



YOUR
EBRINGTON

Delivering Ebrington: A community led approach

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What happened?

Members of the public had their say on Ebrington during a series of community workshops in June 2024.

People shared ideas on how the ongoing transformation of Ebrington could be maximised for wider community benefit, and ways the entire site can be a stronger catalyst for the social, economic and sustainable development

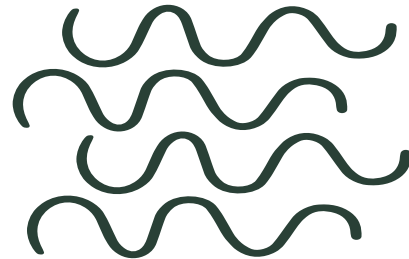
ambitions of Derry~Londonderry and the North West.

Ambitious thinking and ways of working better together were common themes. Negative headlines, problems and missed opportunities were rightly highlighted, and frustrations and concerns understandably expressed, but all participants wanted the focus, collaborative working and investment to shift to making things better. All wanted Ebrington's potential fully realised.

Why is this important?

Because change and its potential are real. People can see and feel it at Ebrington, want more good things to happen there, and want ways of making them happen.

This document summarises the range of themes, issues and possibilities highlighted during these community workshops. The purpose of recording and sharing them is to inspire further ideas, spark action and build momentum for better ways of unleashing more and wider benefits from the transformation so far; and exploring new opportunities for delivering needed change.



Setting the scene

A unique site

Ebrington's history, heritage and views are fascinating. It's best to visit but you can also get a sense of this online¹. The Ebrington site was returned to the people of Derry~Londonderry in 2003. The site's history includes difficult aspects for some but the City of Culture celebrations built excitement around the potential of the space to bring people together and showcase the City's rich cultural expressions and vibrancy.

The legal custodian of the site since 2016 is The Executive Office (TEO). Since then, it has invested over £37m to regenerate the site, protect its built heritage and attract businesses and jobs. The Executive Office is committed to the transfer of Ebrington to Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The need to listen to and talk more with communities

A lot has been done and the physical transformation clear for all to see yet many parts of the wider community are not fully aware of Ebrington's unfolding story. Many do not know about the developments which have happened and the people, businesses

and organisations now working there, or the opportunities ahead and ways communities can be part of and benefit from it.

Arguably that reflects past engagement across the City which should have been better sustained and expanded and let's be honest, Ebrington has hit the headlines in recent times for the wrong reasons. Realising the potential for large scale public events and wider vibrancy on site has always been a key part of the ambition of Ebrington and a shared goal of many, but this is still a work in progress.

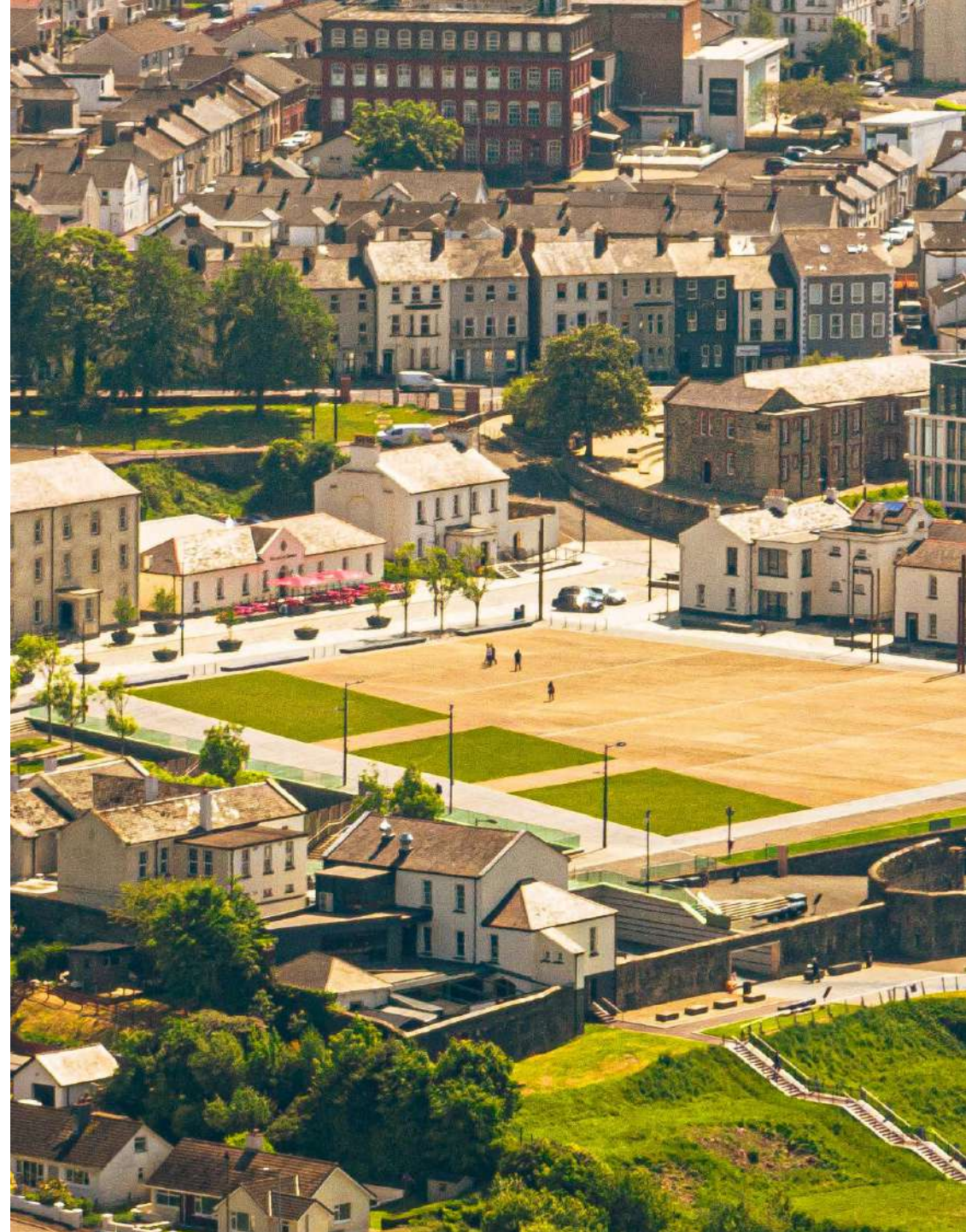
Community workshops

Host venues for the community workshops were selected to encourage involvement and participation. Locally based Gray's Communications² were commissioned to facilitate the sessions.

Advertisements were placed in local newspapers and their online platforms. A 10-day social media campaign generated over 100,000 impressions. Public figures, elected representatives and highly-followed media platforms shared information on the workshops. >>>

¹Your Ebrington website - <https://yourebrington.com/about/>

²<https://grayscommunications.com/>



Over 40 community groups were engaged, with many sharing information with their wider contacts and through social media.

Sparking discussion

At each event TEO officials provided an update on recent developments and, importantly, were present to listen, meet people, share views and strengthen connections going forward.

Officers from Derry City and Strabane District Council also provided an update on progress on the new museum at Ebrington. The Derry ~ Londonderry North Atlantic (DNA) Museum will be a major tourism and cultural attraction for the City and the North West and is due to open its doors at Ebrington in 2026. Construction begins early 2025. TEO has contributed £3.3m funding to this museum project and current and future partnership working between the

Council and The Executive Office will help realise its potential and support the handover of the wider site.

Some initial questions helped to open up wide-ranging discussion

The word cloud overleaf visually represents the most frequently occurring feedback from the three sessions. Words used more often are displayed in larger font. This format offers a quick overview of some of the main themes, topics and sentiments expressed during discussions. These are explored further in later sections.

“How can the space at **Ebrington** benefit you, your community, or local business?”

“How can we all work better together to develop **Ebrington** for the future?”

“How can **Ebrington** be improved as an experience for local, national and international visitors?”

“What is your favourite thing about the **Ebrington** site and is there anything else you would like to add?”



What was the thrust of conversations?

Ebrington Square is a vibrant, inclusive gathering place that brings people together.

To make the space a hub for creativity, wellbeing, and connection for the future, feedback asked us to:

- Increase and proactively support the use of Ebrington Square and surrounding spaces by community groups, arts and cultural organisations and practitioners, health and wellbeing initiatives, charities, sporting bodies and other programmes run by multiple sectors.
- Make it family-friendly.
- This includes ensuring it's a safe and shared space for all.
- Recognise and support Ebrington as a place which brings people together, narrowing the river and connecting the City centre as a shared space spanning

both banks of the Foyle.

- Give people opportunities to be creative and imagine new possibilities.
- Work with and alongside people, communities and wider stakeholders to realise these possibilities together.



Ebrington is not just the Square. Bringing the entire space together highlights the City's creative and cultural assets. We received feedback such as:

- Ebrington Square can be the centrepiece of a joined up approach to events across the City, showcasing the creative, cultural and tourism strengths of Derry~Londonderry and the North West. It can help attract a range of artists and significant creative, cultural

and other events to Derry~Londonderry.

- It's recognised that Ebrington Square has a certain capacity, which means it's important for joined-up approaches with, for example, St Columb's Park, Brooke Park, and other spaces and greenways elsewhere (e.g. Foyle Valley Railway) to offer solutions accommodating different events and multiple formats and audiences.
- It's not just about the Square at Ebrington. The streets, walls, green areas and 'nooks and crannies' at Ebrington are usable spaces offering diverse creative opportunities.

- But many organisations, particularly smaller community groups, might not know this and fear their event will be 'lost' in the wide open Square. There are ways activity can be supported for local groups through, for example, onsite access to movable landscaping/planters/screens as well as AV hire.



Creating a vibrant and lively atmosphere at Ebrington is essential to its success. Through regular, diverse activities for families and the wider community, Ebrington can grow as a positive space for everyone. Key points raised included:

- Ebrington must be more than a nice walk and view on a sunny day.
- It can seem like a 'roll of the dice' on whether you turn up on a day when the place is humming with activity, or on other days when the site is empty and all that is missing is tumbleweed.
- If there are regular things for families to do and enjoy – small and bigger scale, free or good value for money - the place will be hiving. This will build a sense of reliability in Ebrington being busy and used for a variety of activities – no matter the weather. It will also build trust in the space by community groups and other smaller organisations that they too can successfully use this space.

- Have a regular programme/calendar of events and activities in addition to things arising from ad hoc or one-off proposals submitted by groups and organisations throughout the year.

- Have more non-alcohol events and activities in the evenings, particularly over summer.

- Support tenants in being innovative and expanding activities and experiences beyond their entrance doors.

Ebrington has been a cornerstone for major events and high-quality everyday activities in Derry~Londonderry. Through hosting local promoters and artists, Ebrington has seen high-profile occasions and community-driven events appeal to diverse audiences across the City. Some observations included:

- Yes - the City and North West should have big days and occasions involving artists and creative, cultural and other events of regional, national and international significance. Ebrington can play a key part in achieving this. And such events should include but not just be about music.

- This might take time to achieve and it will need investment and collaborative business planning and coordination to build momentum. Some will call this subsidy, but it is investment to generate >>





bigger economic, social, tourism and cultural returns.

- The Executive Office and partners such as the Council need to engage with and 'sell' Ebrington to national and international promoters, as well as supporting opportunities for local promoters and entrepreneurs.
- Potential to develop an annual music festival, one which doesn't clash with other regional festivals/events and instead becomes an established annual event.
- Debunk myths - people from Derry~Londonderry will pay for tickets... evidence is the packed coaches bringing them to concerts in Belfast and Dublin.
- People will buy tickets for quality acts and experiences in Derry~Londonderry, in Ebrington and elsewhere.
- Promoters have a key role to play in putting forward and delivering these quality experiences and ticket-driven approaches.
- Have higher quality event hospitality/ beverage options and experiences for large concerts and events. Have better information on places to stay and go at Ebrington and elsewhere (on both banks of the river) to encourage visitors to stay longer and wander and spend wider.
- Remember that small can be beautiful.

Music events and festivals can build organically, focus on experiences and become known locally and more widely for their quality.

- Have Ebrington become a place for daily music - buskers, community choirs, young people and bands rehearsing etc. Support this with dedicated sheltered areas and benches/ seating.
- Have regular and scheduled 'every day' types of events which support vibrancy throughout the year.
- Tie everything together through a curated programme of events, activities and themes - who can coordinate this? How can this support the construction phase of the DNA Museum and joined up approaches after it opens?
- Create more opportunities for creativity and support this with funding for community groups, artists and cultural organisations - these things don't just happen! This is about investment and collaborative approaches across multiple funders and organisations.
- Have games on the Square - giant chess, volleyball, tennis etc. Include regular health and wellbeing events and activities - walking trails, yoga etc. Bring together schools for cross-City sports days at Ebrington and St Columb's Park.
- Craft Fairs. »





- Better integration with Council events, including Halloween, Christmas and festivals (Jazz, Maritime etc.).

- Outdoor Film Festivals at Ebrington. Support this with seating, picnic areas and possibly 'silent disco' style headphones.

- Christmas Market at Ebrington, a high-quality experience and sufficiently promoted.

- Make it clearer and easier for community groups to organise events at Ebrington.

Ebrington is a welcoming, shared space that embraces cultural diversity and promotes positive relationships among the entire community. We received input that included:

- Ebrington must be a shared space. That doesn't mean a neutral space, devoid of cultural diversity. Ebrington can help promote connections, bring together people and groups from

diverse backgrounds, challenge stereotypes, provide experiences and boost collaborations which support good relations.

- This can be a key focal point of the space and important part of the criteria of grant programmes and related investment to boost activities at Ebrington.

- Inclusion also involves those with physical and learning disabilities. Events, activities, tenants and businesses onsite should be supported to work with community and voluntary sector expertise in ensuring inclusive and positive experiences and opportunities at Ebrington. This can include, for example, enhanced facilities and training and support for businesses and staff.

- While increasing the vibrancy and activity at Ebrington, we can be mindful of opportunities and ways for families and individuals living with neurodivergence to also enjoy and experience Ebrington. This can include quiet spaces and scheduled special events.

Ensuring Ebrington is a safe environment for everyone is crucial to its success. The space must be a welcoming and secure place for all, during the day and as part of the growing night-time

economy. Some observations included:

- Ebrington must be perceived and experienced as a safe space.

- Make sure security, CCTV, lighting and related safety infrastructure is of paramount importance and resourced.

- Include a focus on mental health training for security staff and other groups and programmes regularly using the site and have established partnerships and protocols with statutory agencies and the voluntary/ community sector.

- Support involvement of tenants and provision of training and initiatives promoting 'safer socialising' during the day and as part of the nighttime economy. This can include participation by tenants in schemes such as 'Ask for Angela' – a widely recognised example of good practice in venues, towns and cities to help anyone feeling vulnerable on a night out.



Education and Learning

Education plays a vital role in the future of Derry~Londonderry, and Ebrington has the potential to become a key space for valuable learning opportunities, supporting the City's commitment to education and career development. Participants pointed out that:

- Ebrington could be a focal point and champion for education, helping to bring schools and learners of all ages and backgrounds together for events, conferences, TED talks and activities. It can be a venue to showcase their work, performances and exhibitions.

- These can include, for example, sporting, music, arts and cultural showcases; and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) initiatives. The new DNA Museum can be the flagship support for school engagement and learning opportunities.

- The business sectors, social enterprises and a diverse range of professionals assembled at Ebrington could be part of this approach, inspiring career choices, highlighting and participating in training pathways, and

supporting careers talks at Ebrington and/or in local schools.

- How can the University and NW Regional College become involved?



The whole community in Derry~Londonderry are doing their bit to tackle the climate emergency, focused on environmental responsibility and sustainability. Ebrington must play its part in creating a lasting impact locally and inspiring visitors to protect the environment. We received feedback that included:

- Increase focus on biodiversity and nature/wildlife across the site and St Columb's Park and the river.

- Mute Meadows space could be used in much better ways or at least repair it and get it working again.

- Reduce the carbon footprint of businesses and buildings on site and celebrate and showcase good practice.

- Develop and promote sustainable travel plans/options for visitors and users

As Ebrington evolves, there is an opportunity to grow into a dynamic, multifunctional space that meets the needs of all its users. We received feedback that included:

- Crèche

- Permanent kid's play area

- Appropriate and more restroom facilities for those with additional needs

- Covered area for outdoor events

- Potential for event infrastructure/ staging owned by Ebrington and rented out. This can also be for use by multiple events and organisations over a set number of summer weeks.

- Exploring the feasibility of tenants providing space for the community where possible.

- Make parking and traffic management safe and supportive of a pedestrian focused and family friendly space.

- Bike rental as part of City-wide network with Ebrington as the key hub.

- Facilities to support sporting events, including triathlon infrastructure and access to the river.

- Better signage to and from Ebrington, including connecting and encouraging movement of people and visitors to local neighbourhoods and businesses.

- Skateboarding facility.

- More activities for young people/ teenagers.

- Additional pedestrian access points to the site. ➤





- Name the buildings and stop calling them numbers. Naming might celebrate the City's reputation for artists and cultural expression.

Ebrington offers exciting opportunities for enterprise and economic growth. To position Ebrington as a hub for innovation and economic activity in the City, your feedback included:

- Encourage pop-up businesses around the site, including independent food trucks, or encourage relevant tenants to be creative with external offerings and adding to the vibrancy of Ebrington Square and on-site streets and green space.
- Support tenants in linking with event promoters and organisers of other events and activities and in offering joint promotional deals etc.
- Host a City and North West Investment Conference at Ebrington.

With its unique blend of history and culture, the people of Derry~Londonderry have embraced Ebrington as their gathering place for the whole community. We were asked to:

- Set a realistic timeline for the handover of the site to DCSDC.
- Begin and expand partnership working now – don't wait!
- Investment will be needed to support this transfer and to ensure the continued success of the site.
- A sustainable funding model is required.

Future growth and expansion of the site requires buy-in from everyone based in Ebrington. Some comments recommended:

- More transparency is needed on plans and delivery.
- More engagement with surrounding neighbourhoods and stakeholders.



Effective regular communication, transparency and engagement with the local community is critical to Ebrington's success. Ideas raised included:

- Transparency underpins everything – be open, upfront and willing to engage with communities.
- Newsletter for stakeholders.
- Quarterly meetings bringing together the public and wider interests.
- Active social media.

- Ambassadors for Ebrington – including tenants and those involved in events, activities and other partnerships. A key high-profile ambassador/advocate for Ebrington can help launch a new approach and ways of working together at Ebrington and for the City.
- Ensure clear and helpful information and processes for small groups organising events – make it easy!
- Many community and smaller groups are put off now not because of a previous bad experience but because they think it will be too complex or expensive to do things at Ebrington, or that it's only for larger organisations.
- Open up opportunities but put in place practical support, coordination, investment and partnership working to make things happen.



So, what happens next?

There's a lot for TEO and others to consider. But that's good.

The Executive Office is determined to achieve a better way of working together to realise the full potential of Ebrington. Insight, feedback and ideas

from these community workshops will help to shape that and deliver real and meaningful change with wider community benefits.

If you want to find out more and be part of Ebrington's continuing story, or add to the ideas, issues and themes raised in this document, then get in touch!



Get in touch!

yourebrington@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Future Considerations

Strengthen Strategic Partnerships Stakeholder Collaboration

Continue partnerships with key stakeholders like Derry City and Strabane District Council, local businesses, community groups and the public to ensure alignment with shared objectives for the region.

Develop a Long-Term Anchor Events Programme

Expand the existing successful events programme into a sustainable, long-term calendar that includes a mix of cultural, community, charity and commercial events.

Enhance Site Management and Maintenance Framework

Establish a robust site management plan to address ongoing and future maintenance needs, factoring in the operational costs of running Ebrington. Conduct a full asset condition survey to understand current and future maintenance requirements.

Maximise Economic and Cultural Value with New Developments

Leverage future developments, such as the new museum for Derry~Londonderry, to amplify the site's economic, social, tourism and cultural impact.

Prioritise Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Integrate sustainability into all tourism and cultural initiatives at Ebrington. Highlight the site's cultural heritage to create a unique identity that differentiates it from other destinations in the region.

Develop a Marketing and Branding Strategy

Create a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote Ebrington as a premier destination in the North West, integrating its cultural, tourism and social elements. Conduct market research to identify target audiences and develop tailored campaigns.

Next Steps

Agree Transfer with Derry City and Strabane District Council

Continue discussions and aim to finalise the site transfer, ensuring legal, financial and operational aspects are thoroughly reviewed.

Initiate Sustained Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Organise further consultations to gather input from local communities, businesses and stakeholders on future uses and the event calendar for Ebrington. Continuously engage and keep the public updated with plans and developments associated with the Ebrington site.

Consider, Develop and Implement a Full Events Programme

A year-long calendar of activities will be developed to ensure that Ebrington remains a vibrant hub for cultural, social and community engagement throughout all seasons. This diverse programme will feature a wide range of events, including large-scale festivals,

smaller community gatherings, charity fundraisers, educational workshops and commercial events, all designed to appeal to a broad audience.

By offering activities that cater to different age groups, interests and backgrounds, the calendar will ensure that Ebrington is a welcoming space for both local residents and visitors. The consistent flow of events will not only boost footfall and enhance the site's economic impact but also encourage a sense of ownership and connection among the community, making Ebrington a year-round destination.





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**If you have any further feedback or would
like to be kept updated on developments
in Ebrington please contact:**

The Executive Office

yourebrington@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

