Ribble Valley

Response and Recovery Plan for Tourism and Hospitality

Consultation Document

Ribble Valley Borough Council

www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

Ribble Valley Tourism Association
Ribble Valley tourism and hospitality businesses are enduring the most painful economic crisis of recent times, but the industry has good reasons to look forward to recovery in a spirit of optimism. By working together in providing a safe and welcoming destination we will continue to overcome the present difficulties and achieve prosperity for our borough.

Cllr Stuart Hirst Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, Ribble Valley Borough Council

Ribble Valley is an incredibly special place, alive with innovation and home to many entrepreneurs, tourism and hospitality businesses have recovered from difficult times before, and with change, creativity and collaboration it can recover again

Amanda Dowson, Chairman of Ribble Valley Tourism Association

This first draft of the Response and Recovery Plan is for consultation purposes. If you are involved with, or have an interest in, tourism and hospitality in Ribble Valley, we would love to receive your comments on our proposals, and we would also welcome any other contributions or ideas.

As it is imperative that we have a plan in place soon, this consultation will last only one week from publication. The resulting plan will however remain a ‘live’ document, and thus, continue to be responsive to the changing circumstances which the virus, and post virus, conditions present.

I look forward to hearing your comments and ideas as we move forward and plan together.

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The need for ‘Response and Recovery’ plan

This plan is designed to create a cohesive and imaginative strategy to attract visitors back following the Coronavirus outbreak, and to guide tourism through a period of inevitable change.

Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Ribble Valley Tourism Association have come together to develop an approach that will:

• Deliver confident, consistent messages to existing and new audiences
• Use our limited resources effectively for maximum impact
• Develop ideas collectively in order to maximise expertise
• Engage with local businesses, communities, and stakeholders to support and champion the voice of tourism in Ribble Valley

Recovery will take time, and the timetable will remain both unclear and unpredictable for the foreseeable future. However, we now have the opportunity to create a template for the restoration of the visitor economy.
Where are we now?

Tourism and hospitality form a major part of the Ribble Valley economy, both in terms of income and employment. The most recent figures indicate that Tourism in Ribble Valley contributes over £260 million into the local economy. In recent years, and certainly up until the current crisis, it has been a most successful and rapidly expanding sector, in which both the economic impact and visitor numbers were rising by over 7% per annum.

Tourism and hospitality are two of the hardest hit sectors in the COVID-19 shutdown. The impact of the resulting restrictions, at the start of the Spring/Summer season, is having a devastating and detrimental effect on all tourism-related businesses, including food and drink, wedding venues, accommodation providers, and attractions, along with a wide variety of support services and industries. Some businesses may not reopen, significant refunds have had to be made and countless staff have been furloughed.

One of the most immediate challenges facing tourism businesses has been dealing with a rush of cancellations and refunds. This has been particularly damaging the wedding sector. Another concern is that for many businesses, it is Spring and early summer period, with Bank holidays and celebratory days such as Mother’s Day, that provide the income to carry a business over the leaner, winter months. Regardless of the speed of the lifting of restrictions, businesses may yet fail, with jobs lost, and the local economy further suffering.

Uncertainty about the implications of social distancing and other restrictions which may need to be introduced to ensure the safety of visitors, presents a further challenge to individual businesses, and to retail centres in particular.

Support and Innovation

Many tourism and hospitality businesses have benefited from the various programmes of central government support, many administered at district level. A good number have used the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to furlough their staff and therefore avoid redundancies. A survey of the hospitality sector nationally reported 84% of businesses have used the scheme and only 2% have laid staff off. This is encouraging news for the recovery period, with a wealth of talent ready to return to work.

In this area, we benefit from having a largely loyal and year-long hospitality workforce, compared to some areas of UK which are subject to radical seasonal changes in employment levels, where skills can be lost. There is no question that the government interventions both in terms of the furlough scheme and direct funding, have ensured the survival of many local business and ensured the retention of a wealth of talent and skills in Ribble Valley.

Many businesses have tried to remodel during the lockdown, in order to generate at least some income, and to keep in contact with customers, as well as supporting their communities and key workers. This has included take-away services, donating food to food banks and making rooms available for quarantine purposes.

Some astute businesses are keeping in touch with their customers using social media, staging virtual events, and newsletters, keen to welcome them back once they are able to reopen. There have been some amazing examples of innovation during this time. Similarly, many operators have used lockdown to physically refurbish and refresh their offer, and develop their skills, particularly with respect to the use of technology.

Support and Innovation

Post virus opportunities

When restrictions are lifted, and it is safe for people to travel more freely, competition, in terms of tourism marketing, will be fiercer than ever. Destinations across the country and moreover, the world, will be creating new recovery strategies. That is why it is so important for Ribble Valley, where tourism and hospitality are so integral to the to the economy, to keep ahead of the game.

Latest research indicates some very distinct trends emerging from the crisis, from we should take heart. These include:-

- A boost in the UK domestic travel market
- The need for visitors to feel and be safe – both during travel and whilst at the destination
- A desire to visit open space and countryside, along with a keen interest in wildlife and nature
- Strong interest in sustainable/green tourism
- Demand to stay local
- Greater interest in buying and eating locally sourced produce

The make-up of Ribble Valley’s tourism businesses, together with its geography, make it well placed to respond these trends.

Long Term

There are however areas where tourism is expected to respond less swiftly to recovery, for example, coach and group travel, weddings, seaside resorts, indoor attractions, cities, educational visits, and cruises. Some of these will not adversely affect Ribble Valley but moreover, may make our job easier.

The areas of greatest concern are those types of tourism which most likely to be impacted by physical social distancing measures including:-

- Weddings
- Group Travel
- Residential / adventure centres
- Theatres/Cinema
- Events.

Each of these is especially important to our visitor economy and whilst they will be dependent on future government guidance, rather than local intervention, they are still areas which merit action points in this plan.

Where are we now?

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A Two Phased Approach – the key principles

We are in a situation of change, where it is hard to predict further restrictions and public behaviours. As a result, the plan is split into two phases, each with key principles:

Response phase

‘remaining confident for the period that restrictions are in place’
(Response Phase - Immediate Action)

1. Support messages from central Government
2. Protect and support local businesses
3. Maintain Ribble Valley brand awareness and develop tourism products
4. Stay engaged with communities and promote the importance of tourism

Recovery phase

‘confidently adapting as restrictions are relaxed and removed’
(Recovery phase - planned now but implemented to coincide with the lifting of restrictions)

1. Reinforce Ribble Valley brand awareness
2. Support local businesses
3. Create safe and welcoming tourism
4. Develop a programme to support different tourism themes
5. Manage tourism responsibly

Changing behaviours

There are naturally some unknowns, for example, we cannot anticipate public behaviour post-crisis. These are likely to include:

- Responding to fear – from visitors hesitant about travelling.
- Risk - older people may be less like to visit due to concerns over risk whilst conversely, younger people may become less risk averse?
- A cashless society and booking methods – timescales and habits are likely to change
- Local Tourism - our primary recovery markets are likely to live Lancashire and the north west, requiring shorter travel journeys
- Responding to social-distancing measures and travel restrictions
- Over Tourism – there could be short bursts of “over tourism” in sensitive areas, often influenced by weather
- Potential over-demand for what in the early stages may be perceived as safer accommodation e.g. Caravans, camping, holiday homes and self-catering

In some parts of the country, a further negative impact from the coronavirus restrictions has been an evolving animosity between host communities and visitors. Visitors have not always been sensitive to rural ways, where they can be perceived as destroying the tranquility. Also, local people may fear that visitors may potentially bring the virus with them. Whilst this has not been particularly evident in this area, it is something to be mindful of in the delivery of this plan. Communities need to understand the importance of tourism to the economy but equally the potential impact of tourism to host communities needs to be carefully managed.

The plan needs to take each of these points into consideration, and this may involve broadening tourism markets from those which historically been targeted, to embrace new markets.

Whilst we have an immediate crisis, we have to adopt a long-term approach, driving opportunities for all seasons, and encouraging a spread of visitors to help us enjoy sustained recovery. That said, it is becoming evident that we need to move swiftly, as when changes begin, they are likely to be rapid.
The Measures

We now take each of these principles to describe the measures we aim to put in place before moving into the action plan, which has more detail about what we plan to do.

**Response phase - Immediate action**

*remaining confident for the period that restrictions are in place*

1. Support messages from central Government
   - Share government information
   - Advise and signpost sources of guidance and support
   - Gathering Intelligence – feeding into research for Marketing Lancashire, Visit England/Visit Britain etc.

2. Protect and support local businesses
   - Distribute grant aid and promote other sources of support
   - Publicise and support local innovation where businesses are adapting their offer.
   - Facilitate knowledge sharing, networking and promote relevant training opportunities
   - Communicate with key stakeholders to gain support for our Recovery Plan

3. Maintain Ribble Valley brand awareness and develop tourism products - **Ready for recovery**
   - Suspend promotional marketing, but keep Ribble Valley very much in the mind of consumers
   - Work with tourism businesses to review their offer in line with any new restrictions and guidelines.
   - Develop new tourism products ready for maximum exposure and be ready to renew media liaison
   - Review changes in visitor behaviour and target new markets
   - Participate in wider campaigns to maximise exposure,

4. Stay engaged with communities and promote the importance of tourism
   - Share relevant public information
   - Promote an understanding of the importance of tourism
   - Adapt and continue event planning
   - Mitigate any potential impacts of ‘over tourism’
   - Develop joint itineraries between areas, e.g. driving routes

**Recovery phase - coincide with the lifting restrictions.**

*confidently adapting, as restrictions are relaxed and removed*

1. Reinforce Ribble Valley brand awareness
   - Unify and deliver positive, up-beat messages to manage visitors’ perceptions – conveying ‘safe and welcome’ messages and ensuring Ribble Valley’s unique qualities stand out
   - Engage with press and media identifying key opportunities for promotion

2. Support local businesses
   - Continued signposting to central and local Government guidance and support
   - Support businesses in dealing with peaks and fluctuations in visitor interest
   - Create opportunities for direct partner involvement in campaigns
   - Continue networking and knowledge sharing
   - Facilitate and promote business-to-business support and training.

3. Create and promote safe and welcoming tourism
   - Review all tourism marketing to ensure positive and confident messages are portrayed
   - Encourage tourism businesses to embrace new regulations and join accredited schemes
   - Promote examples of innovation and best practice

4. Develop a programme to support different tourism themes
   - Promote to new markets including a younger audience and ‘Families together’
   - Launch a ‘Love the great outdoors’ campaign (walks cycling, drives Virtual experiences)
   - Develop food and drink experiences
   - Sustain interest in longer term established themes, especially weddings and group travel
   - Promote Ribble Valley as ‘A place for all seasons’

5. Manage tourism responsibly
   - Monitor visitor flows working closely with the Bowland AONB service
   - Promote seasonal offers and encourage a year-round calendar of events
   - Promote and support responsible and safe visitor behaviour in all media

**NOTE:** Recovery phase is planned now, and implemented to coincide with the lifting of restrictions.
Our Love Ribble Valley Campaign headlines

Response Phase - Immediate Action

Launch of ‘Spirit of Ribble Valley’ promotional Video during National Tourism week.

Recovery Phase - To coincide with the lifting of restrictions

Love our Great Outdoors
- ‘Trustworthy Trips’ – New itineraries for driving, cycling, and walking experiences including visitor attractions
- ‘Families together’ – New itineraries based around attractions, heritage and food
- ‘Virtual Visits’ - On line virtual experiences of Ribble Valley.
- ‘Walks with Taste’ – More self-guided walks with great, safe dining experiences

Love our Food and Drink
- ‘Great Food Experiences’ building on our strengths in a new campaign
- ‘Picnic Country’ – Experience locally sourced foods, enjoyed in great locations
- Relaunch of the ‘Ribble Valley Food and Drink Trail’ with interactive on-line promotion

Love our Businesses
- ‘Love to be Open – Celebrating individual businesses as they open up
- ‘Build back better’ – Support the redesign of tourism, ensuring it is safe
- ‘Made in Ribble Valley’ - a celebration of arts, craft, and creativity

Love our Weddings
- Promotion of Ribble Valley as a safe and welcoming wedding destination

Love Short breaks
- ‘A place for all seasons’ campaign – to grow year-round tourism

Love Meetings
- Promotion of ‘safe and welcoming’ venues for business and family occasions

Here are some of the proposed campaign headlines, the have been lifted out of the action plans which now follow in this document. They illustrate some of the promotional proposals we would like to consider. It is not a comprehensive list, and we look forward to receiving your ideas. In each of these we will be keen to work with partners to develop the detail and when the time is right, to ensure their successful implementation.

Tom Pridmore
Tom.pridmore@ribblevalley.gov.uk
01200 414496
### Phase One - Response

#### Measure: Support messages from central Government

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<th>Action</th>
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<th>Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share government information</td>
<td>Reinforcing, in all communications, current government messages</td>
<td></td>
<td>Immediate and ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advise and signpost sources of guidance and support</td>
<td>Regular ‘Tourism Update’ e-shots to tourism related businesses, containing the latest guidance</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Initially every 10-14 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intelligence gathering</td>
<td>Promoting and responding to consumer and business consultations</td>
<td>ML Visit England / Visit Britain</td>
<td>As and when required</td>
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#### Measure: Protect and support local businesses

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<tr>
<td>Distribute grant aid and promote other sources of support</td>
<td>Promote the availability of grant aid and other support through regular E-shots to businesses</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Grants - ongoing as funds are available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicise and support local innovation where businesses are adapting their offer.</td>
<td>Features on social media platforms</td>
<td>Marketing Lancashire</td>
<td>Ongoing during crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate knowledge sharing, networking and promote relevant training opportunities</td>
<td>Regular weekly webinar meetings with business on various themes</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with key stakeholders to gain support for our Recovery Plan</td>
<td>Involve stakeholders in the preparation of the plan and consult with stakeholders during National Tourism Week</td>
<td>RVTA and other stakeholders</td>
<td>25th – 30th May 2020</td>
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#### Measure: Maintain Ribble Valley brand awareness and develop tourism products - Ready for recovery

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<tr>
<td>Suspend promotional marketing, but keep Ribble Valley very much in the mind of consumers</td>
<td>Launch promotional video ‘Spirit of Ribble Valley’ during National Tourism week with underlying message of soon being ready for visitors Note - Suspension of mainstream marketing is pending the reopening of tourism businesses</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>26th May 2020 National Tourism Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with tourism businesses to review their offer in line with any new restrictions and guidelines.</td>
<td>Circulate latest information on through regular E-shots and RVTA webinars Individual support to specific business where appropriate</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Every 10-14 days during crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop new tourism products ready for maximum exposure and be ready to renew media liaison</td>
<td>Prepare locally focused Digital and Social Media campaigns around key early themes including walking, driving, and cycling, including a review of the Tolkien Trail and an expansion of ‘Walks with Taste’</td>
<td>Specific local communities Targeted businesses</td>
<td>Ongoing ahead of recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare targeted campaigns to attract residents and day visitors</td>
<td>Draft social media marketing awareness material ready for when the restrictions are lifted</td>
<td>Targeted businesses</td>
<td>Ongoing ahead of recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review changes in visitor behaviour and target new markets</td>
<td>Be prepared to alter course on campaigns and marketing, dependant on consumer behaviours.</td>
<td>Bowland AONB and RVTA</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in wider campaigns to maximise exposure,</td>
<td>Contribute content and ideas to Marketing Lancashire and similar campaigns</td>
<td>ML Visit England/Visit Britain</td>
<td>As opportunities arise</td>
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#### Measure: Stay engaged with communities and promote the importance of tourism

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<tr>
<td>Share relevant public information</td>
<td>Actively promote industry best practice and other measures to ensure confidence about tourism within the community</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote an understanding of the importance of tourism</td>
<td>Incorporate into media releases the positive aspects of the visitor economy</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt and continue event planning</td>
<td>Monitor any new guidelines relating to event management and work with event organisers to seek solutions</td>
<td>Events organisers</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigate any potential impacts of ‘Over Tourism’</td>
<td>In planning the various campaign, take into consideration the potential for over tourism and plan accordingly e.g. by promoting non-honeypots, seasonal experiences, and extended opening</td>
<td>Bowland AONB RVTA</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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**Phase Two - Recovery**

### Measure: Restore Ribble Valley Brand awareness

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<tr>
<td>Unity and deliver positive, up-beat messages to manage visitors’ perceptions – conveying ‘safe and welcome’ messages and ensuring Ribble Valley’ stands out</td>
<td>Relaunch promotional video with wider appeal and content to incorporate the key messages Use Safe and Welcome narrative in all campaigns and communications</td>
<td>Various businesses RVTA</td>
<td>Upon restrictions being lifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with press and media identifying key opportunities for press promotion;</td>
<td>Target media contacts located within one hours drive time and drip feed relevant content. e.g. new experiences, publications, and events Promote key themes to specialist media including food, walking, cycling etc.</td>
<td>ML RVTA</td>
<td>After restrictions are lifted, drip fed over a period of weeks September 2020</td>
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### Measure: Support local businesses

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued signposting to central and local Government guidance and support</td>
<td>Continue to promote opportunities for support and funding to businesses in the Regular Tourism Update newsletter</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Every 10-14 days as continues to be relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for and support businesses to deal with peaks and fluctuations in visitor interest</td>
<td>Promote ‘Love to be Open’ social media campaign – Celebrating individual businesses as they open up ‘Build back better’ – Support the redesign of tourism, ensuring it is safe Made in Ribble Valley - a celebration of arts, craft, and creativity</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Upon restrictions being lifted Ongoing from restrictions being lifted Once sufficient relevant businesses are open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue networking and knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Continue to host business webinar events with the RVTA Promote suitable events organised by other parties</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Gradually relaxing frequency from weekly to two monthly over time as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate and promote business-to-business support and training.</td>
<td>Support regular training and workshop events run by the RVTA in support of local businesses</td>
<td>RVTA RVTA timetable</td>
<td></td>
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### Measure: Develop specific tourism themes

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<tr>
<td>Promote to new markets including a younger audience and ‘Families together’</td>
<td>Devise specific marketing to encourage ‘young fun seekers’ Design and promote a ‘Families together’ campaigns</td>
<td>Hospitality businesses Family friendly businesses Forestry Authority and United Utilities</td>
<td>September 2020 August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote food and drink experiences</td>
<td>Promote a new series of ‘Trustworthy Trips’ including walking cycling , driving itineraries along with a selection of virtual experiences Relaunch the Tolkien Trail</td>
<td>RVTA Forestry Authority and United Utilities Parish Council</td>
<td>Staggered programme over 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustain interest in longer term established themes</td>
<td>Promotion of Ribble Valley as a safe and welcoming wedding destination – launch virtual guide June 2020 and printed guide once social distancing measures have been agreed ‘Meeting Places’ campaign to promote safe and welcoming venues for business and family occasions Promotion of a ‘Made in Ribble Valley arts and crafts trail</td>
<td>RWH RVTA</td>
<td>January 2021 Once sufficient businesses are open</td>
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*all subject to further restrictions
## Measure: Create safe and welcoming tourism

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<tr>
<td>Review all tourism marketing to ensure positive and confident messages are portrayed</td>
<td>Review each of the tourism websites to ensure the content is portraying the new language of ‘safe and welcoming’ tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td>By the end of June 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage tourism businesses to adhere to new regulations</td>
<td>Ensure that all businesses participating in promotional campaigns are adhering to new safety guidelines</td>
<td>RVTA, VE, VE, QT Health and Safety Executive</td>
<td>In accordance with each campaign</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Actively promote and encourage participation in safe and legal type accreditation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote examples of innovation and best practice</td>
<td>Actively seek out best practice and highlight on social media</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Regular weekly drip feed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incorporate best practice into the annual tourism awards</td>
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## Measure: Manage tourism responsibly

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<tr>
<td>Monitor visitor flows working closely with the Forest of Bowland AONB service</td>
<td>Monitor tourism carefully to ensure that ‘Over tourism’ does not occur, especially in sensitive areas such as Bowland and Pendle Hill</td>
<td>Bowland AONB, PBC</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote seasonal offers and encourage a year-round calendar of events</td>
<td>Launch ‘A place for all seasons campaign’ creating content for each season</td>
<td>RVTA</td>
<td>Autumn 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote and support responsible and safe visitor behaviour in all media</td>
<td>Include in all campaign and marketing the need for responsible behaviour, for example using the countryside code and the need to be mindful of the needs of local people</td>
<td>NFU, NE, Bowland AONB</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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*all subject to further restrictions*