

THE FUTURE OF THE OWA CONSULTATION PAPER

OWA Strategy, Structure, Governance and Officers' Relationships with School and Foundation

A Proposal from the OWA Main Committee
July 2011

INTRODUCTION

At the last OWA Main Committee Meeting on Monday, May 9, 2011, the Strategy Group tabled a paper bringing together various strands of discussion concerning the future of the OWA, its structure and financial state, particularly in the light of meetings held with Dr Barnett at the School and Messrs Marriott and Corney at the Foundation. The OWA Main Committee unanimously endorsed this paper and the recommendations for change contained therein and approved their implementation subject to (a) the approval of the School (b) the approval of the Foundation and (c) ratification at an EGM of the OWA in October 2011.

BACKGROUND

Following on from the valuable work of earlier Strategy Groups, the current group comprising Alan Cowing, David Pearce and Pip Burley, set itself three tasks:

(a) To clarify the positions of the three principal parties, namely, the School, The Foundation and ourselves, regarding the role of the OWA and the relationships between the three parties moving forward.

(b) Based upon the above and our own requirements, to determine whether any changes are required to our structure, organization and modus operandi

and

(c) To consider the best way to secure the future of Croham Road as an integral part of a forward-looking OWA with its own clear commercial and financial objectives and strategy.

WHY CHANGE IS NECESSARY

There have been a number of significant changes brought about by the Foundation (and effecting all Foundation schools), which require us to re-define our role as an Alumni/Sports association. In brief, the Foundation decided nearly two years ago to employ the services of a Director of Development and Communications (Simon Marriott) who has, in turn, introduced Development Officers into the schools with a brief to prepare for a major fundraising campaign sometime in the future. The precise nature of this campaign is a matter for further debate between all parties and a new committee has been established chaired by David Hudson (Governor and formerly Director of Communications of Nestle UK) and comprising Peter Squire (Governor and former Head of Bedford Modern), the Heads or their senior nominees, Simon Marriott, school alumni and development officers and nominated representatives from each of the alumni organisations. The first meeting of this committee took place on June 6th. (*PB attended this*).

THE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

In the case of Whitgift, the Alumni & Development Office, with Phil Fladgate (currently) as part-time Alumni & Development Officer, is established, active and, at present, appears to be co-operating with the OWA in all respects. What's more, the Foundation appears to be happy with this arrangement and, indeed, supportive of joint ventures such as the recent Prostate evening which was initiated by the OWA, supported by the School, and subsidised financially by the Foundation. Neither the Foundation nor the Alumni & Development Office appears to have any problem with this kind of arrangement. The Foundation has said that the Alumni & Development Office at the School and the Alumni & Development Officer are there to build relations with Old Whitgiftians for the specific purpose of a Fundraising programme planned for two to three years time. Proceeds will benefit Whitgift School, for bursaries and capital projects. Initially, possibly due to an inadequate flow of information between the Foundation and ourselves, it was felt that the establishment of such an office at the School would, in some ways, threaten our own unique relationship with OWs. As will be seen from what follows, however, this appears less of a danger providing only that we are prepared to support and work in harmony with the School's Development office.

THE DATABASE

As part of this operation, the OWA agreed to provide the Foundation with our database comprising some 8,500 addresses and contacts of OWs throughout the world. We understand that the Foundation has made a substantial investment in new software called Raiser's Edge, as well as the labour costs of transferring our data onto this, providing far more accessible information than hitherto. This system is now installed at the Foundation's offices in George Street and at the School. We have been told that it will be available for us to access very shortly and that training will be provided.

WORKING TOGETHER

The School, Foundation and OWA need to consider the totality of activity of a Development Office and an Old Boys' Association and whether this is best done by one body, i.e., the School, or two, the School and the Old Boys Association working in harmony. Most other schools we have looked at have concluded two, where friend-raising and friend-supporting (i.e. Old Boy to Old Boy socialising, news and communications) are best done by an independent Alumni Association, with Fund-raising and support for the School and its pupils (careers advice, mentoring, etc) being organised by the Development Office. According to our research, there are many schools and old boy associations successfully operating this model, indeed, there is already evidence to suggest that the OWA and the Development/Alumni Office can function side by side without undue duplication of roles. It is therefore a question of who controls and manages the two operations.

As things stand, we do not have the opportunity to control the Alumni Development Office since it already up and running at Haling Park and paid for by the School and the Foundation. However, there are advantages to running the OWA from the School so that for practical purposes the two operations can operate hand-in-hand. We should then be able to continue running the OWA as we do now, presided over by a newly-elected OWA Committee which would be the successor to the present Main Committee.

CROHAM ROAD

It has been vital to establish the role, both present and future, of the Sports facility at Croham Road within the 'Whitgift Family'. Whilst the 'open' nature of the Club has been a matter of debate, nevertheless, it would appear that in the real world of Alumni Sports Clubs, there is no practical alternative. Indeed, our view is that the more 'open' we make our club the better - not only from the pragmatic point-of-view of fielding successful teams in the various leagues and maximizing revenue to run the facility, but also to satisfy the Foundation's charitable charter to serve the local community as a whole.

Further, in the course of our investigations we have not found an example of an independent school with a "closed" old boys' sports club anywhere - except when teams are assembled for specific competitions, e.g., Cricketer Cup and Halford Hewitt. Certainly there are no closed clubs in the London area and the only significant ones outside London (Old Edwardians and Old Birkonians) have long ceased to exist. The successful "Old Boys" sports clubs, Old Albanians, Old Elthamians and Old Colfeians, gave up any pretence of being closed forty years ago. Yet they remain the alumni organisations of their respective schools and the school has no embarrassment in encouraging its former pupils to remain active in their association.

THE FOUNDATION

Through meetings with Simon Marriott and Martin Corney (Clerk to the Foundation) we have gleaned a clearer picture of the Foundation's overview; despite what they say about Alumni Relations on their own website (from which it could be deduced they planned to take over many of the functions of the OWA). However, they have emphasized that there is no intention of setting up a rival alumni organisation - although they do believe that the school is in a position to take a stronger role in maintaining relations with old boys, especially those lost to the current arrangements. The Foundation and the Heads of all the Foundation schools have agreed a paper, dated February 2011, entitled "Aims and Objectives of the Establishment of Development Offices within the Foundation and Schools". Implicit in this is the establishment of an alumni office at the School, staffed by an OWA appointee, which would ensure a good flow of information between the Association and School's Alumni & Development Office. The Foundation appears to take a broadly optimistic position with regard to Croham Road and believes it

has a real role within the Whitgift family providing sporting facilities for the School as well as serving the wider community. They see logic in using Croham Road for the School's 'overspill' sport and accept that this would not be for timetabled games but could work well for midweek or Saturday morning matches.

THE SUPPORT OF THE SCHOOL

To be successful Croham Road in particular and the Association in general, must have the School's active support in encouraging boys to use what is on offer. Ideally, as the alumni (non-sporting) side of our activities develops to incorporate other pursuits - a Theatre & Concert Section, a Book Club, a Wine & Food Society, Travel Club, etc, - so the interests covered by the Association will more clearly mirror those on offer at the School. Thus the transformation of schoolboys into active members of the Association becomes seamless and, through our increased presence at the School, will occur naturally

WHAT IS HAPPENING ELSEWHERE?

It has become clear that the establishment of a Development and Alumni Office within the infrastructure of a school - although new to us - has been widespread elsewhere for some time. The previous Chair of the Strategy Committee, Peter Warren, provided much useful research on how other public schools are dealing with the problems now facing the OWA.

At **Haileybury**, for example, the Haileybury Society (which is a registered charity) has an office at the School for which it pays a nominal rent. The Secretary receives a salary, which is paid 50:50 with the School, it is now 75 (school) and 25 (Society) but the Society provides an equivalent sum for bursaries at the School. The Development Officer and the Alumni office share the database (under rules agreed at the time the Database was first shared with the School) and they work closely together. The Secretary attends the School Development Board. At **Rugby** the Rugbeian Society has a Secretary whose salary is entirely paid by them. She works very closely with the Rugby School Development Office at the School. The Headmaster is on the OR Committee and the President of the OR is on the Governing body of the School. The situation appears slightly different at **Lancing** where the Lancing Club had a paid Secretary who later became, firstly, the Head of Alumni Relations and is now the School's Development Director and Alumni Relations Officer, paid for by the School. In that capacity she provides the Club with all its administrative needs. The Club remains totally independent and the Chairman of the Club sits on the Development Council of the School (ex officio).

THE INDEPENDENCE OF CROHAM ROAD

In reality we have not been independent of the School or Foundation for many years. As long as we have relied on the AMS (The Advanced Membership Scheme), the idea that Croham Road is independent is largely an illusion. Secondly, how can an old boys' association/club be 'independent' of its school in the broader sense - and why would it want to be? Our role, surely, is to become a prominent member of the Whitgift family, with a constitutional remit to maintain OW interest in the school and promote the interests of OWs and of the school. Similarly, so long as we are connected to the Foundation, both through its overall control of the school and (ultimately) our ground, how can we be independent of the Foundation? It could be argued that on both counts we are not, cannot be, and should not wish to be 'independent'. Of course, that does not mean we should not have proper relationships and understandings in place. At present, it would appear that our arrangement with the Foundation in relation to the freehold of Croham Road is legally sound, but that is all. Similarly, despite excellent progress in our relationship with the School more recently, our relationship with the School and Headmaster has been patchy at best.

In brief, the current position of Croham Road can be summed up as follows:

- * The Club struggles to break even, never mind produce meaningful profits to improve facilities.
- * The current position is dependent on subscriptions from boys who have not yet joined the club (AMS) and others who never visit Croham Road.
- * If the AMS disappeared we would need to find another £45-50k per annum to stay where we are.
- * The Balance Sheet is dependent on an accounting convention that regards future AMS monies as a dependable asset.
- * There are 6000+ 'members' who do not pay a subscription at all.

* Apart from an influx of new hockey players, membership of the major sports sections (Rugby and Cricket) is not growing and, if anything, declining. Colts and junior sections are doing well but parents (and neighbours) have declined favourable terms to become members.

* Costs are fixed so we have to rely on increasing revenue - subscriptions, bar, catering, lettings etc - to increase profitability.

* To maximise revenue from lettings we have accepted external clients who, ideally, we might not want.

* The clubhouse has grown from a core 1930's building. It is outdated, tired and probably not fit for purpose.

* To renovate and refurbish could be futile - a complete rebuild would be more economical in the long run, either on the existing site or, with planning consent, elsewhere on the grounds.

Therefore, we should not attempt to carry on as we are. Fundamental change is required.

MANAGEMENT

It has been rightly pointed out that the days of a plentiful supply of volunteers to take on jobs 'running' a business like Croham Road are fast disappearing. So, when we say we 'want to retain control', are we actually saying that the people who are running Croham Road now would like to go on doing so for as long as they are able? Or does this mean that they would like to go on running their individual clubs - rugby and cricket in particular, rather than the OWA or, even Croham Road as a whole? This would seem likely and perfectly feasible. No one should be asked to or expect to go on forever.

We must be clear, however, that in the wider sense, our responsibility is to establish the best possible outcome for future generations of OWs in terms of facilities, resources and management. All of which requires a fundamental restructuring of our current management practices.

CROHAM ROAD AS A CENTRE FOR OW SOCIAL (NON-SPORTING) ACTIVITIES

The view has been expressed that OWs feel a greater affinity for Croham Road than for the School. Also, that Croham Road provides better 'social' facilities than the School. As against this it could be argued that:

- (a) A very small percentage of OWs regularly use Croham Road at all - maybe a couple of hundred out of 8,500 known OWs
- (b) The School is better equipped to provide a wider range of activities and facilities than Croham Road *and*

(c) To improve Croham Road to a state where it might successfully function as a social club serving OWs, their partners, wives and families, not to mention the wider community, would require a substantial investment, which, as things stand, is not possible. We should also bear in mind that the School has been geared up to cater professionally for the hospitality market.

Regardless of which view prevails - and it is certainly the case that many OWs, parents and boys do like Croham Road - one thing seems certain: that we should be looking to create a situation where the School and Croham Road complement each rather than compete. Our immediate strategy is to put Croham Road onto a financially secure footing as soon as possible, whilst sowing the seeds for its future improvement.

A NEW STRUCTURE

As has already been identified, encouraged by the Foundation, part of the alumni function of the Association has already been appropriated by the School and the Headmaster has openly expressed his intention to recruit more dedicated staff and has already apportioned an area around South Entrance to be the Alumni Headquarters. In addition, the School has embarked upon a programme of reunion events. In time, it would appear certain that, whether we choose to engage with it not, the School will become a recognised centre for the Association's alumni activities.

Still, in general terms, and regardless of where the activities take place, the necessity to develop the Whitgift franchise appears to be accepted by everyone - although possibly more by the non-sportsmen than the active participants at Croham Road. How and where this happens is immaterial; the important thing is that we are seen to be part of and involved in the process.

Thus we will have two committees/boards, one managing the affairs of the wider Association and the other responsible solely for Croham Road. The important point being that these two groups of OWs must be clear as

to the remit and responsibilities of their respective committees and are representative of their roles. Formal objectives and constitutions will be needed.

Providing we work together with the School and the Foundation to achieve our mutual aims and objectives, there appears to be no good reason why they will not continue to support us. Nevertheless, it is essential that those appointed to run Croham Road devise a Business Plan going forward which will enable it to stand on its own feet. This, and the future management of Croham Road, will become the remit of a new Board (replacing the present Executive Committee) whose sole job it will be to run Croham Road and organise its sporting and social activities. It is unarguable that Croham Road needs a better, more visionary business model together with a sustainable and effective management structure.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Nearly all other old boys associations have already done it, many OWs have been suggesting it for a number of years and we are certain that the time has come to drop the "Old" from the OWA. Therefore, it is proposed to adopt the title of the "Whitgiftian Association".

Similarly, in order to better describe its activities, its 'open' policy and its future in the wider context of the community, Croham Road, too, will need to change its title to "The Whitgift Sports and Social Club" or "The Whitgift Sports Club" or, simply, "The Whitgift Club". We recommend the latter. Indeed, with the alumni part of the old OWA re-located at Haling Park, it would be misleading for Croham Road to retain OWA in its name.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS - LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

(A) The "Whitgiftian Association" to be re-located at Haling Park

Main functions:

- Manage member database
- Expansion of non-sporting activities
- Collect all WA subs- Manage member communications
- Arrange events
- To be self-funding from increased subscription revenue
- To encourage alumni support for and links with the School

All this working in parallel with the Alumni Development Officer (PF) and utilising the up-dated 'Raiser's Edge' database. To be successful this will require a paid professional Administrator/Secretary based at school and working closely with PF and the archivist. Excellent IT skills essential.

Surplus of subscription income less Administration costs would be shared with 'The Whitgift Club'.

(B) The present OWA Headquarters becomes "The Whitgift Club"

Needs to be run as viable independent business - albeit part funded by the Whitgiftian Association

Needs professional management group including competent, commercial salaried club manager. Structure, roles and personnel to be decided.

The first role of this group will be to devise and implement a Business Plan for the improvement of existing premises or re-development of the site with new, state-of-the-art buildings and facilities and to develop fully-costed design, construction and investment proposal.

HOW IT WILL BE PAID FOR

It is believed that a large additional sum of money (equivalent, roughly, to the amount currently received from the AMS (approx. £50,000 per annum) could, in fact, be raised from our 'dormant' membership. Our projections have been derived from an examination of the most recent accounts, taking into consideration the size of our potential market - namely, the 6,000 (approx) OWs known to us and whose details are registered, and of whom less than 1,000 are paying any money at all to the Association. If it were able to convert only a percentage of these into paying OWs our overall income would rise significantly. The details of how such a 'subscription drive' could best be undertaken remain to be

established. However, the following illustration serves to show what might be achieved with only a relatively modest success rate.

It will be seen that to aid this illustration a new set of membership categories has been suggested.

FULL MEMBERSHIP £75 (less 10% DD discount)

To include:

- 1 Full membership of the Whitgiftian Association
- 2 Full membership of the Whitgift Club & reduced playing costs
- 3 Newsletters, magazine, regular communications and e-mails
- 4 Invitations to Reunions
- 5 Invitations to Regional events
- 6 Invitations to events and activities at the School and the Whitgift Club
- 7 Associate membership of OW Affiliated Club(s) in London
- 8 Membership Discount Card providing bar, catering and rental discounts
- 9 Other Affinity benefits
- 10 Automatic participation in Careers and Mentoring programmes

COUNTRY MEMBERSHIP (Outside 40miles) £50 (less DD discount)

To include all of the above, based on reduced usage

OVERSEAS MEMBERSHIP £40 (less DD discount)

To include all of the above

UNDER 24 MEMBERSHIP £40 (less DD discount)

OW PATRON MEMBERSHIP £25

To include

- 1 Newsletters
- 2 Invitations to Reunions and Regional events

LIFE MEMBERSHIP £1,000

Full Membership for life (one-off payment subject to annual increase)

Potential Results of Subscription Drive

If we could achieve the following, namely:

10 Life Members (one-off)	£10,000
650 Full Members @ £75 (less 10% discount)	£44,000
2,500 OW Patrons (new)	£62,500

TOTAL INCOME FROM SUBS **£116,500**

This money would be collected by the Whitgiftian Association on its own behalf as well as the The Whitgift Club. As mentioned, it would seem entirely appropriate for this to be split, after costs, say, 50% to the WA and 50% to The Whitgift Club, thus providing Croham Road with more than £50,000 per annum. In fact, this apportionment should be explained in detail to all members so that they can see for themselves how their money is being used. In any event, it can be seen that the success of such a membership drive could in itself more than make up for the income currently received from OWA subscriptions and the AMS. Moreover, it can be seen that at this level of income generation, the WA itself will be able to build up reserves over time which will prove valuable when the time comes to expand both operations further.

SPORTS CLUB SUBSCRIPTIONS

At present Croham Road has receipts of £20,000 (approx) from Sports Subscriptions. Under the new 'split' arrangements, the Whitgift Club would be entirely at liberty to enter into its own membership drive to recruit pure Sports Club members, in other words to have its own membership quite separately to the Whitgiftian Association. These people might be:

- (a) OWs who choose not to belong to the Whitgiftian Association
- (b) Parents, relatives, siblings of OWs
- (c) Teachers at Whitgift
- (d) Parents, relatives, siblings, teachers, etc, of any schools within the Foundation
- (e) Foundation staff, governors, etc.
- (f) Supporters of the individual Sports Sections
- (g) Members of the general public

Whilst we have yet to explore the detail of a membership drive by the Whitgift Club, it is envisaged that it would contain categories of membership not unlike the OWA itself, with OWs enjoying the benefit of a significant discount over non-OWs. However, there would need to be some shift of emphasis as to where this "Sports Club" income ended up since it is the Club as well as the individual Sports sections that needs

it, not only to pay for maintenance and upkeep of the grounds and buildings but to invest in future improvements and development to benefit all users. In fact, whilst the sport sections will be encouraged to recruit members in their respective sections, nevertheless, they will in effect become 'clients' of the Whitgift Club, contributing as required to its overheads and costs.

Again, for the purposes of this illustration a new set of membership categories has been suggested.

SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP £30 (less DD discount)

To include

- 1 Information on all fixtures (home & away), regular e-mails and mailings, quarterly Whitgift Club Newsletter
- 2 Whitgift Club Membership Card with 7.5% discount at bar
- 3 Discount on lettings and rentals
- 4 Invitations to Club Events
- 5 Family Membership included

PLAYING MEMBERSHIP OWs £150, Non-OWs £225 (less DD discount)

To include

- 1 Playing membership, Section of choice: Rugby, Cricket, Football, Hockey

Plus all of the above

UNDER 24 PLAYING MEMBERSHIP OWs £75, Non-OWs £115

To include

- 1 Playing membership, Section of choice: Rugby, Cricket, Football, Hockey

Plus all of the above

SUPPORTER'S MEMBERSHIP (Supporting Section of Choice) £20

AFFILIATE CLUBS (Golf, Swimming, Shooting, Hockey, Fives)

Clubs pay an annual fee to the Whitgift Club equivalent to £5 for each of their playing members)

To include

- 1 Use of Club facilities for committee meetings, annual dinners, etc

Potential Results of Subscription Drive

Subscription income to the Club currently stands at around £20,000 per annum. Adopting the above membership categories - together with a well marketed and managed membership drive - it would be hoped to double this income over a three-year period.

TOTAL INCOME FROM SUBS £45,000

As at present it may be that, for example, the Supporters fee income is paid directly to the playing club of choice. Where the Club receives sums directly from team members, particularly in the case of match fees, captains will be encouraged to collect these sums and return them to the Club. Where players are found to persistently avoid paying match fees, captains will be asked to collect them in arrears or, failing that, to de-select the offending players. Alternatively, captains may choose to make up these shortfalls from their own section/team funds.

Commercial Income

Without going into undue detail at this point, nevertheless, it is presumed that more revenue can be derived from catering and lettings as the Whitgift Club grows and flourishes. Bar profits are another matter, however, and if a lesson is to be learned from the commercial sector, it must be that alcohol alone may not be such a reliable source of income in the future.

FUTURE OF THE AMS

(ADVANCED MEMBERSHIP SCHEME)

Regardless of the above - and whilst we don't wish to be dependent upon the AMS - it remains in our interest to justify this stream of revenue to parents with boys at the school who may not become OWs for several years.

Therefore, it is proposed to encourage boys to join the Whitgiftian Association when they join the school rather than when they leave. Such a proposition should be easily deliverable, especially as the school builds up a stronger and more accessible Alumni database base and Archive allied to our own increased presence and involvement at the school. A range of ongoing benefits would be offered to boys whilst at school. At the same time, those parents paying the AMS will automatically become eligible for membership of the Whitgift Sports Club, free to use its facilities at any time.

CONCLUSIONS

The more we have studied the overall situation, the more we have concluded that not only is change essential for the future wellbeing of our Association, but that it is overdue. In one respect we are fortunate; that the changes introduced by the Foundation have caused us to face the situation in time to prevent a further deterioration in our position from which we might find it hard to recover. This remark is not flippant, we only have to look at the many other old boys' associations who have been pared down, lost their sports facilities or ceased to operate at all. In our case, the major weaknesses in our present position, accrued over many years, have become, namely:

- (a) Our failure over a long period of time to raise - and increase - subscription income from many thousands of OWs.
- (b) Our failure to plan for the future in terms of commercial and financial viability, relying instead on the AMS and loans from the Foundation (currently standing at £35,000) to shore up our operations as well as our balance sheet
- (c) Our failure to keep abreast with the requirements of managing an ageing and problematical building at Croham Road without proper regard for maintaining its fabric and suitability and without generating sufficient reserves to do so.
- (d) Our over reliance on volunteers and failure to recruit and pay adequate remuneration for a Manager from the right background to provide the management skills required to run and grow a business of this size. Plus, it needs a strong and commercially minded management committee prepared to stand up to users and individuals.
- (e) Our failure to regard Croham Road as an entity that has to be viable in its own right rather than merely a service facility for the Sports Clubs.

Whilst the influence of the School and Foundation are significant against the broader backdrop of the 'Whitgift Family', our principal problems are attributable to our own lack of effective management and planning and, likewise, are ours to solve. No one is going to do it for us.

We need a fresh start in the form of a fully-fledged development plan for the future - a plan that will excite and motivate a new generation of OWs as well as the School and the Foundation who may yet be the agents of our salvation.

The ideas and proposals suggested in this document are designed to do just this. The changes of structure, the new names, the drive to actively develop more subscription income in return for a more fully engaged Whitgiftian Association, the move of our Alumni operations to Haling Park to work side-by-side with the school, the re-launch of Croham Road as a truly open Sports Club serving the wider community, the adoption of a new business plan, the vision of a new building - all of this will provide inspiration and encouragement to those around us, not least those who may yet provide the funding we will need to realize our full potential.

There is always the option of doing nothing, or very little. Indeed, this would appear to have been the pattern over many years and the reason we have reached the point where action is now required urgently. It would, of course, have been much easier if the ideas discussed in this document had been introduced gradually over a period of time. But that hasn't happened. There could be many reasons but the most likely would seem to be a reluctance in the past to see the wider picture coupled with an over reliance on volunteers to manage the business; and who have become even harder to recruit in recent years. None of this in any way decries the contributions of those who have dedicated much of their personal time and passion to the club. It has simply not been enough nor have there been enough of them.

At the present time it appears that both the School and the Foundation wish to see us taking the initiative. In principle, this gives us an advantage and the opportunity to influence the course and pace of events. But we need to move quickly.

Should you have any queries, questions or recommendations to make regarding the above please feel free to contact any of the undersigned:

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