

President: Gerald Egan Vice-President: Alan Whitehouse

Harrogate Line's Double GOLD Award

By Mark Parry



Brian Dunsby and Christian Wolmar, President of Railfuture.

The Harrogate Line Supporters Group, one of our branch affiliates, has been given an award for the "Best Campaign" and its leader, Brian Dunsby was awarded "Best Campaigner" at the Railfuture Annual Awards held in Bristol on 7 November. Brian said, "The judges were most impressed by 200+ people involved in our Harrogate Line Supporters Group and the role of the Chamber in promoting enhanced rail services for the wider economic benefit - not simply a small group of rail enthusiasts trying to reopen a local line closed by Beeching! I was told by the Railfuture Director Roger Blake that we should blow the trumpet to show that local Rail Groups can have an impact." The Supporters Group was founded by the Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

Nina Smith, Chair of Railfuture in Yorkshire said that these awards were just reward for the skilful and tenacious campaigning by Brian Dunsby and the Harrogate Line Supporters group. Virgin's greatly enhanced East Coast Service from 2019 is testament to this successful campaigning. She added that the Department for Transport's Electrification Task Group has recommended the Harrogate Line as one of the north of England's top six lines needing early electrification, and it is imperative that the Secretary of State accepts this recommendation and announces a timescale for electrification. Virgin East Coast is to introduce a two hourly service between Harrogate and London in 2019.

Also the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Line, another of our affiliates, won the Award for best newsletter.

Our Next Branch Meeting is our Annual General Meeting & is an open event

13:00, Saturday 23 January 2016 (Branch meeting starts at 15:00)

**The Guest Speakers are to be Andrew Jones MP for Harrogate and David Horne
Managing Director of Virgin East Coast.**

A buffet lunch is available from 12:00, you need to book through Nina.

Cedar Court Hotel, Park Parade, Harrogate HG1 5AH.

See flyer sent with this newsletter for full details

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Chris Bell, Chair of the Don Valley Railway addressed the branch meeting in Sheffield on 26 September. The line in the Upper Don Valley is currently used by the steelworks, with one train a day, and the Group is campaigning to open it to passengers. The potential for this line as a passenger railway is enhanced by some of the Steelworks land being developed for housing and retail. A shuttle service, from Deepcar to Sheffield, is the preferred option, running every half hour and taking just 11 minutes.

Chris Bell, picture by Mark Parry

The Group is officially known as the “Don Valley Railway Ltd” and is a registered charity, company and campaign group. They have four options being considered:

- Tram train extension from Middlewood
- A new tram train route along the old Woodhead Route into central Sheffield
- A Light Rapid Transit Shuttle
- A Light Rapid Transit Stopping service

The Group claims their schemes will have the following advantages:

- Decrease journey times;
- Improve accessibility, sustainability and connectivity;
- Reduce air pollution and the carbon footprint for those in the Upper Don Valley;
- Reduce the public subsidy needed for public transport in the area;
- Facilitate an improved freight operation;
- Create tourist and leisure opportunities as Stocksbridge is close to the Peak District National Park;
- Their use of light rapid transit technology will help establish Sheffield as a centre for such technology along with the Rotherham tram train project;
- Involve the re-opening of Sheffield’s Victoria station for the Don Valley and other services.

Developing the Leeds Rail Network

by Mike Crowhurst

Readers may have noticed some rather interesting ideas floated by West and North Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce during August, - “**Connecting the Northern Powerhouse**”, about how to expand the rail network in and around Leeds to accommodate both HS2 and the growing demand for rail travel into the city, with or without electrification. Their ideas received coverage in *RAIL* 781, in the Yorkshire Post and elsewhere.

In outline their proposals consisted of:

- Widening the throat east of Leeds station to four tracks.
- Reopening the old viaduct approach route from the west for “Trans North” services.
- Upgrading (widening?) the present TransPennine route west to Huddersfield and east to connect with HS2 near Garforth (not quite as easy as it looks).
- A new line from Neville Hill to Woodlesford, freeing the present route for HS2.
- More terminal platforms on the north side, moving the car park further west.
- More through platforms on the south side (for HS2 and HS3 also known as “Trans North”).
- More cross-Leeds local services and cross-country high speed services *through* Leeds.
- Reopening lines to Otley, the Airport, and east of Leeds, with numerous new local stations.

This plan concentrates all high speed services on new platforms on the south side of the station with a grade separated junction at the end of the viaduct approach from the west, and does away with the proposed HS2 station at New Lane.

The plan has much to recommend it, starting with the integration of *both* high speed routes with the existing system and the **abandonment of New Lane**. Without New Lane, the footprint of the station would need to expand considerably, and the total passenger throughput likewise. The proposal to tackle the widening of the 2 track throat east of the station is brave but very useful if it can be done.

It is debatable whether they have the best arrangement for the various parts of Leeds station, with all high speed services on the south where considerable land take would be required. It is unclear if terminating high speed services are to use the new through platforms on the south – which is likely to overload them, or the new terminal platforms on the north, in which case the grade separated junction on the approaches is not necessary. Their figure 6 shows new platforms on the south as through platforms (which would take out the Hilton Hotel), while figure 1 shows them as east facing terminal bays. It is debatable whether cross-Leeds *high speed* services in the Cross-country corridor are either desirable or compatible with the presumed HS2 service patterns. Bringing the “Dark Arches” into use for passengers would be good, but since 2002 the emphasis has been on above track circulation rather than below. Whilst a new transport interchange off Sovereign Street on the south side would be nice, I’m not sure the site could now be freed up. East of Leeds the connecting curve at Garforth is constrained by proximity of the M1 motorway. Surprisingly there is no mention at all of the proposed **Parkway** station at Micklefield. Figure 5 shows one line serving both the Airport and Otley, which is impossible! I suspect they mean Yeadon.

The needs of **freight** traffic do not seem to have been fully taken on board. The main focus of freight activity in the Leeds area is around Stourton and Hunslet, yet that is exactly the corridor that they propose for HS2 access to Leeds. Mixing freight and high speed traffic is not on, so full segregation and quadrupling of the section would be essential. Most east-west freight in West Yorkshire uses the Calder Valley route via Wakefield Kirkgate, avoiding Leeds, while the main north-south flow is to and from Airedale, via Stourton, connecting with the east-west corridor at Altofts. The biggest conflict point is at the western approach to Leeds station, where the latter flow crosses all the passenger lines. A freight flyover was to have been built here in 2002 but was dropped to save money. The biggest single contribution to increasing capacity on the approaches to Leeds would be to build this flyover. Reopening the old viaduct (especially with the grade separated junction) might conflict with this. One gathers that High Speed services for Leeds will be entirely separate from those for York and Newcastle. To come off the high speed line into Leeds only to re-join it near Garforth would represent a considerable detour and time penalty. And the final approach to Leeds station from this line is on a considerable curve. So the idea of bringing together the through and terminating high speed services may in reality not be necessary anyway.

The proposers have however highlighted one key problem with the Leeds network, and have hit upon one very valuable idea for its improvement. The problem is the **imbalance of routes** approaching from the west (8) over the east (2). This severely constrains the opportunities for cross Leeds operation, leading to the predominance of west facing bay platforms (9) over through platforms (6) or east facing bays (2). The new idea is the use of the Lower Aire Valley (Cross Green) corridor for a **new approach route** into Leeds from the east via Neville Hill, in place of the existing route via Stourton for local services. But hurry! – this area is rapidly being developed mainly for industry.

Yet the opportunities this route would open up are not confined to the Woodlesford routes. For a start, a fast route bypassing the congested **East Leeds** line could use this approach, from Neville Hill, across the motorway near junction 45, then south of Temple Newsam Park and Garforth, north of Swillington and Kippax, re-joining the present lines to York *and Hull* at Micklefield. Here it could feed directly into the proposed **East Leeds / Elmet Parkway** station. This would allow upgraded TransPennine services, as well as more intensive local services and other improvements such as reopening the branch to **Scholes**, and the long mooted station at Osmondthorpe.

Take the idea further. As well as the lines from Woodlesford, one other line could be routed to the eastern approach – the **Wakefield Westgate** route. This is not as easy as it might have been a couple of decades ago, but it is still possible. It involves using part of the old Rothwell line, from the present route at Lingwell Gate to a point north of Howlet Cross, then continuing northward, possible in tunnel past the west of Rothwell, then west of motorway junction 44 at Stourton, over the River Aire and east of Skelton Grange power station to join with the other routes near Skelton Moor Farm. Stations at points such as Lofthouse, Carlton and Rothwell West are possible.

More importantly, capacity on the present line between Lingwell Gate and Leeds would become available for **high speed** services along with the present intercity ones. This would require a new connection from the main HS2 line at Altofts across to Lingwell gate, which is quite possible. (A connecting curve where HS2 crosses the Doncaster line near Crofton would allow some high speed trains to call at Wakefield but would not be suitable for

the main high speed Leeds route without widening through Wakefield). Widening most of the route from Lingwell Gate into Leeds is possible but may not be necessary. A call at the White Rose Centre might be an option. In reality either high speed route is doable, but this one crosses over the Huddersfield lines directly into the *north* side platforms already, without requiring the re-use of the viaduct line.

It would also mean that since no high speed branch into Leeds from Woodlesford is now needed, the **York high speed line** could avoid the sensitive Woodlesford area altogether, stay east of Swillington, join the East Leeds relief route north of Kippax instead of looping round to the north of Garforth, and feed into “Elmet Parkway” at Micklefield. If the expanded parkway station cannot be fitted in on the present site, re-routing the line to the north between the two parts of Micklefield is another option. Widening to Church Fenton might be needed, or perhaps better, a South Milford- Sherburn curve, giving these places extra Leeds – York trains.

West of Leeds, the TransPennine corridor requires further bypass sections to bring it up to the proposed HS3 standard (assuming an in-corridor solution is adopted). Again, part of an abandoned railway formation could be used, perhaps including the old viaduct approach, then part of the “Leeds New Line” alongside the M621 to Gildersome, continuing parallel to the A62 to re-join the Huddersfield line at Bradley. Short tunnels would be needed at Birstall, Gildersome and Liversedge. Online upgrades would have to suffice through Huddersfield and the Colne Valley, as the route must continue to serve that town. The disused Standedge Tunnel bore would be re-used, and a new cut off built from Uppermill to Medlock Vale bypassing Stalybridge and Ashton-under-Lyne to the north. Stalybridge and Dewsbury, would be left to semi-fast services, but Huddersfield would get all services. Fast services would need to use Victoria, as a connection to Piccadilly is difficult, other than via the Ordsall curve. If on the other hand an entirely new high speed corridor is preferred, linking Leeds, Manchester and *Sheffield Victoria*, with a delta junction somewhere north of Penistone, then the Leeds arm would miss Huddersfield, probably stay west of Barnsley and Wakefield and approach Leeds from the west – with presumably a longer separate York branch.

Back in Leeds, for more through services to operate, two things are needed at a minimum. First, **widen the eastern throat** to four tracks. Second, the present bay platforms 13 and 14 should be replaced by **two through platforms**, not just one as currently intended. (This splits the third island platform into two). The number of platforms then becomes: west bays 8, through 8, east bays 1. If the new platforms are of insufficient width, this could be rectified by doing away with the through road and advancing the face of platform 12. It is highly doubtful if adding further through lines on the south is possible or worth the cost involved, but new or extended terminal platforms on the north side (as the Chambers propose) are certainly possible.

Cross – Leeds local services could then be developed as follows, building on the existing Calderdale – East Leeds pattern. Re-opening the Scholes branch could enable the Huddersfield line locals to be extended across Leeds. That leaves the Aire, Wharfe and Harrogate lines to be linked to the Hallam, Pontefract and Wakefield lines. One problem arises: a lot of crossing movements are implied somewhere on the core section. Bearing in mind that these lines will also carry fast and classic TransPennine services and presumably still classic Cross Country Services, the need for further grade separation somewhere may become necessary. This might be possible either at the West End, at Marsh Lane or in the Neville Hill area.

Once virtually all local services become through services, the recently built west facing bays on the north side (numbers 1 to 6) become available for all terminating high speed services and the classic East Coast London services. These platforms might need some realigning and lengthening (number 1 is already a good length and could take a reverse face), and more platforms could be added this side, but significant expansion further north should not be necessary. The cost saved of such expansion, and of the New Lane station, would go some way to offsetting the cost of the new eastern approach lines. Whilst some cross Leeds electric services would be possible on completion of only present plans (Bradford Forster Square and Huddersfield to York and Selby), it would require extension of electrification to all other local lines including Caldervale, Harrogate and Hallam, for full cross Leeds opportunities. One other link which might free a few more paths through the station, would be to reinstate the **Thwaite Gate bridge** over the Aire for freight, providing a freight link between Neville Hill and Stourton, with possibly a full delta junction on the Hunslet/Stourton line.

Finally, one more benefit could be obtained for the City of Leeds: a **second station** in the City centre. Leeds and Bristol are largest cities in the UK with only one city centre station. This is part of the reason for the bad overcrowding in Leeds station. Two stations on the core link is the best solution for Leeds. We need a second station on the eastern edge of the business centre, and the widening of the throat would make this a far more practical proposition. The favoured site in the past has been next to the Minster and the Bus Station, but this is an awkward site on a viaduct with little space to spare and what there is will be needed for the extra tracks. Finding width even for four platforms here will be virtually impossible. A rather more practical option is further east, at **Marsh Lane**, where the line curves slightly, ample land is available for four or more platforms, and the line beyond is already four tracked. Admittedly it is not as well placed for the bus station and markets but it abuts the Quarry Hill

culture and media cluster, it is almost within walking distance of St. James's hospital. A station here, served by all local and regional services (not cross country) would give the east side of the centre a much needed boost, and help redress the imbalance with the prosperous western side. The Chambers propose only a local station, for a few local services.

The Chambers also suggest stations at Neville Hill and in the Lower Aire Valley. Most of the other stations suggested have been proposed before, and there are various options for new stations on the reopened Scholes branch.

To sum up, Leeds needs comprehensive development package comparable to Manchester's if the so-called Northern Powerhouse is to mean anything this side of the Pennines. The Plan I suggest would relieve overcrowding in Leeds station, remove the bottle neck east of the station, reroute three local lines into the east of the city, provide a second station for the centre at Marsh Lane, at least six new local stations (Osmondthorpe, Stanks, Scholes, Rothwell West, Calton, Lofthouse), make much better use of the Parkway station proposed at Micklefield, and lay foundations for high speed links both with the south and across the Pennines, properly integrated with the established network.

Woodlesford's Jam Tomorrow

by Carmel Harrison

The last straw was when the customer relations man from Northern Rail told me 'jam tomorrow' and thought that was alright.

It wasn't – in fact by the time he had responded to my three month old complaint I, and my fellow commuters from Woodlesford, had endured a decade of a deteriorating service that showed no sign of improvement. Now I had it from the horse's mouth we could look forward to no improvement.

The following day I could stand idle no longer. We arrived at the station in time to buy our tickets and watch helpless as our fellow commuters were left with us on the platform because there was only a single carriage for a busy rush hour train into Leeds - enough was enough.

Not only was the next train significantly delayed so was the following train. People missed connections and were obviously going to be late for work. It was made worse because it came at the end of a week of cancellations and delays in both directions on numerous routes and it wasn't even leaves on the line time of year.

When I eventually arrived at work I set up a facebook page for Woodlesford Train Users, posted some photos from that morning's poor service testifying to our treatment. The response has been magnificent with friends passing the page across to people they know commute and are at the mercy of the train. Complete strangers have followed and now we have a fledgling twitter page. @WDSRailUsers.

The service along the Lees/Sheffield/Knottingley line has been getting worse for a decade or more. First it was just late trains, then it was regular cancellations and now it is both of the above and dangerously crowded carriages. There was a time when it was quicker for me to run or cycle in to Leeds. It still probably is but I have too much to carry. The roads are even worse and the bus a nightmare.

The infrastructure is creaking with no commitment to improve. Northern Rail hide behind the five minute rule which doesn't count as a delayed train and the fact they aren't obliged to pay compensation unless the train is half an hour late. That and the fact commuters put up with poor service and appalling conditions.

No more from Woodlesford. We are planning a petition at the station and on line and will continue whatever the outcome of the franchise to continue lobbying for a better service. We have put up with poor service long enough – no more.

Re-open Askern Station

by Mark Parry

The Doncaster Free Press reported, on 27 October, that the Friends of Askern Station are campaigning to get their station re-opened. They handed a petition to Doncaster's elected Mayor Ros Jones. The Friends say the line is used mainly for freight. The Station opened in 1848 and survived for a hundred years. Doncaster Council identified Askern station as a possible re-opening back in 2008. It would serve a population of 6,000.



On 16 September 2015 members of Railfuture, Yorkshire, and also East Midlands, visited the Potter Logistics Distribution Centre in Barlby along with representatives of Selby and District Rail Users Group. Members were fascinated with the operation and witnessed the departure of the freight rail service to Felixstowe. They were also delighted to learn that the Potter Group recognize the many advantages of rail freight services and are keen to develop this business. Railfuture and Selby and District Rail Users Group have sent their thanks to Hayley Nicholson, Operations Manager at Potters, for organizing the visit. *Photo by Graham Collett.*

Rail User Groups affiliated to Railfuture within the Yorkshire Branch

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group	www.avrug.org.uk
Bradford Rail Users' Group	www.bradfordrail.com
Halifax and District Rail Action Group	
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group	Email: hlrug@live.co.uk
Harrogate Line Supporters' Group	www.harrogateline.org
Hope Valley	www.hopevalleyrailway.org.uk
Huddersfield, Penistone and Sheffield Rail Users' Association	Email: hpsrua@btinternet.com
Hull and East Riding Rail Users' Association	www.hullrailusers.co.uk
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group	www.lasrug.btck.co.uk
Minster Rail Campaign	www.minstersrail.net
Selby and District Rail Users' Group	http://www.selbytowncouncil.gov.uk/useful-links/selby-district-rail-users-group/
Settle-Carlisle Line, Friends of the	www.foscl.org.uk
Skipton-East Lancashire Railway Action Partnership	www.selrap.org.uk
Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Sustainable Transport Group	Email: nhrawsons@googlemail.com

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It's been an eventful period since the last issue of the Yorkshire Rail Campaigner. I have been side lined for several weeks after an accident whilst walking on the moors, having suffered a sprained ankle and a torn or pulled ligament or tendon in my leg. They are slowly on the mend.

By the time this issue is published, we will probably know who have been the successful bidders for the Northern and TransPennine franchises. I've no idea who it will be, but whoever it is, Railfuture looks forward to a long and fruitful relationship, in our roles as eyes and ears, and as a critical friend. We certainly hope that the winning bids will be ones that go significantly beyond the core specification in the invitation to tender.

Perhaps the biggest piece of news in this quarter has been the "unpausing" of the Huddersfield Line TransPennine and Midland Main Line electrification schemes. The good news is that some infrastructure improvements will now take place in advance of or in parallel, with the erecting of the masts and wires. The less good news is that the completion dates have been put back, with Sheffield expected to be wired up in 2023, and the Huddersfield Line electrics planned to start in December 2022, although it remains to be seen if this is achieved. The Secretary of State has said that electrification would take place under a unified plan which also includes infrastructure improvement; this wasn't necessarily the case before the pausing. However, the extent of improvements is not yet known and it is really important that these are radical, including four-tracking between Diggle and Mirfield. Perhaps the Hendy review, due before this issue is published, will give us a steer on this.

We don't know where these developments leave the implementation of the recommendations of the Electrification Task Force. These have not been accepted by government, but as its priority recommendations are an essential component of making our northern rail system fit for purpose, it is essential that passenger groups, local authorities and MPs pressure the Chancellor to allocate the necessary funding. It's also vital that the skills vacancies that are holding back electrification and other infrastructure work are addressed as a top priority by creating as many proper apprenticeships as are needed. The Chancellor appears fully committed to the Northern Powerhouse; he needs to ensure that the funding is available to make it a reality.

In September, Jeremy Corbyn was elected as leader of the Labour Party and that party has undergone a sea-change outside Parliament, with a large influx of new members. The party's conference has committed the party to renationalising the passenger railway, on an incremental basis as franchises expire. Whilst I sympathise with the emotion behind this policy shift, I don't think it addresses the key issues. We have ever-more overcrowded trains, at least at peak periods; high walk-on fares and season tickets; a lack of timetable coordination; and too many places with poor or non-existent services. Overcrowded trains in our region are the result of a shocking lack of investment by successive governments in both infrastructure and rolling stock, resulting from the view held from the 1960s until the about ten years ago that rail was yesterday's technology. High fares are the result of the Blair government deciding that passengers' share of railway income should progressively rise from around 50% of costs to 75%, a policy continued until the last election. This is a form of demand management that takes no account of the importance of modal shift from the private car as a necessary component of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as tackling air quality and road congestion. The view that those who don't use trains shouldn't subsidise those who do must be challenged. The fewer vehicles there are on the roads, the more room there is for those who really need to use them. Neither of these issues will necessarily be addressed by renationalisation; nor will renationalisation *per se* improve poor service patterns and bring the railway back to places that should never have lost it, including Wetherby, Ripon, the Spenn Valley, Pickering, and Otley, or the direct routes between Beverley and York, and Colne to Skipton. Indeed, whereas the last thirty years of British Rail were ones of route retrenchment, this century has seen new and reopened routes. These have been promoted by devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales, by the UK government in the case of the approved East-West link from Oxford to Milton Keynes, and by the private Chiltern Railways Train Operating Company in the case of the Oxford- London Marylebone route. The key point about all these is that they have happened without renationalisation, and thus it is perfectly possible for the UK government, private Train Operating Companies and, in the future, Rail North/Transport for the North to open new routes. Lack of timetable coordination would hopefully improve under a nationalised railway, but it isn't rocket science for the Department for Transport to demand better coordination by private Train Operating Companies. The same should apply to reducing the extraordinary number of legal documents that govern all relationships on the railway; is it not possible for Department for Transport lawyers to come up with wording in train operating company and Network Rail contracts that blanket covers the myriad of detail that currently requires separate contracts? Doing so would save many millions of pounds every year.

ADDENDUM: Since writing this, there have been new developments. On the positive side, RAIL 787 reports that Calder Valley infrastructure improvements from Rochdale westwards, will start in January 2016 and those east of Rochdale, in 2017-8, thus increasing capacity ahead of December 2018 timetable changes and the infrastructure work on the Huddersfield line. RAIL also reports that North Yorkshire County Council wants a new line built between Leeds and Northallerton, with the triple purposes of providing a diversionary route with extra capacity on the East Coast Main Line north of York; reconnecting Ripon to the rail network; and providing very fast direct services into Leeds, including from Harrogate in 15 minutes. On the negative side, it is reported that both the Department for Transport and the Department for Communities and Local Government's revenue budgets will be cut by a further 30% by 2030; this has worrying implications for rail fares, bus routes, bus routes, and the knock-on effects of less modal shift, more carbon emissions, worsening air quality, more social isolation and more road congestion.

Membership News:

Paul Colbeck – Membership Secretary

Welcome to: Mr Brian Dunsby of Harrogate, Mr Philip F Johnston of Skipton and Yorkshire Coast CRP

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or by contacting our membership secretary Paul Colbeck,

14 St Giles Way, Copmanthorpe, York, YO23 3XT,

Paul.colbeck@railfuture.org.uk

If you join online please email Paul to let him know.

Our next issue (**Yorkshire Rail Campaigner 32**) will be out in March 2016. If you would like to have your news included please email material, news and feedback to: Mark.Parry61@Virginmedia.com to arrive by **Saturday 6 February 2016**. Alternatively call or text 07941 642349.

Would you like your Yorkshire Rail Campaigner sent by email? It would save us money and you can enlarge it on your screen to read it more easily. You can always revert back to the post if you decide you don't like it.

Diary

- **12 December 2015:** Open day at Settle station. foscl.org.uk
- **13 December 2015:** National rail timetable change
- **23 January 2016:** Yorkshire Branch Annual General and open meeting at the Cedar Court Hotel, Harrogate. See the Flyer for full details and the front page.
- **12 November 2016:** Railfuture's Autumn Conference in Birmingham Toby Rackcliff of West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority has agreed to be one of the guest speakers. Senior representatives from local commerce, government and railways are being sought.

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