

# Communities O&S – June 2022

## Economic Development Update

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The following briefing note provides an update to the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on recent economic development activity in Warwickshire.

It covers work undertaken by County Council officers and partners across a range of services as well as other key pieces of relevant news and information.

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### HEADLINES/ KEY SUMMARY POINTS

- Macro-economic factors remain the key issue with inflation and energy costs continuing to rise and staff shortages continuing to dominate the headlines
- Business resilience appears to holding-up well however, and we continue to see strong demand for our Business Support and Employment and Skills programmes
- The Local Communities and Enterprise Fund (LCE), part of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) has now been launched to provide vital financial support to smaller and early-stage businesses and social enterprises
- Attached to this paper as an Appendix is a summary document outlining the delivery and investment planning process for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which replaces European Structural Funds as they come to an end in 2023

## 1. ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Inflation, wages, energy costs, raw materials and the cost of living are all continuing to rise. This is having an impact on businesses across Warwickshire, which is consequently being reflected to the end consumer. We are still hearing about staff shortages and some businesses are having to raise wages to provide a far more attractive package to support recruitment needs.

Despite the rise in costs, the consensus in terms of nature of enquiries on the ground is that businesses are still keen to invest in growth and continue with expansion plans. Many enquiries seeking funding for capital projects such as renovations/extensions for expansion; however, some unable to demonstrate growth, partly due to not having fully recovered from the pandemic. Where we are unable to support the business to pursue a Small Capital Grant or they are not eligible for Duplex, the Local Communities and Enterprise strand of the WRIF is proving to be a useful alternative option.

## 2. BUSINESS & ECONOMY SUPPORT

The **Local Communities and Enterprise Fund (LCE)** has now been launched. The new scheme is part of the Council's £140million Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF), created to aid the economic recovery of the county post-Covid. Delivered for the council by Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust (CWRT), the LCE will bring vital support to smaller and early phase businesses, and social enterprises. Its principal focus is micro businesses (fewer than 10 employees) and small businesses (fewer than 50), but applications will be welcome from medium-sized enterprises of up to 250 employees. <https://www.cwrt.uk.com/wrif-lce-fund>

The County Council has launched the 2022/ 2023 round of its **Small Capital Grants** programme. The latest round of Small Capital Grants (SCG) funding, which is worth £1 million after a recent Portfolio Holder decision to allocate additional funding to support the programme, has an increased intervention rate of 40%. There is a healthy pipeline of applications for the next Panel in July. Since 2015, the programme has awarded over £2 million to Warwickshire businesses as part of a £14 million package of finance, loans and grants for Warwickshire businesses. The SCG programme alone has already created more than 200 jobs around the county.

<https://business.warwickshire.gov.uk/may-2022/news-in-brief/new-1million-round-of-small-capital-grants-programme-is-launched>

A further 42 businesses completed the intensive support provided by the “**CW Business – Start, Grow and Scale**” programme during the first quarter of 2022 and a further eight individuals were supported to start their own business. This brings the total number of businesses supported since 2016 to almost 900. 385 new jobs have also been created and almost 450 Warwickshire residents helped to start their own business. The current phase of the programme (to June 2023) is funded by £1.8 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as well as WCC, University of Warwick Science Park, and the District and Borough Councils. The next payment from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Local Government will

bring the total grant received since January 2019 to over £1 million. For more information including details of the support available, visit: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/cwbsp](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/cwbsp).

WCC recently commissioned an external evaluation of the programme. The key findings were:

- 92% of businesses would recommend the programme.
- 87% of businesses say they achieved their goals upon completing the support programme.
- 49% of businesses rated the programme as 5 stars
- 44% of businesses reported increase in profit as a result of attending the programme.
- Over 75% of businesses reported new products or services launched as a result of the support.

A further evaluation is scheduled to take place in Spring 2023.

The new strand of this support is Project Warwickshire – a dedicated programme to help the county's small businesses in the tourism, leisure and hospitality sector. This project was discussed with the Business Minister Paul Scully who visited recently and met with WCC and the delivery staff for this project.

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/2910/paul-scully-business-minister-visits-stratford-and-find-out-more-about-project-warwickshire>

The first 11 businesses have now completed the support with 14 jobs safeguarded as a result of the support. Links to the case studies are below and one of the stories of Lucky Tails Alpaca farm (below) has also been picked up by BBC CW radio.

<https://business.warwickshire.gov.uk/may-2022/news-in-brief/tails-up-for-alpaca-farm-thanks-to-local-business-support>

The **Business Investment Growth Team** have received 79 enquiries since the 1<sup>st</sup> April and leads have been generated from the following:

- 16% from Growth Hub
- 6% from partners such as UWSP, CCC, and CUE
- 48% via WCC direct channels
- 6% from Economy & Skills Internal Teams including Invest in Warwickshire and the Skills Hub
- 24% from Mill Street

We are seeing a small number of enquiries from CIC's, charities and Social Enterprises, particularly on funding for premises, and to help find suitable premises. With these queries, we are able to assist with carrying out a property

search with the support of our Invest in Warwickshire team, but in terms of funding, this more difficult with many of them not having the funds required to cover the loan of the size needed to purchase land/building.

Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust's "**JumpStart**" project has now engaged 207 Warwickshire residents looking to start a business since April 2021 and subsequently created 28 new businesses following the support. The community-based project complements the county-wide start-up service delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce on behalf of WCC (part of the ERDF programme below) by focusing on underrepresented groups and hard-to-reach individuals in certain parts of the county. The £300,000 project is funded by £100,000 from WCC's Place Shaping & Economic Recovery Fund. JumpStart is expected to support 315 Warwickshire residents between April 2021 and March 2024.

<https://business.warwickshire.gov.uk/april-2022/news-in-brief/jumpstart-workshops-will-give-entrepreneurs-the-advice-they-need>

### 3. EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS SUPPORT

As the local economy continues to recover there are positive signs of business confidence and we have seen an increase in requests for **Business Skills Reviews** with a strong focus on recruitment and talent attraction. The national picture shows there are a high volume of vacancies and unemployment figures are low meaning businesses are struggling to fill vacancies. This causes issues for them maintaining current service levels and does not provide room for growth. Our **Fair Chance Employment Programme** has proven to be a valuable tool in helping businesses unlock alternative talent pools to help fill vacancies. The programme provides support to businesses in carving supported job roles by making reasonable adjustments to match available people to current opportunities. The programme currently offers support to a variety of disadvantaged groups such as those with SEND, armed forces resettlement, ex offenders and we are currently shaping a piece for the resettlement of refugees. This particular piece will see them welcomed to Warwickshire, introduced to living & and working in the UK, the assessment of skills & experience that this group of people bring to Warwickshire with the ambition to successfully match them to available job opportunities in their field of interest.

We continue to deliver the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) programme, **The Warwickshire Brighter Futures Programme** with the delivery window now being extended to December 2022. The programme is made up of 5 strands each with a different focus.

**Extra Ability**, Accelerate are about to start deliver to the second cohort, following the pattern of workshops with an employability focus and an end goal of a work placement.

**Break Away Camps**, the first camp took place over the easter weekend and was delivered by the Outward Bound Trust in Aberdovy. The week was a huge success and we are reflecting how we can shape future camps to be based in Warwickshire.

**Warwickshire Community Skills hubs**, Work has begun to shape delivery and look at how we can utilise the spaces. They have been used for the Extra Ability strand, by the WEST team and there is a plan for the space to be used to support DWP for their Commonwealth Games recruitment & for the Resettlement piece within the Fair Chance Employment Programme.

**Let's Go Rural**, The first tour has taken place in the south of the county and was delivered by WCG. The tour showcased their Moreton Morrell Campus, their land based engineering, farriery & agricultural offer stopping off at a rural hospitality setting for a talk on the career opportunities they offer. More tours are planned over the coming months to showcase other sectors across the county.

**Esports Futures**, Delivery of this strand is well under way and has been hugely popular. This strand is delivered by The University of Warwick and offers young people the opportunity to explore careers in the competitive gaming industry. There are future esports camps planned for the duration of the project.

On the whole the project has so far been a success and is having the desired impact in supporting young people in understanding employment opportunities available.

#### **4. INWARD INVESTMENT**

The Inward Investment Team took space at **UKREiiF – UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum** on May 17th-19th in Leeds, as Invest Coventry & Warwickshire. We were joined by Mark Ryder and Stuart Buckley of Warwickshire Property Development Group and colleagues from Coventry City Council. The show had a similar focus to MIPIM as Coventry & Warwickshire, and we linked up with Midlands Engine to co-ordinate activity and a common presence at the show. We hosted a networking facilitation event and a panel titled 'New Vibe Future High Streets – How Culture and Creativity Can Drive Investment and Transform Places'. We are following up on the leads and contacts made at the event.

Warwickshire is well known as a centre for automotive, but the current competition to locate the offices of the new Great British Railways (GBR) has provided a good opportunity for us to showcase our local strengths in the rail sector. A competition has been launched to identify the new site, with initial EOIs submitted by a March 16th deadline. We have issued a recent press release with supporters given the opportunity to register why they think this will be a good location, with 200 comments already collected. Nuneaton also featured in a [Rail Business Daily profile of some of the leading towns](#). We expect the shortlist to be announced by the end of May.

Invest in Coventry & Warwickshire will be exhibiting at a couple of key transport technology shows in the local area next month. [Rail Live 2022](#) takes place in Stratford District at the Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre, the major centre for rail test and development. The rail equivalent to the Farnborough Air Show takes place

as a mixture of outdoor and indoor exhibition and conferencing. Later in June we will be at the [Battery Cells and Systems Expo](#), promoting the local supply chain around battery and future mobility, with a presentation from Coventry City Council on the West Midlands Gigafactory.

## **APPENDIX 1: BUSINESS NEWS**

### **Major business headlines from around Warwickshire**

#### **Digital Creative sector**

##### **Video game company to move into Leamington's former House of Fraser store**

A growing video gaming company has signed-up to take two floors of office space at the former House of Fraser store in Leamington. Sumo Group is a Sheffield-based firm which provides creative and development services to the video games industry. It has pre-let 44,000 sq ft of space in Valeo Capital's conversion at the former House of Fraser department store in The Parade. The development of the former department store has been renamed Bedford Street Studios, which will provide 65,000 sq ft of office space in the heart of the town centre.

<https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/local-news/video-game-company-move-leamingtons-24003228>

##### **Yooka-Laylee developer Playtonic has opened a second office in Leamington Spa.**

The studio, formed by former staff of UK developer Rare, has recently attracted investment from Tencent, with plans to work on multiple projects -- including a sequel to its 2017 3D platformer. Although official announced in March, Playtonic have now officially moved into 1 Mill Street this month.

<https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2022-03-23-playtonic-games-opens-leamington-spa-studio>

##### **Kwalee continue to grow global brand**

Award-winning multiplatform games publisher Kwalee is opening its fourth global office, in Portugal. This development is the latest in what's been an incredible period of growth since 2020, during which Kwalee expanded from its Leamington Spa headquarters and opened international studios in India and, China. With remote team members globally, the expansion means that the company has employees across 18 countries.

<https://europeangaming.eu/portal/latest-news/2022/05/12/114395/kwalee-opens-new-office-in-portugal/>

##### **Channel 4 Collaboration to Boost Region's TV Production Sector**

Channel 4 and Create Central have formed a collaboration to support and grow the West Midlands' TV production sector, with funding available for companies in the region.

More4 the West Midlands is a £30,000 development fund open to all production companies based within the West Midlands Combined Authority area and/or one of the three West Midlands' Local Enterprise Partnership regions.

Three More4 programmes ideas will be selected for initial development and awarded £5,000 each, with one idea awarded an extra £15,000 funding for further development.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/channel-4-collaboration-to-boost-regions-tv-production-sector>

## **Automotive/ Future Mobility**

### **Britishvolt Partners With Prologis to Build £200m UK battery cell Scale-up Facilities**

Britishvolt has announced a partnership with UK logistics real estate operator Prologis to build a battery cell scale-up facilities in the West Midlands. The site will develop new cell formats and electro chemistries to create higher performance, production ready, batteries of the future whilst helping lower cell costs for EVs.

<https://www.autofutures.tv/2022/05/31/britishvolt-partners-with-prologis-to-build-200m-uk-battery-cell-scale-up-facilities/>

### **REE Automotive to build commercial EV plant in Local Area**

REE Automotive which develops rolling chassis for commercial electric vehicles (EVs), has announced a new assembly plant in the Coventry & Warwickshire area to supply customers in Europe. The Israeli-based startup said the highly-automated assembly plant it will have an annual production capacity of 10,000 EV chassis.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/ree-automotive-build-commercial-ev-plant-uks-coventry-2022-05-16/>

### **Former Ferrari boss Amedeo Felisa takes over as chief executive of Aston Martin Lagonda**

Aston Martin has appointed its third chief executive in three years, with Tobias Moers stepping down after only two years in charge. Moers will leave the board of the British

carmaker with immediate effect but will stay until the end of July to “support the leadership team with a smooth transition”, Aston Martin Lagonda announced. The former Ferrari boss Amedeo Felisa will replace him as chief executive. Felisa joined Aston Martin’s board as a non-executive director in July 2021.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/04/aston-martin-appoints-third-ceo-in-three-years-as-tobias-moers-steps-down>

### **Volta Truck Production Breaks Cover in Bedworth**

EV tech business Volta Trucks recently profiled its bespoke, in-bay build process for Design Verification prototypes. Developed in partnership with E-VO (E-PPL Vehicle Operations), in Bedworth, the process allows for speed and flexibility. A prototype built there was on show this week at the Commercial Vehicle Show at the NEC in Birmingham. Full build will take place overseas by Steyr, the Austrian contract build specialists who also build the Jaguar e-Pace and i-Pace, and some MINI models.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8NSgpodRVQ>

### **Jaguar Land Rover Appoints New Product Engineering Director**

Thomas Müller takes responsibility for the technical development of all new Jaguar and Land Rovers, including both hardware and software. He replaces Nick Rodgers who left in December after leading this role since 2015. His expertise in technology, agile leadership and digital capabilities will bring significant benefits to the efficient delivery of the next generation of modern luxury vehicles. He joins Jaguar Land Rover from the Volkswagen Group, where he held a variety of engineering leadership positions at Audi.

<https://www.jaguarlandrover.com/news/2022/04/thomas-muller-joins-jaguar-land-rover-executive-director-product-engineering#:~:text=Gaydon%2C%20UK%20%E2%80%93%20Monday%204th%20April,including%20both%20hardware%20and%20software.>

### **Warwickshire-headquartered dumper truck maker sees profits rise**

Dumper truck maker Thwaites, based near Leamington Spa, reported a turnover rise of almost £30m according to the latest financial year, increasing its profits by £3.6m in the process. Thwaites designs and makes a range of trucks which can take loads of up to ten tonnes.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/turnover-up-by-almost-30m-at-dumper-truck-maker>

## **Two Warwickshire electrical technology firms awarded development funds**

Nuneaton company Viritech Ltd, which specialises in the deployment of hydrogen propulsion in vehicles, and Warwick-based SysElek are among 13 national firms that have been awarded £135,000 each from Coventry's Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC) to help in the race to decarbonise transport.

[https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2063931-businesses-awarded-1.8m-for-electric-vehicle-technology?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=WestMidlands\\_17th\\_May\\_2022\\_Daily](https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2063931-businesses-awarded-1.8m-for-electric-vehicle-technology?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WestMidlands_17th_May_2022_Daily)

## **Penso Power, Luminous Energy secure approval for UK battery storage project**

Penso Power Ltd. and Luminous Energy secured full planning permission for a 350-MW battery storage development in North Warwickshire, U.K. The companies have said that the approved design for the Hams Hall project allows the deployment of more than 1,750 MWh of battery storage, which will support the U.K. electricity system.

<https://www.energy-storage.news/penso-power-and-luminous-energy-get-green-light-for-five-hour-bess-project-in-uk/>

## **Rotala Acquires Historic Henley-in-Arden Bus Company**

Rotala has acquired an operator of commercial and contracted bus services in Warwickshire and the southern West Midlands. The Birmingham-headquartered company has snapped up Johnsons (Henley) Ltd's entire bus business and 20-strong fleet. The business being acquired currently trades under the 'Excelbus' brand. Rotala estimates that the assets being purchased have annual revenues of approximately £3.5m.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/rotala-acquires-west-midlands-bus-operator>

## **World's first hub for flying taxis opens in Coventry**

Air-One® developed by Urban-Air Port® and supported by Supernal is a fully-operational hub for electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) vehicles and is

located at Westminster Car Park, in the centre of Coventry (CV1 3fZ). The technology is set to provide a blueprint for more than 200 vertiports planned worldwide by Urban-Air Port® over the next five years to meet growing demand. The firm says the advanced air mobility (AAM) market is set to take off, with forecasted growth of 9% annually to reach \$1 trillion within the next two decades.

[https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2063287-world%e2%80%99s-first-hub-for-flying-taxis-has-opened-in-coventry?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=WestMidlands\\_27th\\_Apr\\_2022\\_Daily](https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2063287-world%e2%80%99s-first-hub-for-flying-taxis-has-opened-in-coventry?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WestMidlands_27th_Apr_2022_Daily)

## **Other business news**

### **Coventry University signals international ambitions**

Coventry University is set to establish an education institution in China, in collaboration with the Communication University of China, as it looks to build on its international success.

The project is currently in the development and construction stage alongside a number of other Chinese and foreign universities. Coventry University was recently awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise in the category of International Trade.

<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/news/2022/new-education-institution-approved-in-china/>

### **Development of commercial units to bring 100 jobs to Southam**

Nine new business commercial units are set to boost the Warwickshire town of Southam. The 42,000 sq ft development at Kineton Road Industrial estate has been brought forward by the Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG). The land has been unused for a number of years and will be particularly suited to small to medium sized enterprises, especially start-ups or expansions.

[https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2063678-development-of-commercial-units-to-bring-100-jobs?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=WestMidlands\\_11th\\_May\\_2022\\_Property](https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/westmidlands/news/2063678-development-of-commercial-units-to-bring-100-jobs?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WestMidlands_11th_May_2022_Property)

### **New hotel near Warwick Castle given the go ahead**

An application proposing the construction of a new 60-bed hotel near the site of Warwick Castle has been given the green light. Plans also include an extension to

the Knight's Village restaurant to provide additional covers and decked terraces for outdoor dining. The project is expected to create 29 jobs upon completion, along with 123 vacancies during the construction phase.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/green-light-for-hotel-near-warwick-castle>

# APPENDIX 1: UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND SUMMARY

## Overview

The UK Government announced the full prospectus outlining the delivery and investment planning process for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2022. This summary provides an update for WCC and Warwickshire partners.

**Type of fund:** Areas receive Conditional allocations (subject to approval)

**Deadline:** 30 June 2022 - 1 August 2022

**Submission Requirement:** Areas prepare Local Investment Plans

**Funding Mix:** Revenue & Capital (ratios determined via the Local Investment Plans)

**Delivery:** 2022/23 to 2024/25 (first allocations expected to be paid from October 2022)

## UKSPF across Warwickshire

The UK Government have made conditional funding allocations based upon a defined methodology: 70% per head of population and 30% which is a needs-based index (similar to the Community Renewal Fund priority areas). The table below summarises the total amounts by allocation:

Lead Local Authority	Conditional Allocation	Activity Notes
North Warwickshire	£1,956,601	Core UKSPF delivery
Nuneaton and Bedworth	£4,028,173	Core UKSPF delivery
Rugby	£3,052,921	Core UKSPF delivery
Stratford-on-Avon	£3,596,031	Core UKSPF delivery
Warwick	£3,484,412	Core UKSPF delivery
Warwickshire County Council	£2,543,360	Multiply only
<b>Total</b>	<b>£18,661,498</b>	

The West Midlands Combined Authority (including Coventry) has a separate allocation of £105 million. When the Warwickshire allocation is directly compared with the current European Structural Funds allocation – UKSPF will result in a relative funding reduction of approximately a third. Lead local authorities are required to submit an investment plan to access allocations.

Match funding is not expressly required as part of UKSPF. However, it is noted that partners should demonstrate value for money against output delivery and are encouraged to consider providing match funding. If match funding can be leveraged, this is likely to create stronger, more cohesive bids which achieve greater outputs. In such cases where value for money can be demonstrated, programmes are likely to score highly.

## Developing Proposals – Investment Plan

Local partners are invited to submit investment plans which deliver across the four priorities of:

- 1) Community and Place,
- 2) Supporting Local Business,
- 3) People and Skills
- 4) Multiply (ringfenced numeracy provision)

Investment plans for priorities 1 to 3 are due for submission between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 with Multiply being asked to submit plans on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Local partners are strongly encouraged to work in partnership including engaging with current deliverers. To achieve this, lead local authorities are tasked to create **local partnership groups**. This will be a core component of administering the fund locally, identifying strategic fit and reducing conflicts of interest. The Government will require partners to commit to output delivery and produce an evidence-based approach for schemes. A total of £20,000 will be available for each lead local authority to produce the investment plan.

### Actions and Partnership Working

Warwickshire County Council is working and engaging the District & Borough Councils to provide strategic support with the preparation of the five local investment plans for the UKSPF funding. This includes economic intelligence, strategic input, technical / co-ordination assistance upon request, and sharing lessons learnt from current delivery which is contracted under EU & other funded programmes. A majority of the European funded programmes are due to end in March 2023 and the reallocation of funding as part of UKSPF could result in a cessation of previous activities.

Lead local authorities are encouraged to work with other authorities (district, county or unitary councils where relevant) to agree and commission people and skills activity, or business support activity over a larger scale which is representative of the full local labour market or business base. Working collaboratively and sharing resources will be critical to ensuring output delivery whilst maintaining value for money despite the real term reduction of funding (circa 30% when compared with previous EU funded packages).

WCC is keen to engage local partners in the development of plans. In the Warwickshire County Council led Multiply funding allocation, the County has built in points of engagement with partners as part of the investment planning process. Further detail on Multiply, the fourth strand of UKSPF has been outlined below.

### Multiply Investment Priority

The Multiply strands of delivery and sign-off will be assessed by the Department for Education and WCC is tasked with preparing the investment plan for submission. Multiply focuses on improving adult numeracy and activities under Multiply will be complementary to activities as part of the wider funding landscape. This will ensure alignment of delivery across UKSPF with due regard to the future People & Skills provision.

### The role of MPs

Local MPs will play an important role across the UKSPF plan development process – advising, reviewing, and supporting the investment plan prior to UK Government sign-off. Sufficient time must be committed to engaging MPs through the preparation of investment plans.

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