

HOUSING

TORY LANDLORDS' DIRTY TRICKS

In March, senior Conservatives held private talks with big landlords about how to thwart the government's renters' rights bill, including launching a legal challenge under human rights law and delaying it with repeated rounds of Lords amendments.

The campaign group Acorn, said: *"There is a coordinated attempt by landlords and their supporters within the Lords to frustrate the progress of the renters' rights bill. Unelected and unaccountable Tory peers are using underhand tactics to deliberately delay this vital legislation even more – legislation that many of them supported in its previous guise under the last government."*

Polly Neate, the Chief Executive of Shelter, said: *"England's 11 million private renters have been waiting years for genuine security and safety in their homes. With reform finally on the horizon, it's utterly disgraceful that a handful of self-interested peers are resorting to cynical delay tactics designed to slow the progress of the renters' rights bill to a crawl."*

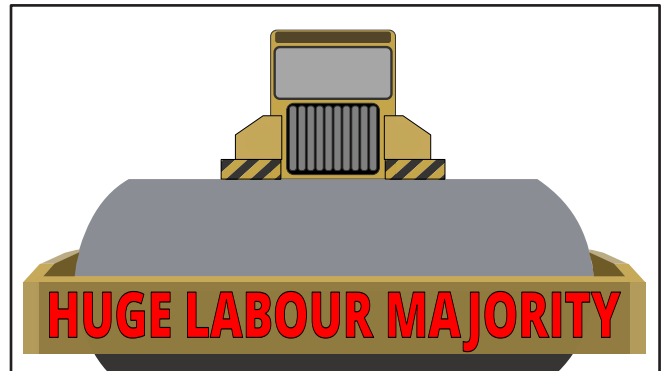
At the heart of Labour's renters' rights package is a ban on no-fault evictions, due to come into force as soon as the bill receives royal assent.

Other measures include enacting "Awaab's law" to force landlords to do essential repairs within fixed time periods.

Michael Gove tabled similar proposals when he was Tory housing secretary, but his bill failed to pass before the election was called. Since then Kemi Badenoch has hardened her party's stance against such reforms.

Jane Scott, the shadow housing minister, has said she will do everything she can to force debate on multiple amendments as a way of delaying the bill, saying **she thought she could hold it up until the autumn at least.**

Not all of the property groups represented were comfortable with the tone of the meeting. Some of those present complained that Scott had sought help finding enough statistical evidence to say landlords were leaving the market due to the bill.



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MINISTER SPEAKS TO LHG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Keynote Speaker: Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning

Matthew laid out the scale of the housing crisis facing the United Kingdom, describing a failure to build homes of all tenures – especially socially rented homes - over decades.

He focused particularly on the dire inheritance passed down by the last Conservative government, whose failure to invest means that only 110-130,000 affordable homes are likely to be built this year, against the Government's target of 180,000.

However, he reported positive progress on the Government's housing agenda since it took power in July 2024.

He stated that the Government had either completed or made progress on every one of the housing commitments in its manifesto, from the overhaul of the planning system laid out in December's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to an independent expert New Towns taskforce, which will report back in the summer.

He also reported proactive measures to build more affordable housing, to tackle the scourge of temporary accommodation, to give councils more certainty over funding, to enhance the rights of private renters, to protect leaseholders and make commonhold the default tenure, and to streamline planning approvals.

In the Q&A, Matthew was challenged on whether the Government should have considered suspending the Right to Buy as a means of preserving the social housing stock.

Matthew argued that this would have been legislatively challenging and defended the right of long-term council tenants to buy their homes at a reasonable discount, provided that this stock be replaced by new affordable homes.

He argued that the Government had limited the net loss of affordable homes by maintaining the discount at a reasonable level.

He was also asked how the Government could further support local authorities to deliver housing, in the context of budgetary constraints. Matthew said that the Government was committed to trying to improve the financial headroom of local authorities to build, acknowledging that councils would need to play a bigger role for the target of 1.5 million new homes to be met.

Members also asked Matthew whether proposed reforms to the planning system went far enough, and what further measures it could

take to reduce the length of time between the granting of planning permission and getting *spades in the ground*.

Matthew spoke of providing for mandatory planning training for councillors, transferring certain decisions to the hands of council officers, oversupplying planning consents into the system, and – where necessary – using ministerial intervention powers to override obstructionist local plans set by local authorities.

In addition, Matthew was asked about how the Government could support regions with unique housing

concerns such as rural areas and old mining towns. It was put to him that rural areas do not always have the capacity or need for intensive building programmes, and that candidates in old mining towns would benefit from more top-lines from the Government on how it was addressing their housing needs.

Matthew responded that all areas of the country, including rural ones, would need to play their part to meet the 1.5 million target and solve the housing crisis. He stated that the Government had proactively publicised its ambitious housing agenda, but agreed to speak to the Party to see if it could help produce



campaigning material for candidates. He also referenced the important role of organisations like LHG in producing briefings for candidates during election time.

In the final round of questions, Matthew was asked about how the Government could relieve the competing pressures placed on Housing Association boards; on whether Homes England could be brought into the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; and how the Government was supporting first-time buyers.

Matthew responded that Housing Associations did need to remediate, build more and decarbonise. He said the Government hoped to alleviate pressures on Housing Associations through local authority funding settlements, retrofitting, and estate regeneration.

He also confirmed that the Government did not plan to bring Homes England into the Ministry but hoped it might be revamped with a new focus on place-based development. Regarding first-time buyers, Matthew said that the Government was developing policy on its manifesto commitments for a mortgage-guarantee scheme and providing for first-dibs for first-time buyers.

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING IN WALES

Whilst places as diverse as New York, Scandinavia and Vancouver have substantial co-operative housing the same is not true of Wales and the rest of Britain. There are strong co-operative housing sectors in Sweden, Norway, Canada, Austria, and Turkey.

In Sweden for example, two large co-operative organisations provide over 750,000 homes which equates to around 18% of the total population of the country living in co-operative housing. In Canada, which began developing housing co-operatives in the early 1970's, there are now over 400,000 people living in Co-operative homes.

There have been major changes since devolution, Merthyr Valley Homes which took control of the former council housing stock then tenants voted to create the first tenant and employee mutual housing association.

Already in Wales the co-operative housing model has helped develop housing including Dôl Llys Hall situated outside Llanidloes and Home Farm Village in Cardiff where forty-one social rented homes were completed in 2015.

With funding from the Nationwide Foundation and the Welsh Government Cwmpas the communities creating homes programme is offering free comprehensive support tailored to each housing scheme.

The project is expected to lead to a thriving co-operative and community led housing sector in Wales which is desperately needed. The Wales Co-operative Centre has developed a strategy to maximise the impact of co-operative housing in Wales.

Working with the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, the Welsh Government and other partners, the strategy aims to scale up co-operative housing with more schemes and more people benefiting from them.

Mike Hedges, Member of Senedd Cymru



**Mike Hedges, Member of
Senedd Cymru**

WHY WE NEED HOUSING INVESTMENT NOW

By Margaret Mullane, MP for Dagenham and Rainham

There are times when you have to stand back and wonder how we got to where we are today. I am thinking specifically about public spending on housing in Britain. Housing Benefit costs are now at record levels with expenditure in 2025/26 estimated to exceed £35 billion.

In the 1970s, between 6% and 10% of government housing spend went on Housing Benefit (HB) and Mortgage Tax Relief with over 90% of spending being put into either the building of new homes or for refurbishing the housing stock. Recent figures suggest that this has reversed and that 90% plus of the available funding now goes towards Housing Benefit.

This drift started in the 1980s when grants to local authorities to build new housing were axed, combined with the sale of council housing. By 1986, only 33% of funding went to the supply of new housing while 67% went to Housing Benefit. There was a similar trend across Europe at this time, but it was much more significant in the UK. It was part of the 1980s 'stand on your own feet' approach.

Alongside this, there has been the fall in the percentage of home ownership. From a peak of 71% it fell to 65% in the 2010s and recent

research shows home ownership to be even lower in London, estimated to be around 49%.

Part of the reason for this is that around 40% of the council housing previously sold off is now privately rented.

It will come as no shock to find that private renting has filled the vacuum created by the fall in home ownership and the reduced availability of council housing at traditional social rents. This has been the major reason for the increase in Housing Benefit costs. Market rents can easily now be three to

four times that of social rent levels. Even with the capping of Housing Benefit payments introduced under Cameron, the upward cost of rents has continued, and with it, the cost of Housing Benefit.

Furthermore, it has to be said, that so called 'affordable' homes at 80% of market rent provide little in terms of a solution, primarily because people in constituencies like mine at Dagenham and Rainham, simply can't afford to live in them without the support of Housing Benefit.

Another future is possible. A future where traditional social rents form the bedrock of our housing strategy is a future with a significantly lower welfare bill where communities can



WHY WE NEED HOUSING INVESTMENT NOW (continued)

thrive. Each new social rent home could save the government between £500 and £1,000 per month which would otherwise go to private landlords. However, this does demand an initial increase in capital investment in the affordable housing programme, but over time it will produce huge revenue savings.

The Government intention to build 1.5 million homes in this parliament is a real ray of hope towards this, but just imagine the savings that could accrue if this supply-side housing investment was to increase to an even higher level, which many forecasts suggest will be needed if we are to make a dent in waiting lists.

I am not presenting this position simply as a route to government savings, it is fundamental to my values as a Labour MP. Social rents deliver far reaching benefits such as the community stability which comes with providing secure tenancies, economic growth where families have more disposable income, and all

research shows that this leads to a healthier population – saving the NHS money. Overcrowding is reduced, giving children better chances in education, and even more money is saved by reducing the spend on hostels and temporary accommodation which is currently crippling local authorities across the country.

There's also a wider economic benefit, on top of these positive outcomes, from shifting the balance of housing spend towards bricks and mortar investment. Boosting the construction industry generates economic growth, produces well paid jobs as well as greater tax revenues.

When we look at the problems facing our society, or consider the economy, when we think about health or wellbeing or family stability, all roads lead back to the housing question. And the answer is traditional social rent.

ONLY 1 IN 40 PRIVATE RENTED HOMES ARE AFFORDABLE

People on housing benefit could only afford one in 40 private rented homes in England.

Housing benefit rates will be locked until 2026, affecting 5.7 million households on low income who rely on it to cover their rent.

The homelessness charity Crisis and the campaign group Health Equals expect even more people to be pushed into rent arrears and homelessness as the freeze on housing benefit takes effect.

In the year to February 2025, average rent in England rose to £1,381 a month. Meanwhile, 126,040 household groups in England now live in temporary accommodation. This includes more than 164,000 children – the highest numbers on record.

Health Equals said: "When people are forced to move house, sofa surf, live in temporary accommodation or cold, mouldy and overcrowded conditions, their health and well-being suffers. In the UK, thousands of lives are already being cut short by up to 16 years by factors like poor quality and unaffordable housing."

MIGRATION - WHAT EFFECT ON HOUSING DEMAND?

Just as we were putting the finishing touches to the *UK Housing Review 2025*, new population projections came out. Over the next ten years, they projected the UK population to increase by almost five million people. Furthermore, with births and deaths expected to be in balance, as the chart from the *Review* shows, all of this increase results from net migration. This peaked at 906,000 in the year ending June, 2023, but is now falling and is projected to level out at 340,000 annually.

How will this affect housing demand? As the *Review* points out, one key question is how many new households are likely to form, and we still await official projections based on recent migration figures.

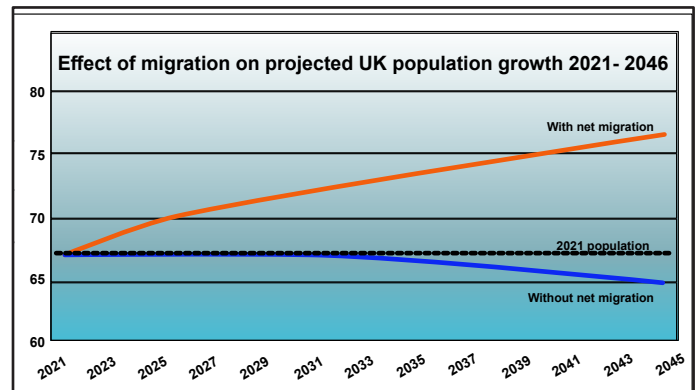
But a calculation by economist Ian Mulheirn suggests that current output of new homes in England is only a little below the required level, and indeed it will be exceeded if Labour's target of building 1.5 million homes in five years is met. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, new needs are also close to being met.

The problem, of course, is that new homes are required not only for new needs, but to address the backlog of old needs. The *Review* points out that 'core homelessness' in England (which includes everyone living in insecure accommodation) has reached over 240,000 households and is rising again, after a temporary halt during the pandemic. So the longstanding projection by Glen Bramley that in England we need to build as many as 340,000 homes annually, revisited in last year's *Review*, still stands.

Another key question is what impact higher migration has on demand for social housing. This is much less easy to project, as the 2021 Census showed that – even in the case of migrants who have been here for a decade – well over half are still in the private rented sector. In the long run, of course, migrants gain permanent residency and become eligible for social housing.

However, analysis of Census figures by the [Migration Observatory](#) shows that, while 17 per cent of all households in England and Wales are non-UK born, the proportion in social housing is slightly lower, at 14 per cent. In London, where 41 per cent of households are classified as non-UK born, they occupy one-third of social housing, also lower than might be expected.

According to the 2021 Census, just seven per cent of social tenants in England and Wales had a non-UK passport. These figures give the lie to recent [social media claims](#) that (especially in London) migrants are disproportionately granted social housing tenancies.



In reality, migrants who have been here for 20 years or more have slightly higher home ownership rates than the UK average. So this raises a different question – does migration push up house prices? The evidence is mixed and far from clear, and much of it comes from studies in other countries. *The Economist* [recently concluded](#) that the overall impact of migrants on property prices is small. In industrialised countries, the share of the population that is foreign-born rose from nine per cent in 2013 to 11 per cent in 2023.

Evidence suggests that such a rise will have lifted prices by around four per cent. In fact, real house prices have risen by 39 per cent, indicating that other factors play a much bigger role.

What conclusions do we draw? Migration is known to have economic advantages, especially where migrants are skilled and in higher-paid jobs. The UK's population would decline without migration, and housing-related jobs like construction and social care would see even bigger labour shortages. So, yes, migrants need accommodation, but their impact on the UK's housing system is limited. Housing shortages would not disappear if migration were halted tomorrow.

By John Perry, Chartered Institute of Housing

Originally published in Housing Today, reprinted here with thanks.

GROWING LHG ACTIVITY IN SOUTH-EAST

By Jacky Peacock

As in London, a seemingly affluent region can often mask the housing crisis within.

But when I moved to East Sussex, and contemplated a South-East LHG branch, its size and shape were daunting. Then I learnt that we could start as a local 'special interest group', and canvassed support in my local Lewes District. An online meeting of five interested members in January this year agreed to establish a group with monthly meetings in our Constituency Office.

Under the Lib-Dems, Lewes lost control of housing development, ending up in Special Measures, so a priority was to meet the Labour Councillor for Planning Policy in the current Lab/Green administration. We are now on the map as a critical friend as we contribute to a new Local Plan and the planning issues to be tackled right now.

Having addressed two local Branch meetings, membership is growing, and the CLP has affiliated to LHG.

Our April meeting will look at our local Tenants and Residents Associations and offer to attend their meetings to listen to their concerns and how we may be able to help. As one of the Priority Devolution areas, local elections are postponed to May 2026 which gives us a year to raise awareness of Labour's housing policies and demonstrate



Jacky Peacock, OBE

the practical difference Labour can make, nationally as well as locally.

After just three months, I'm convinced that this is a great direction for LHG to take and would be happy to talk to any LHG members wanting to consider a local LHG in their patch.

Jacky Peacock, OBE
Lewes CLP

jacky.peacock@outlook.com

100 YEAR WAITING LIST FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

The National Housing Federation (NHF), Crisis and Shelter found that in 32 local authority areas across England report that the wait for a home with at least three bedrooms is now longer than 18 years – the length of a whole childhood. The wait for family-size social housing has risen to more than 100 years in parts of England in what charities have condemned as a national scandal.

Three London councils have waiting lists exceeding 100 years, while 9 local authorities have waiting lists of more than 50 years.

More than 1.3 million families are waiting for social homes in England, including a record number of 164,040 children.

A housing ministry spokesperson said: "These findings highlight the scale and devastating impact of the social housing crisis we've inherited.

"We're taking urgent action to fix this through... injecting £2bn to help deliver the biggest boost in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, investing in homelessness services, and bringing forward overdue reforms to the right to buy scheme that will protect the stock of existing social housing."

COMMONHOLD - FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW

The 5.3 million leaseholders in England and Wales will welcome the recent publication of the Government's Commonhold White Paper "*The Proposed new commonhold model for home-ownership in England and Wales March 2025 CP 1270*". The implementation of commonhold will bring England and Wales into line with the rest of the English-speaking world.

Commonhold is a form of freehold tenure invented by the 2002 Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act. The commonhold association holds the freehold. All residents have a share in the association. They decide how the block is to be run. There is no third-party involvement. Unlike leases which only exist for a particular period, commonhold lasts for ever. A commonhold community statement defines the legal relationship between the association and the residents.

The leasehold tenure originated from the Norman conquest. If the lease runs out, the property reverts to the freeholder. It is feudal in nature. Leaseholders pay ground rent for nothing in return. Many leaseholders believe that their freeholder regards them as "cash cows".

Labour tried to abolish the leasehold system in 2002. There was too much opposition from landed interests with over 2000 amendments from the House of Lords. It was made too hard for leaseholders in blocks to convert to commonhold. Outside of Parliament leaseholders were not organised.

The White paper repeats Labour's long-standing policy to replace the leasehold system with commonhold. However, despite a strong pre-election commitment to abolish leases completely, the document is not yet fully convinced that this should apply to existing leases. It proposes that commonhold should be the norm for new flats only. If leasehold reform is to become two-tiered, this would be a grave political mistake. Over 5 million leasehold voters would not look kindly on a political party that failed to deliver on introducing commonhold on two occasions.

Only a handful of commonhold developments were created by the 2002 Act. In Wales the only commonhold site consists of 15 freehold houses with shared facilities such as a garden.

Look up [Grove Court Mews in Pembrokeshire](#). On the [Isle of Sheppey in Kent](#) there is a commonhold association for 30 mobile homes. The previous owner gifted the freehold to the site residents. For more details check out Commonhold on [What do they Know](#). The White paper's definition of commonhold fails to mention freehold houses with shared facilities. The relevant civil servants need to check out the [leasehold advisory service website](#).

The introduction of commonhold for small estates of freehold houses may partly address the [fleecehold scandal](#). Developers charge home owners on estates where the roads and public area are not adopted by local councils. The previous Government gave such home owners the right to challenge these charges in court. A better solution would be for the public areas to be adopted by the council and for a commonhold association to be set up to manage the communal areas.

Alistair Strathern the Labour MP for Hitchen introduced a 10 ten rule bill on [housing estates](#) in March 2025. This bill will go nowhere without Government support. The Competition and Market Authority has investigated this issue after [complaints](#). However, the Government's response is very lukewarm on the need for reform in view of the need to build 1.5 million new homes.

The Government has [other policies](#) to help leaseholders. It is now easier to set up right to manage companies whereby leaseholders effectively take over the management of their block from the freeholder. A group of Labour MPs are campaigning for the [regulation of property agents](#) on which the Government has yet to determine their policy.

A housing tenure that has feudal origins should have no place in a modern society. When the draft bill is published later this year, hopefully the Government will ensure that the commonhold system can be comprehensively implemented. If you are interested in leasehold reform, please get in touch with the LHG working group via Joss Harrison at jossharrison98@gmail.com.

By Dermot McKibbin

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

Building more good-quality homes and tackling homelessness are two central priorities for this Labour Government. They are central to achieving their missions to spread opportunity and boost economic growth. After 14 years of Conservatives, now is an important moment in time where we can really make progress on housing policy – and so much more adjacent to the housing space – which is why I was delighted to be elected as the new Chair of the Labour Housing Group in March.

It's a privilege to take over Cllr John Cotton after his long and successful tenure as Chair. I thank him for his service. And as Leader of Birmingham City Council – England's largest authority – he will continue to play an important part in helping this Labour Government rebuild the country.

It's an exciting time for Labour Housing Group too. We are at the early planning stages for Labour Conference, but it's set to be our largest number of events yet. Our Redbrick Blog is going from strength to strength. And there is lots of day-to-day work we have in the pipeline to make sure that we are in the best position to help Labour achieve its housing ambitions – and to encourage Labour to go further where necessary. We will be a constructive friend and build on our track record of collaboration.

Given the moment we are in, now is the time to get more involved in the Labour Housing Group. I look forward to working with you all over the coming 12 months.

Best wishes, Jack Shaw

EXECUTIVE REPORT

The last Executive Committee meeting marked a turning point for Labour Housing Group, as our Chair, Cllr John Cotton opted to step down from his role. Executive Committee member Jack Shaw was unanimously elected by the Committee as his successor. There were a few role reshuffles within the Committee alongside the Chair's changing of hands, listed in full in this newsletter.

Jack has big plans for LHG, which you can read about in his section of the newsletter, where he introduces himself to LHG members.

The LHG Exec are working on several new initiatives, including the creation of an award to mark LHG's late supporter, Nicky Gavron. Further details of this, including how members may be able to get involved, will be provided in due course. We are also working on our plans for the Labour Party Conference, where we have several exciting events in the pipeline, so do make sure to come along if you are heading up to Liverpool this year!

We were so grateful to all members who came to our Policy Day in Birmingham last November, and enjoyed hearing all of your contributions and thoughts on planning policy. At the last Exec meeting we agreed to begin planning the next Policy Day, due to take place in the Autumn, and will publish details of this shortly so you can save the date.



By Sarina Kiayani

LHG Executive 2025-26

Jack Shaw – Barking CLP
(Chair)

Sem Moema – Hackney
North and Stoke Newington
CLP (Vice-chair)

Alison Inman – Colchester
CLP (Vice-chair)

Sheila Spencer –
Newcastle North CLP
(Secretary)

Sarina Kiayani – South
West Hertfordshire CLP
(Assistant Secretary and
Newsletter Editor)

Ross Houston – Finchley &
Golders Green CLP
(Treasurer)

Heather Johnson –
Hampstead & Kilburn CLP
(Membership Secretary)

Andy Bates – Bermondsey
& Old Southwark CLP
(Policy Officer and Speaker
Liaison)

John Cotton – Sutton
Coldfield CLP (Local
Government Liaison)

Issy Waite – Hampstead &
Highgate CLP (Social Media
and Communications lead)

Alex Toal – Tottenham CLP
(Red Brick editor)

Adam Allnutt – Poplar and
Limehouse CLP (Events
Officer)

Marc Harris – Hampstead
and Kilburn CLP (Branches
Liaison and Socialist Society
Executive Rep)

Asma Islam – Poplar and
Limehouse CLP
(Parliamentary Liaison)

Chris Carter – Newport
West and Islwyn CLP
(Devolved Nations Liaison)

Chris Worrall – Poplar &
Limehouse CLP

OUR FRONT BENCH TEAM



Rt Hon Angela Rayner
MP Secretary of
State and Deputy
Prime Minister



Jim
McMahon
MP Minister
of State



Matthew
Pennycook
MP Minister
of State



Baroness
Taylor of
Stevenage
Under-
Secretary of
State



Rushanara
Ali MP
Under-
Secretary of
State



Lord Khan
of Burnley
Under-
Secretary of
State



Alex Norris
MP, Under-
Secretary of
State

PROGRESSIVE BRITAIN CONFERENCE
If you're attending the Progressive Britain Conference in London on Saturday 10 May, make sure you drop by the LHG stall. And tell your friends about us! We'll be signing-up new joiners on the day.

BUSY? YOU CAN STILL HELP

If you are too busy to give time and energy, you can still help us in our work by making a donation by bank transfer to:

"Labour Housing Group"

Account number
50478080,
Sort code 08-90-06

Co-operative Bank,
PO Box 1AN, Blandford
Street, Newcastle, NE99
1AN.

Of course, you can also
send a cheque made

payable to "Labour
Housing Group" c/o
**The Treasurer, Flat 2,
8 Torrington Park,
London N12 9SS**

**Additionally, this
"QR" code shows
LHG's bank details on
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