our services, elected representatives, local groups and organisations, and our staff. We are very grateful for the time people took to respond to our survey, and to those who took time to meet with us to discuss how libraries in Louth will develop over the next five years. I would like to express my thanks to Consultant, Sinéad Begley for her advice and practical help in progressing the Programme through its various stages and to Senior Executive Librarian Amanda Branigan for leading the library working group through this process. I also wish to acknowledge the dedication of staff at all levels for their contribution to how we develop our service over the next five years.

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# Executive Summary

Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025 is a trajectory for the Library Service. This Programme sets out the vision, values, objectives and actions of the Library Service for the next five years. Louth Library Service seeks to strengthen and support communities by providing dynamic, inclusive and responsive Library Services.

The Programme will encompass our vision of Louth Library Service as the cornerstone of sustainable communities by preserving the past, serving the present and shaping the future. Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025 supports the overall mission of Louth County Council, which is to provide leadership and deliver high quality, citizen focused, responsive and effective services.

We value this opportunity to set out our core values, our core services and the supports we will strive to provide in meeting the needs of all parts of the community living in County Louth.

This five-year development Programme is underpinned by Louth County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024 and links to the Annual Service Delivery Plan, setting out the principal service objectives and priorities for each individual year.

In accordance with Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 Louth Library Service shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—

**WE SHALL**

**ELIMINATE**  
discrimination

**PROMOTE EQUALITY**

of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services

**PROTECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS** of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services



Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025 is underpinned by Our Public Libraries 2022, a progressive and ambitious public library strategy, focusing on the core functions of the Library Service, bringing greater structure and consistency to the library's role in literacy support, supporting lifelong learning opportunities and establishing the library as a key place for accessing reliable and authoritative information.

The Programme is aligned to the European 2030 agenda on sustainable development in terms of disseminating information and creating awareness among users of the Sustainable Development Goals via SDG oriented Library activities related to becoming smarter, greener, more connected, more social, healthier and closer-to-citizens.

Although Louth is the smallest county in Ireland, it is home to two of the largest urban towns, Dundalk and Drogheda. This results in a significant and diverse range of economic, social and cultural strengths and opportunities.

Key developments in recent years include the refurbishment and re-development of Drogheda Library in 2013/14; a full upgrade of Ardee Library in 2016 culminating in the launch of a My Open Library Service in 2019; and the upgrade of spaces and resources in Dundalk Library in 2019. All three full-time libraries have self-service technology. Barriers to library access have been removed with the abolition of all fines and fees and major investment in the development of digital resources and eServices. The recent increased usage of Louth Libraries; for example the 30% rise in items borrowed in 2019, reflects the success of these measures.

The next five years will see significant investment in Louth Library Service ICT infrastructure, resulting in enhanced digital services, a digital and STEAM schedule of events and classes, and a modern, innovative information technology environment. The key challenges of serving the needs of a diverse, young population present us with unlimited opportunities to respond with a range of cultural and educational, fit-for-purpose spaces and relevant print and digital collections.



English Classes, Dundalk Library

## Addendum

### Covid 19 Pandemic

- The Covid 19 Pandemic emerged just after the final draft of the strategy. Louth Library Service responded to the needs of the community by establishing a housebound service, by creating new online content, investing in and promoting additional eServices, by pivoting events online and then by delivering initiatives through a combination of the physical and the virtual. The Pandemic is set to remain disruptive and challenging in the medium term. As a cornerstone of the community, Louth Library Service has a responsibility to support people in navigating through the challenges. While technology and technological skill and ability to learn have come to the fore, the Pandemic has emphasised the digital divide and digital poverty within our community. Louth Library Service endeavours to support literacy development collaboratively for all cohorts and will work to ensure our programming is accessible to all and will specifically target marginalised communities. Louth Library Service will reinforce the use of innovative technologies to meet the needs of the community during this time and exploit all opportunities available to mitigate against the disruption of the Pandemic.



## REFURBISHMENTS

Drogheda Library in 2013/14

Ardee Library in 2016

Dundalk Library in 2019



INCREASED  
USAGE

OF LOUTH  
LIBRARIES

# Mission, Vision and Values



## MISSION

We strengthen and support communities by providing dynamic, inclusive and responsive Library Services.

# LOUTH LIBRARY SERVICE



## VISION

Louth Library Service will be the cornerstone of sustainable communities by

- Preserving the past
- Serving the present
- Shaping the future



## VALUES

We value

- Diversity
- Partnership
- Accessibility
- Transparency
- Creativity
- Continuous Improvement



Niamh Shaw, LSF

# Strategic Goals

■ Louth Library Service supports and enables the development of literacy skills, reading, creativity and innovation, and helping people realise their potential.

■ Louth Library Service supports and facilitates learning, providing free access to lifelong learning, job and business advice, and healthy living.

■ Louth Library Service inspires creativity within communities and provides welcoming and inclusive spaces for all.

## Strategic Objectives

**1 Objective 1: Capital & Infrastructure**  
To develop our library buildings and service points to be fit for purpose for all and to reflect the quality of service on offer.

**2 Objective 2: Workforce**  
To develop our library staff team in terms of staff levels, skills, confidence and capacity to be leaders for the future development of a dynamic library service.

**3 Objective 3: Collections and Resources**  
To develop our collections to the highest quality and in line with innovative technologies.

**4 Objective 4: Event Programming**  
To inspire, facilitate and engage the community to reach its full potential through an innovative programme of events and activities.

**5 Objective 5: Technology**  
To establish libraries in the community as a key place to go to, to access, learn and use innovative information technology and digital services.

**6 Objective 6: Marketing and Communication**  
To promote and market the Library Service through all media to ensure efficient use of this valuable resource for the benefit of all the community.

**7 Objective 7: Collaboration and Partnership**  
To develop, build and maintain collaborative networks for our mutual benefit and for the benefit of the community and to foster a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion and inter-culturalism.



Toddler Group

# Introduction

Each Local Authority has a statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 2001 to prepare a Library Development Programme adopted by the Council, covering a five-year period. In December 2019 the County Librarian established a working group to co-ordinate and draft Louth Library Service Development Programme 2020-2025. To inform development of the Programme a PESTLE analysis was undertaken by the working group to identify key political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors influencing the future of Louth Library Service. The library team engaged in a SWOT Analysis workshop as part of the process of developing the Programme. (See Appendix 2 for a summary of findings).

## Consulting the Community

To assist in identifying the needs of the community and to allow people have their say in relation to Library Services, the working group embarked on a process of consultation among users and non-users of Louth Library Service.

Consultation among the public and organisations, businesses, schools and colleges was conducted using surveys, focus groups and feedback sessions facilitated by staff at events in libraries.

Online (and hardcopy) surveys for the public and for schools, businesses and organisations were promoted through library branches, the Council website, social media, the School Library Service and the Louth Public Participation Network. Library staff also promoted the consultation through a range of stakeholders and community spaces across the county (See Appendix 3 for details of organisations contacted).

Focus groups were conducted with local groups. Staff invited feedback from participants at events in libraries including adult and children's book clubs, parent and toddler groups and talks for the public. There was a fantastic response from the public and in total over 800 individuals and 60 groups including library users and non-users took part in the consultation process.

## Key Findings

The central role and value of books, reading and good quality collections is a theme that runs throughout the consultation findings.

Overall, there is a strong level of satisfaction with Louth Library Service among members of the public and the vast majority of those consulted feel their needs are being met. Staff play a key role in this regard, with a particularly strong level of satisfaction in library facilities and the quality and selection of books were also rated highly overall.

The library supports literacy and reader development in schools and provides information, community space, supports and facilities for a range of organisations in Louth. A broad range of individuals and groups of all ages value the library for books, reading, events and classes. The importance of the library as a community hub or



## SATISFACTION

- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Library facilities
- ✓ Quality & selection of books

civic space and for social inclusion is evident. An opportunity exists to provide additional services and resources for people with disabilities and special educational needs through the library service.

Lack of quiet space or differentiated space to accommodate different users can present an issue. This reflects the value of the libraries for a range of uses from relaxing and reading, studying, sharing quality family time, to taking part in events, classes or clubs.

Consultation findings reflect the very positive role of staff in engaging and supporting schools and community groups and the value placed on this by service users. The community outreach service provided through the Mobile and School Services is highly valued.



SnaG Table Quiz

Information and communication technology (ICT) requires upgrading and planned improvements will be welcomed by users. The Library App has been very well received and eServices are highly rated by those using them.

On-going promotion of all Library Services is needed in both traditional and digital formats to maximise use by both current users and new audiences. Effective communication is key to groups availing of the facilities and services available from the library. The recent National and Local PR and Marketing campaign can be leveraged to address this issue.

Consideration has been given to suggestions from the public, schools, and organisations in relation to service provision and collaboration in developing the objectives and actions in this document

## COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS TO THE PUBLIC SURVEY ON WHAT THE LIBRARY MEANS TO THEM

“ Vital as a resource and also great to have a space open to all. A world at my fingertips, ready to explore, open when I need it and a quiet refuge in a busy world. ”

A space where I can brush up my skills and have personal time for self-growth. I can spend quality time with kids while using the Library Services.

“ Libraries give me access to knowledge at no cost. As Cicero says “if you have a library and a garden you have everything you need”. ”

I can't describe how it enlightens our lives and how much we have learned through a vast array of books we would not usually be exposed to. Plus, the trust in excellent staff. Louth libraries have really enriched our lives in my young family which will stand to us for life.



# CO. LOUTH

IRELAND'S  
SMALLEST  
COUNTY

827 SQ. KM

88km  
of COASTLINE

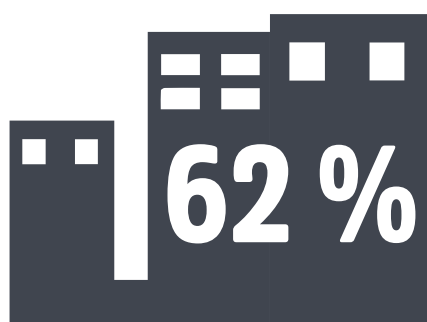


(from Carlingford Lough to the beaches at Baltray & Termonfeckin)

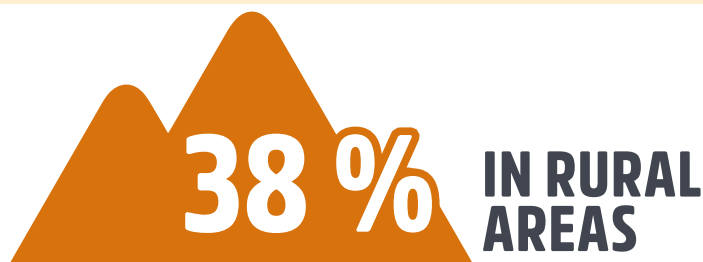
POPULATION 128,884



49% ♀ 51% ♂



RESIDENT IN URBAN AREAS



IN RURAL  
AREAS

A population of **140,000**  
projected by **2020**



POPULATION GREW  
BY 16% IN THE  
PERIOD 2006-2016



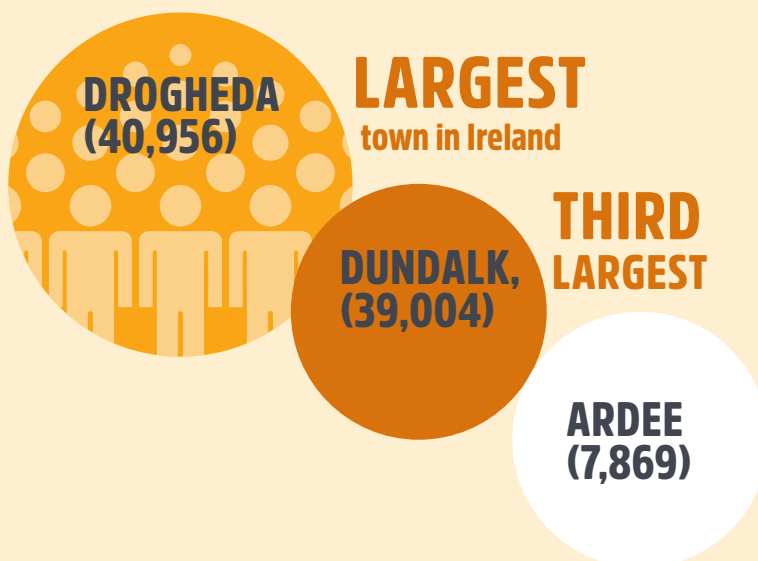
## UNEMPLOYED IN 2016

(nationally the unemployment rate was 13%).

**ETHNICALLY &  
CULTURALLY  
DIVERSE**, 19% of the  
population born  
outside of Ireland.



## IRELANDS MOST DENSELY POPULATED COUNTY, KEY POPULATION AREAS ARE...



Source: 2016 Census (figures rounded to whole numbers)

## About Louth

Situated in the northeast of the country, the county of Louth is the smallest of the 32 counties with land area of 827 sq. km. It contains two major urban centres, Drogheda and Dundalk, and a number of substantial towns and villages including Ardee, Dunleer, Clogherhead and Carlingford. The county is bound by counties Monaghan and Meath on its western and southern sides respectively, counties Armagh and Down to the North, and by the Irish Sea to the east.

With a population of 128,884 Louth is the most densely populated county in Ireland outside of Dublin. In recent years, Louth has experienced a steady rise in population due to external and internal migration as well as a natural increase in population.

Louth is a prime location for business due to its strategic position on the eastern seaboard between Dublin and Belfast. High quality infrastructure, both road and rail, and accessibility to ports and airports north and south facilitate trade and industry. High speed broadband and a highly skilled and educated workforce further contribute to successful economic development. Louth has a reputation for entrepreneurship and is a base for numerous internationally renowned global operations. The largest industrial sector in the county is the wholesale and retail trade, followed by human health and social activities, manufacturing, education and the accommodation and food services sector.

Dundalk Institute of Technology, O'Faich Institute and Drogheda Institute of Further Education provide excellent educational facilities and opportunities. Louth residents also enjoy an easy commute to and from major colleges and universities in Dublin and Belfast.

Louth is a high amenity area with excellent recreation, sports and entertainment facilities. It boasts an impressive coastline stretching over 88 km from Carlingford Lough to the beaches at Baltray and Termonfeckin, offering scenic beauty, seaside activities and water sports.

Louth is also a vibrant county for arts and culture with numerous theatres, music venues, museums, galleries, archives, heritage centres and creative workspaces. Centres such as Droichead Arts Centre (Drogheda) and An Táin Arts Centre (Dundalk) contribute to a thriving arts and cultural scene and there are festivals, events and s across the county throughout the year.

The county is steeped in history and tradition from the area of Oriel with its mythological glory to the world-renowned Boyne Valley. A busy centre for tourism, Louth offers numerous visitor attractions including Monasterboice and Mellifont.



# Louth Library Service

Louth Library Service is part of the Housing, Communities and Quality of Life Directorate in Louth County Council. The County Librarian, who leads the Quality of Life section including libraries, museum, heritage, arts and archives, reports to the Director who, in turn, reports to the Chief Executive.

**Drogheda,  
Dundalk & Ardee**

**FULL  
TIME**

**Carlingford  
Dunleer**

**PART  
TIME**

The Service is delivered through three full-time libraries in Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee, two part-time libraries in Dunleer and Carlingford, and Mobile and Schools Library Service.

The Library Service reports to the Council's Community, Quality of Life and Creativity Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). The committee was established in 2020 and meets quarterly, assisting the Council in the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy relating to the Quality of Life Directorate.

## Origins of Louth Library Service

The first public library to be opened in Ireland under the Public Libraries Act (1855) was opened in Dundalk in 1858. The Library Service in Louth has been in existence since a Mechanics Institute was established in 1844 in a room in the Market House, Dundalk. It was run by a committee for the purpose of improving the minds and conditions of all classes in the community and a membership charge was imposed. A librarian was appointed at a salary of £10 per annum and the service existed until 1853 when it changed its name to the Dundalk Literary and Scientific Institution.

In 1857, due to a decline in membership and financial difficulties, the Library book stock was handed over to the Town Commissioners to be added to a new Dundalk Free Library Service



Ted Greene Book Launch



Mandala Art

**31**  
STAFF



**264,551**  
visits  
to library  
branches



# Louth LIBRARY Service at a Glance 2019

**279,000**  
live items  
in stock

with approximately  
**10,000**  
items added each year

**9,500**  
items purchased

**4,600**  
children's books,  
**4,000**  
adult books,  
**900**  
DVDs, CDs and  
journals

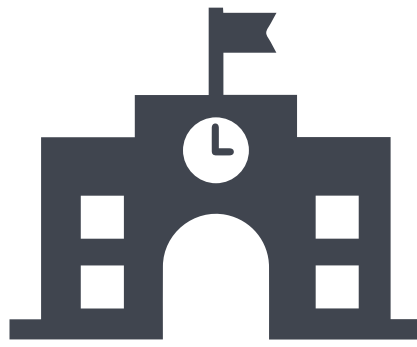
**471,209** items  
issued

**Mobile service visits**

|                           |                               |                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>1,030</b><br>community | <b>216</b><br>nursing<br>home | <b>48</b><br>crèche |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|

## My Open Library Service

launched in Ardee in 2019



## The school library

serves 75 primary schools across the county

## Online eServices

available to download

- eBooks
- eMagazines,
- eNewspapers
- Online courses
- Language learning



will be spent per head of population on Library Services in 2020

316  
adult  
events

395  
children's  
events

A varied programme of cultural, educational and STEAM related events are scheduled across all branches throughout the year



**Membership**  
\* 22,054 (Valid)  
13,265 (Active)

### \*Membership

At the time of writing the collection of data on membership was refined to reflect a more stringent definition of membership into valid and active categories.

Valid membership can count membership commenced or renewed during the 12-month period previous to the current date. Many valid library members use the library for relaxing or attending events without undertaking a transaction (borrowing an item).

Active membership can only count users who carry out a transaction that is recorded in the Library Management System (LMS). The returned membership figure to the National Oversight Audit Committee (NOAC) is the active figure.

## Branches and Services



**Drogheda Library** serves one of the largest towns in Ireland and a population of upwards of 42,347 (CSO, 2016) from an open plan ground floor level of the building it shares with Droichead Arts Centre in the centre of the town. The library was refurbished in 2014.

**Dundalk Library** serves a population of 39,004 (CSO, 2016). The library is situated on a shared campus with Louth County Museum and is housed in a restored 18th century warehouse, once part of Dundalk Distillery. There are two levels in the library; the lending area, seating, study, exhibition space, and some technology services are situated on the ground floor. A learning and technology centre, reference and genealogy section, study space and Work Matters Hub are located on level two.

**Ardee Library** has been part of the My Open Library initiative since March 2019 and serves a population upwards of 7,966 (CSO 2016). It was refurbished in 2016/2017 and is open plan with a public meeting room.



**Carlingford Library** is housed in a former Courthouse and is a protected structure on a narrow site. It is located within the Carlingford Architectural Conservation Area and within the zone of archaeological interest (Arnold, P, 2010).

**Dunleer Library Service** is delivered from the old station master's house in Dunleer.

**The Mobile Library serves** housing estates, nursing homes, crèches and rural areas of Louth.

**The Schools Library Service** serves 75 primary schools in the county and aims to visit each school three times during the year.



A summary of library locations and opening hours is outlined in Appendix 1.

## My Open Library

My Open Library aims to improve access, use and visibility of the library as a community hub, developing the library as a focal point for community and cultural development. This new and innovative self-service option is available to members of Louth Library Service aged over 16.

Members of this enhanced service can now access the library on a self-service basis from 8am-10pm, 7 days a week. Members must be over 16. Photographic ID and proof of address are required. Terms and conditions apply.

### During My Open Library hours members can:



## Library Team

Recruitment to increase staffing, underway at the time of writing, will see the level rise by 30% from 31 to 42. This will enable the strategic development of Louth Library Service and build on the work done to date on improved opening hours, enhanced accessibility to services, and ultimately, improved membership and usage.





## Collections and Resources

At present Louth Library Service has in the order of 279,000 items in stock and an annual book budget of €155,000. Approximately 10,000 items are added to collections annually.

Louth Library Service offers a range of online and eServices, which are available for free, to download to any device. These include e-learning courses; online language courses; e-books and e-audio books; comics; international magazine titles and local, national and international newspapers. Each library branch runs eServices demonstrations for the public on a monthly basis. Our eResources collections are growing year on year to meet the demand of library members. The objective of Louth Library Service Collection Policy is to provide the broadest possible range of materials to support culture, recreation and knowledge, and to respond to the changing needs of our community and our borrowers.

## Technology

All 330 library branches across the country share a Library Management System, allowing access to a catalogue of over 15 million items. This national public library catalogue is supported by a nationwide delivery service, which facilitates members ordering items online or in person for delivery to their local library.

Free Wi-Fi, public internet access and self-service print/copy facilities are available in all branches. Self-service kiosks using radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology are available in the three fulltime branches of Ardee, Dundalk and Drogheda. This technology allows users borrow and return library items on the self-service kiosks by machine reading the digital data encoded in RFID tags or smart labels.

Workstation facilities for hot desking are also available in the three fulltime branches and a 3D printing service is available in Dundalk Library.

The Louth Library App is available on both Android and Apple devices and enhances access to library online and eServices. The App is available at [www.louthcoco.ie](http://www.louthcoco.ie) or Google Play Store.

The Library Service has a prominent social media presence, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

As part of a strategic focus on literacy, including digital literacy, planned developments include the roll out of digital learning spaces to deliver a 21st century library ICT environment making the latest technology, such as virtual reality, accessible to all. This will be supplemented by a programme of STEAM (Science Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) activities for all ages to bring new audiences into the library.

As Library Services are required to underpin the school curricula the recent focus on elements of coding and computational thinking will be reflected in Louth Library Services educational programming.



## Preserving the past...

### Local Studies and Archives

The Local Studies and Archives sections of Louth Library Service are a valuable resource with many unique local history collections. The Local Studies Library offers a genealogical service for family history research and holds records relating to the Archdiocese of Armagh for baptisms, deaths and marriages pre-1900.

Louth Library Service, in tandem with the Council Archives Service, act as the memory bank of Louth through collection development, community engagement, digitisation of local history collections and the delivery of a programme of collaborative commemorative events including the Decade of Centenaries.

### Louth County Council Festival of History

The festival formed part of the communities' strand of the 2019 Decade of Centenaries Commemorative Programme, funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. A diverse panel of expert speakers offered a range of engaging talks on the Revolution in Louth; the First Dáil; Women and Revolution, and the Revolution North and South.

## Serving the present...

An extensive educational and cultural programme is scheduled each year to afford Louth residents the opportunity to engage with culture and further develop cultural identity, for example Creative Ireland, Culture Night and Louth Science Festival.

### Supporting Business, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

To support job seekers and budding entrepreneurs, dedicated Work Matters hot desk spaces are available in Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee Libraries. Resources include free Wi-Fi, a designated PC or laptop, printing and photocopying, books, newspapers, information, and a jobs board. Local partners include Louth Meath Education and Training Board, Intreo, Louth Volunteer Centre, Citizens Information Centre, LEO and the Mill Enterprise Hub in Drogheda. A range of upskilling opportunities are available including English for Employment (free English classes for non-English speakers) and computer classes under the Digital Skills for Citizens initiative in multiple branches.



## Supporting Literacy and Reading

Strong literacy skills provide long term social, educational, and economic benefits. Louth Library Service continues to have at its core, the support and development of literacy skills, reading, creativity and innovation, to help people realise their potential.

As part of the national Right to Read initiative, to support and enhance literacy work in local communities, Louth Library Service will enhance the existing collaborative reader development initiatives, to engage children, teenagers and their parents in hundreds of events each year.

Under the Louth Right to Read Network numerous local agencies work together, led by Louth Library Service, to identify reader and literacy needs in a targeted approach.

Louth Library Service provides a wide range of initiatives which support children's literacy. From baby book clubs to storytelling events, author visits and children's book clubs, a varied range of innovative approaches is used to develop literacy skills and promote a love of reading and books among children and young people. As the popularity of parent & toddler groups and baby book clubs continue to soar, we are welcoming new members to libraries on a weekly basis.



## Healthy Ireland at Your Library

Improving health and wellbeing for people in all communities is a national priority. As part of the Government's Healthy Ireland initiative a programme of events is delivered to the community across all five branch libraries in Louth in collaboration with local agencies, the HSE, and primary care providers. Comprehensive collections of books and online resources are available in all branches on all aspects of health and wellbeing.



## Libraries, the Heart of the Community

Through our staff, our experience, our physical presence in towns and villages around County Louth and our community network, Louth Library Service delivers a vibrant programme of events each year including book clubs, coding classes, computer classes, Irish conversation groups and creative writing workshops. During 2019 we delivered a record number of 316 adult events and 395 children's events to engage the community.



## Louth Science Festival 2019

(Part-funded by Science Foundation Ireland)

The 2019 Science Week theme was climate action; seeking to help people understand it; how science and technology can help us create a positive climate future; and the impact we as individuals can have. In total over 2,000 people attended 67 events, which took place across all 5 branch libraries for primary and post-primary school students, and the general public.

## Services to Schools

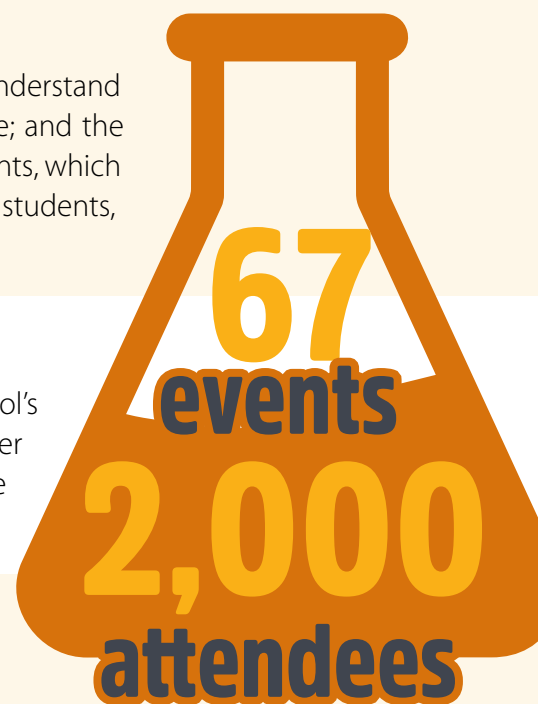
Louth Library Service is unique in maintaining and developing a School's Service. A mobile library visits all primary schools in County Louth a number of times a year and teachers can visit the library store to browse and choose from a selection of 25,000 books.

## 1 Card, 6 Libraries

Louth Library Service has a unique reciprocal borrowing arrangement with the Library Service of Dundalk Institute of Technology. Members of Louth Library Service are able to use the services of DkIT Library for free and vice versa.

## Shelf Life

The Louth Library Blog promotes the Library Service in Louth and allows library members and staff to share their love of books and libraries. Articles have covered a range of topics from favourite books of the decade, events like the Children's Book Festival and recommendations for spooky reads for Halloween. Recent authors interviewed for the blog include Liz Nugent, author of Skin Deep, the Wee County Big Book Club choice for 2019.



## Collaboration and Partnership

The public libraries have been prominent actors in their communities for over 150 years and networks of contacts and collaborations exist between libraries and a range of stakeholders including local politicians, schools, community and voluntary groups, development agencies, and artistic and recreational bodies.

Louth Library Service values the strong partnerships that exist with the Communities Section of Louth County Council, Comhairle na nÓg, Louth Older People's Forum, Dundalk Men's Shed, the Louth Public Participation Network and Louth Tidy Towns. Working in collaboration with local community groups and organisations is very important to us. We recognise the importance of collaboration with colleagues in the Council and we actively develop partnerships in areas such as Culture, Sport, Corporate Affairs and Economic Development.

By continuing to develop strong links and working relationships with other agencies and groups we can build on and improve the lives of library users through providing quality resources and an innovative programme of events and activities to meet the varied needs of our diverse community.

Below is a snapshot of events Louth Library Service has run with different partners to enhance our services.



### Getting readers off to a Flying Start

Our continued collaboration with the Genesis Programme has resulted in the delivery of an exciting Early Years programme to local crèches, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development Dormant Accounts Fund. Recommended reading lists on transitioning to pre-school and national school have been developed, in support of the Flying Start and Incredible Years programmes. Multiple copies of these titles are available to borrow in all branches.

### Writing a Science Opera with Creative Ireland and DkIT

Write a Science Opera (WASO) is a creative professional development approach to music and science education in which pupils of different ages, supported by teachers, opera artists and scientists, become the creators of an educational performance. On the Wings of a Butterfly, a project run by Louth Library Service in Dundalk Library, which employed the WASO approach, was facilitated by lecturers from the Department of Creative Arts, Media and Music, assisted by students from Dundalk Institute of Technology. The project ran over six weeks in autumn 2019 and involved fifth-class pupils from three primary schools in Dundalk. The children explored the life of a butterfly, impacts on human life and the threats of climate change and pollution. Teachers were encouraged to link the WASO process to the school curriculum with opportunities to create links with other classroom-based activities.

## Funding

The annual revenue budget for Louth Library and Archive Service is €3,252,567, with a capital fund of €500,000 in place for 2020. The Department of Rural and Community Development make available capital and revenue streams throughout the year to underpin the strategic aims of the service. In 2020 €25.23 will be spent per head of population on Library Services.

## Strategic Objectives and Actions

### Capital & Infrastructure

#### Objective

To develop our library buildings and service points to be fit for purpose for all and to reflect the quality of service on offer.

#### Actions

- Avail of funding opportunities to expand and enhance the mobile and school services.
- Explore funding opportunities to deliver a library in the Cooley area of County Louth.
- Invest in infrastructural upgrades aligned to Louth County Council Climate Action Strategy.
- Commit to improving access through optimum, user friendly opening hours.  
Implement the My Open Library Service in Drogheda Library.
- Create welcoming, comfortable and accessible spaces in our libraries for all, and in particular, improve the library experience and services for children, teens and adults with sensory impairments, additional needs, learning differences, those on the Autism spectrum, and their parents, guardians and carers.



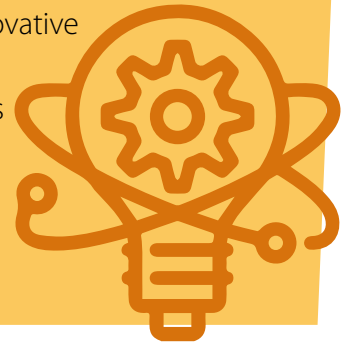
### Technology

#### Objective

To establish the libraries in the community as a key place to access, learn and use innovative information technology and digital services.

#### Actions

- Roll out the development of digital learning centres and innovative spaces.
- Facilitate training for library staff in the use of new, innovative technology.
- Maintain and upgrade internet and Wi-Fi services across all Library Services.
- Investigate potential emerging technologies reflective of societal trends and changes.
- Promote and enhance access to our digital collections.



### Workforce

#### Objective

To develop our library staff team in terms of staff levels, skills, confidence and capacity to be leaders for the future development of a dynamic library service.

#### Actions

- Increase and maintain staff numbers in line with agreed workforce plan.
- Support staff in developing and enhancing their skills and deliver a programme of continuous professional development.
- Build on a flexible structure of communication within the library team.
- Ensure relevant health and safety, child protection and other statutory requirements are adhered to in compliance with national legislation and the Council's policies.



## Collaboration and Partnerships

### Objective

To develop, build and maintain collaborative networks for our mutual benefit and for the benefit of the community and to foster a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism.

### Actions

- Maintain and build on the network of local stakeholder relationships including DkIT, Louth Public Participation Network, Local Community Development Committees, and local service providers, thereby reaching new audiences.
- Leverage inclusive partnership approaches to promote the library as a community resource available to everyone.
- Continue to build on the existing relationships with the school network including pre-schools, primary and post primary schools, and further promote class visits to all library branches.
- Build on internal partnerships within the Council network in terms of event programming and funding opportunities, promoting integration, inclusion and participation.
- Actively seek out collaboration with our local community.
- Formalise the Library of Sanctuary status for Louth Library Service. The objective of the initiative is to promote integration, inclusion and welfare of refugees, asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants and those on the margins, through a practical commitment to becoming places of welcome and safety. Louth libraries are traditionally places of sanctuary, a space where integration happens underpinned by our equitable ethos and free membership.
- Ensure we assess and report on any issues relevant to our function in implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty pertaining to people covered by the nine grounds under equality legislation: gender (including a transgender person or a person who is transitioning to another gender), civil status, family status (including lone parents and carers), age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community; and people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.



## Marketing and Communication

### Objective

To promote and market the Library Service through all media to ensure efficient use of this valuable resource for the benefit of all the community.

### Actions

- Leverage the momentum and resources of the Public Libraries National Public Relations & Marketing campaign.
- Engage with our public representatives, staff, and citizens, local and national organisations to effectively communicate and disseminate information about the variety of services offered by the Library.
- Leverage new and innovative forms of communication to effectively engage with the public.
- Engage with all relevant stakeholders both local and national, Strategic Policy Committees, Louth Public Participation Network, and Local Community Development Committees.
- Strengthen links with local and national media channels.
- Use innovative ways to attract non-users and specific cohorts to the Library Service.



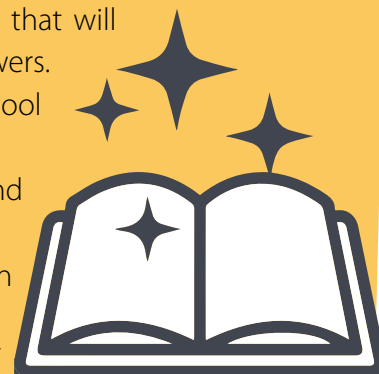
## Collections and Resources

### Objective

To develop our collections to the highest quality and in line with innovative technologies.

### Actions

- Continue to provide access to quality collections that will reflect the increasingly diverse needs of our borrowers.
- Continue to respond to the library needs of the school network within the County.
- Work towards the Public Library standard and benchmark per capita spend.
- Develop our unique local history collection in collaboration with the Archive Service.
- Further develop access to and the promotion of our local history collections through digitisation.
- Bridge the digital divide through targeted programmes.
- Promote access and facilitate ease of access to all digital resources.
- Devise initiatives to encourage and promote reader development and literacy skills.
- Review our collection development policy on a regular basis.



## Event Programming

### Objective

To inspire, facilitate and engage the community to reach its full potential through an innovative schedule of events and activities.

### Actions

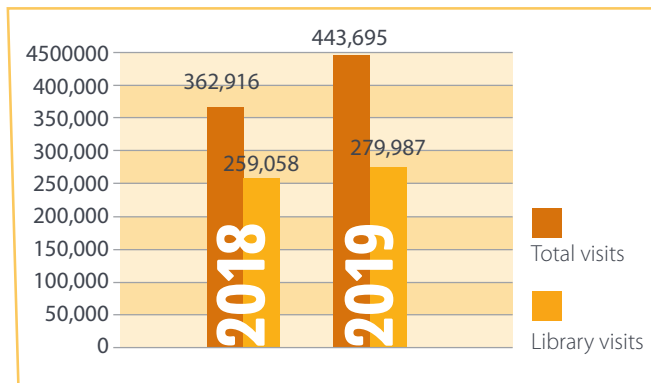
- Collaboratively develop and promote a varied educational and cultural event programme to facilitate life-long learning, STEAM and cultural identity for all in line with national and local initiatives.
- Pursue all relevant funding opportunities to supplement and reinforce event programming.
- Continue to provide an employment and business information service to the public through the Work Matters initiative.
- Implement the Right to Read action plan in line with national guidelines.
- Continue to develop and deliver the Healthy Ireland at Your Library initiative through a schedule of events and provision of an expertly chosen core collection of titles related to health and wellbeing.
- Implement the Creative Ireland Louth Strategy in collaboration with Culture Team Louth.



# Appendix 1: Key Statistics

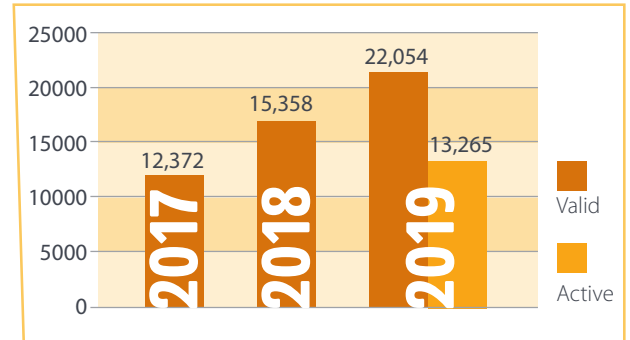
## Key Performance Indicator's 2019

- 264,551 visits to library branches
- 471,209 items issued (30% increase on 2018)



## Membership

- 22,054 (Valid), 13,265 (Active)



Membership\* 22,054 (Valid) 13,265 (Active) only available for 2019

## Events and Activities

- 316 adult events and
- 395 children's events were held

## Schools Library Service

- 214 Schools library visits

## Mobile Library Service

- 1,030 community visits
- 216 nursing home visits
- 48 crèche visits

## Income and Expenditure

|  | 2017      | 2018      | 2019      | 2020       |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Library Service Operations             | 1,726,455 | 1,713,825 | 1,830,680 | 2,159,481  |
| Archive Service                        | 93,700    | 95,550    | 97,105    | 104,556    |
| Book Fund                              | 155,000   | 155,000   | 155,000   | 155,000    |
| Contributions to Library Organisations | 16,100    | 17,389    | 17,389    | 16,481     |
| Service Support Costs                  | 891,130   | 898,198   | 1,037,250 | 817,049    |
| Total                                  | 2,882,385 | 2,879,962 | 3,137,424 | €3,252,567 |

€25.23 will be spent in 2020 per head of population on Library Services.

## Income from external sources

The Department Rural and Community Development make available Capital and Revenue streams throughout the year to underpin the strategic aims of the service.

## Service Points

### **Carlingford Library**

Newry Street, Carlingford, Co. Louth, A91 N226.  
Tel: 042-9324113

### **Dunleer Library**

Station House, Dunleer A92 W322.  
Tel: 041-6859016

### Opening Hours

Monday Closed  
Tuesday 10am-1pm; 2pm-5pm; 6pm-8pm  
Wednesday 10am-1pm; 2pm-5pm  
Thursday Closed  
Friday 10am-1pm, 2pm-5pm  
Saturday 10am-1pm



### **Ardee Library**

Market Square, Ardee, A92 XH22. Tel: 041-685902

### Opening Hours

Monday Closed  
Tuesday 10am-1pm; 2pm-8pm  
Wednesday 10-1pm; 2-5pm  
Thursday 10am-1pm; 2pm-8pm  
Friday 10am-1pm; 2pm-5pm  
Saturday 10am-1pm; 2pm-5pm  
Sunday Closed

### My Open Library Hours:

8am – 10pm  
8am – 10pm  
8am – 10pm  
8am – 10pm  
8am – 10pm  
8am – 10pm  
8am – 10pm



### **Dundalk Library** Roden Place Dundalk, A91 RC44.

Tel: 042-9353190

### **Drogheda Library** Stockwell Lane, Drogheda, A92 PY20.

Tel: 041-9876162

### Opening Hours

Monday Closed  
Tuesday 10am-8pm  
Wednesday 10am-5pm  
Thursday 10am-8pm  
Friday 10am-5pm  
Saturday 10am-5pm



# Appendix 2: PESTLE and SWOT Analyses

## PESTLE Analysis

### Political

#### International Level

- Ongoing alignment with International standards: e.g. IFLA, UNESCO.
- The IFLA international congress was scheduled to take place in Ireland in 2020. Due to the Pandemic it has been rescheduled to 2022.
- Brexit may affect procurement and supply of books, furniture and eServices.

#### National Level

- Our Public Libraries 2022, Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities.
- Putting People First (the Government's Action for Effective Local Government) and the Local Government Reform Act of 2014.
- The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) in conjunction with the library sector is in the process of reviewing Irish Library Standards and Benchmarks.
- National Public Relations & Marketing campaign to promote libraries.

#### Local Level

- Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021.
- Louth Corporate Plan 2019-2024
- Louth Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022.
- The positioning of the Library Service, within the Quality of Life Directorate in the Council.
- A Strategic Policy Committee for Communities, Quality of Life and Creativity, which will input to library development
- General and Local Elections over the period of the Library Development Programme.

### Economic

- Louth has pockets of deprivation and intergenerational disadvantage.
- Louth Library Service has allocated funding to open recruitment. Local businesses, multinationals, and DkIT present potential for sustainable funding partnerships and collaboration.
- A range of funding streams offer potential for development of Louth Library Service e.g. Rural Regeneration and Development fund and Peace IV.
- Potential to support economic development initiatives require ICT infrastructure and collaboration from other agencies.

### Social

- Demographics of the County; young, relatively densely populated, fast growing and ethnically diverse, with pockets of disadvantage.
- Libraries have a role in social inclusion and in providing a community hub.
- Louth Library Service offers a schools and mobile service, which visits creches, care settings and rural communities.
- Louth Library Service collaborates with a range of stakeholders to deliver programmes and support social inclusion.

## Technological

- Changes to the national Library Management System.
- Infrastructure and support requirements to implement new technology.
- Balance between technological developments and traditional services. Libraries need to continue to provide quiet space and sanctuary.
- Social media impact on promotion and awareness of Library Services.
- Digital upskilling and training needs are changing and evolving constantly.

## Environmental

- National Programmes and targets for energy efficiency and climate action for the public sector.
- Green procurement and environmental impact of equipment and facilities.
- Upgrades to branches in heritage properties present constraints in terms of accessibility.
- The Westgate Vision initiative to redevelop the centre of Drogheda will place an emphasis on public realm space.
- Potential to enhance public realm space outside of the Museum and Library in Dundalk.

## Legal

- Reporting and regulation requirements; Health and Safety, GDPR, insurance, child protection and risk assessment.
- Brexit will create a new set of challenges in terms of legal considerations.



## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Qualified, experienced, flexible, creative, responsive, committed staff.
- Good customer service, strong rapport with the public.
- Purpose-built branch libraries (Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee).
- Location, parking and free Wi-Fi make libraries a community hub.
- Free service available to everyone
- My Open Library, Ardee.
- Good book fund, strong and varied collections.
- Outreach through mobile and school services.
- Broad and diverse events.
- Wide range of online eServices and Library App.
- Promotion through blog, social media, local radio and newspapers.
- Excellent local history and genealogy collections.
- Collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders including schools, community groups and public bodies.
- DkIT Library reciprocal borrowing arrangement. · National Distribution Service.
- Local delivery of national initiatives e.g. Healthy Ireland, Right to Read.
- Funding from a range of agencies, including SFI and Creative Ireland.

### Weaknesses

- Staffing shortages and capacity. · ICT infrastructure, equipment and support.
- Dunleer and Carlingford libraries require extensive upgrading.
- Mobile vans require replacement.
- Lack of quiet/ differentiated space.
- Book stock impacted by National Distribution Service.
- Gap in book stock for teens.
- Engaging young people is a challenge.
- More promotion of services is required.
- Online services reduce visits to the library.



## Opportunities

- Staff recruitment; more skills and capacity.
- Staff CPD and forums.
- Enhanced ICT will give staff opportunities for upskilling. · ICT offers opportunity to engage teens and young adults.
- External ICT support would offer a more responsive service.
- Offer language/citizenship support to new communities.
- Target special needs groups and other specific audiences.
- My Open Library promotion and expansion.
- New mobile and school vans to enhance service provision and access.
- New premises at Carlingford and Dunleer to improve service provision and access.
- Develop external civic spaces at libraries.
- Access the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and other funding streams.
- Increased collaboration with stakeholders e.g. LGMA, the third level sector, local community groups.
- Seek external sponsorship for events.
- Respond to the results of public consultation.
- Showcase what libraries are today.
- Engage with employers and multinationals to promote libraries.

## Threats

- Libraries losing their core identity and becoming a 'hold all' for other organisations and programmes.
- Antisocial behaviour in libraries and lack of caretaking staff.
- The new national Library Management System.
- Brexit; increased tariffs and costs.
- Insurance costs.
- Reduced budgets, lack of funding.
- Upcoming elections may change priorities.



## Appendix 3: Stakeholders contacted in relation to consultation

- Dee Hub, Ardee
- Ardee Retirement Group
- Redeemer Resource Centre, Dundalk
- The Youth Café, Dundalk
- Reception and Integration Agency, Carroll Village, Dundalk
- Louth Public Participation Network
- DkIT and DkIT Library
- Dundalk Chamber of Commerce
- Drogheda Chamber of Commerce
- Creative Spark
- Boomerang Youth Café, Drogheda
- Comhairle na nÓg
- Dundalk Men's Sheds
- Louth County Council Staff
- Louth County Council Elected Members
- All primary and post primary schools in Louth
- Genesis

## Sources

- CSO Census 2016
- EBLIDA 'Think the Unthinkable: A Post Covid-19 European Library Agenda' September 2020
- Louth County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024
- Louth County Council Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2022
- Paul Arnold Architects; Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (2010)
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014





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