

Creativity Hub

ATUSS LOOK-UP! Ferrara Strategy

Project funded by the Emilia-Romagna Regional
Programme 2021-27

CUP B72F23000480006

Site Visit Notebook

Spaces are changing.
How do people experience
them?

Civic monitoring visit on 9 October 2026



monitoring
marathon



Draft of 13 October 2026

The place and our question



Bagno Ducali on the left. Centro Slavich and forecourt on the right.
Design plan, distinct from the conditions observed on 9 October.

Between Bagno Ducali and the Montagna bastion, the project reorganises outdoor spaces already in use.

We ask how the redevelopment supports cultural activities and everyday life at the Hub.

The visit route

- 1 Bagno Ducali
- 2 Link to Centro Slavich
- 3 Entrance and forecourt
- 4 Rear performance area

The four stops on the site visit



The full route

Bagni Ducali and Centro Slavich

The four stops on the visit. The highlighted location changes on the following pages.

- 1 Bagni Ducali
- 2 Link route
- 3 Entrance and forecourt
- 4 Rear performance area

Orientation diagram,
not to scale.

An already active cultural hub

The works supervisor traces the site's successive uses: a defensive bastion, industrial activities linked to the gas company, community uses and the gradual arrival of cultural organisations.

The redevelopment serves an existing community. Local associations hold classes and rehearsals here, produce music and stage performances.



Methodology

We combined our review of project documents with accounts from people who know and use the site.



The visit reveals a place with a history of different uses.

Stop 1. Bagni Ducali



We are at stop 1

Bagni Ducali

We start at Bagni Ducali and the junction on Viale Alfonso I d'Este.

- 1** Bagni Ducali
- 2** Link route
- 3** Entrance and forecourt
- 4** Rear performance area

Orientation diagram,
not to scale.

1. Bagni Ducali: work is still under way



On 9 October, we observe outdoor works still in progress. The works supervisor explains the aim of reclaiming an area previously also used for informal parking.



The remaining works need clarification, and crossings, connections and access points need checking. The planned conversion of the interior for the Conservatory is a separate project.

Stop 2. Link route



We are at stop 2

Link route

We follow the route towards the spaces at Centro Slavich.

- 1 Bagni Ducali
- 2 **Link route**
- 3 Entrance and forecourt
- 4 Rear performance area

Orientation diagram,
not to scale.

2. The link to Centro Slavich

The project connects Bagni Ducali to the cultural spaces and the routes along the city walls.



Methodology

On 13 October, we sought confirmation from the project officer (RUP), who states that the parking area among the trees is complete.



Stop 3. Entrance and forecourt



We are at stop 3

Entrance and forecourt

We enter the forecourt and observe how access to the premises coexists with other uses of the space.

- 1 Bagni Ducali
- 2 Link route
- 3 Entrance and forecourt**
- 4 Rear performance area

Orientation diagram,
not to scale.

3. The entrance opens up views of the forecourt



The works supervisor explains the decision to replace the wall with fencing that opens up views inside. Corten steel recalls the site's industrial past and also forms the screens around utility equipment.



Users report problems with the gate. Visual openness and access management require separate checks.

The entrance during construction



A stage in the transformation

The Council's photograph records construction at the entrance to the complex. It shows work on the forecourt, temporary fencing and utility equipment along the façade.

It captures a stage in the project, helping to connect the previous layout with the spaces observed during the visit on 9 October 2026.

The forecourt before and during the visit

Before redevelopment



The Council's photo shows the previous surface, also used for parking. Date not specified.

Site visit on 9 October 2026



The visit records new paving and planting beds. The two views are from different angles.

One forecourt, different uses



The layout affects both time spent here and access to the premises. Cars obstruct access for minibuses or ambulances.

Spending time and meeting people

Some interviewees say people now come in to look around, sit down and wait for those attending classes. They see the place as more open.

Accessing activities

Others highlight reduced parking and the needs of people arriving from outside the city with heavy instruments. Views also vary by time of day and type of activity.

Getting close to the premises

The interviews identify a specific problem: when cars occupy spaces outside entrances, some vehicles cannot get close enough to drop off people with limited mobility or unload instruments.

Other interviewees say they can load and unload successfully. Conditions vary by access point.



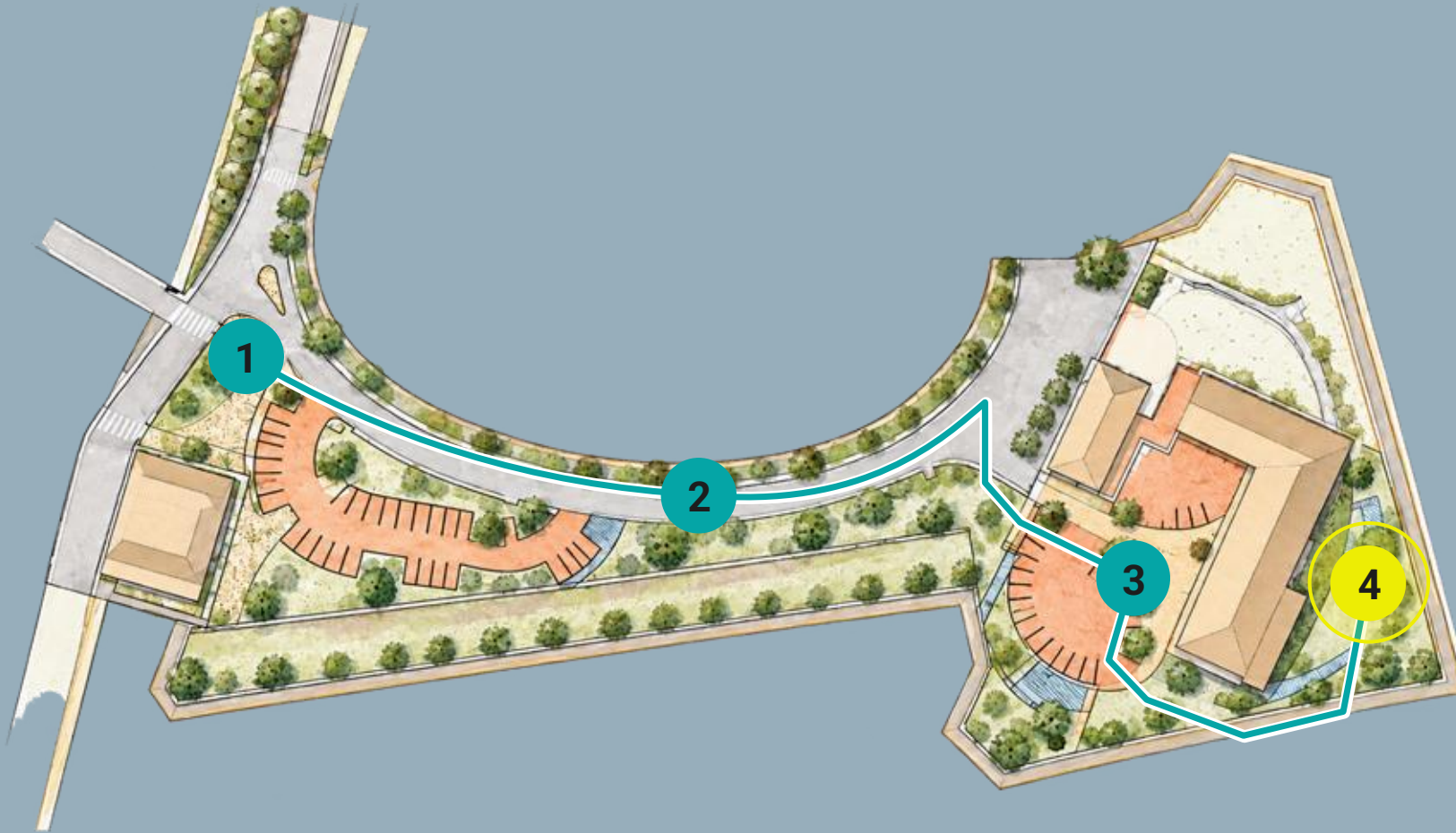
Methodology

One suggestion is to keep a clear strip in front of the premises. This needs technical assessment and tests with the vehicles actually used.



The cars observed show the parking arrangements.
The photo does not record a test with passenger transport vehicles.

Stop 4. Rear performance area



We are at stop 4

Rear performance area

We go around the southern end of the building to reach the tiered seating at the rear.

- 1 Bagni Ducali
- 2 Link route
- 3 Entrance and forecourt
- 4 Rear performance area**

Orientation diagram,
not to scale.

4. The rear performance area



At the rear, we find an intimate space already used for performances. Users say the deeper tiers now allow chairs to be arranged with room for people to pass.



Users ask the Council for lasting arrangements to use the area as a public performance venue.

The tiered seating before and during the visit

Before redevelopment



The Council's photograph shows the previous earth surface. Date not specified.

Site visit on 9 October 2026



The visit shows the new precast elements. Photos taken from different viewpoints.

Surfaces and ramps in everyday use



Construction details gain meaning when compared with users' experience.

The works supervisor explains that the triple surface treatment kept costs down. He also acknowledges dust production. Some users report difficulties moving across it and keeping interiors clean.

The supervisor states that the ramp has an 8% gradient. The group questions whether people can use it independently. We do not conduct a wheelchair test during the visit.

Planting needs time and care



Planting and comfort contribute to the project's effectiveness over time.



New trees and planting beds line the forecourt. The supervisor reports replacing two plants.

Users describe intense summer heat and still limited shade. The plants will need time and maintenance to grow.

Who maintains it?

The works supervision team names the Council and Ferrara Tua. An agreement with the associations is being drafted. Responsibilities and arrangements still need clarification.

Water: separate incidents



We noticed a puddle and a trickle of water linked to a broken pipe. The incident needs to be located and its cause clarified.

Reports of standing water during rainfall concern the performance of the drainage system.

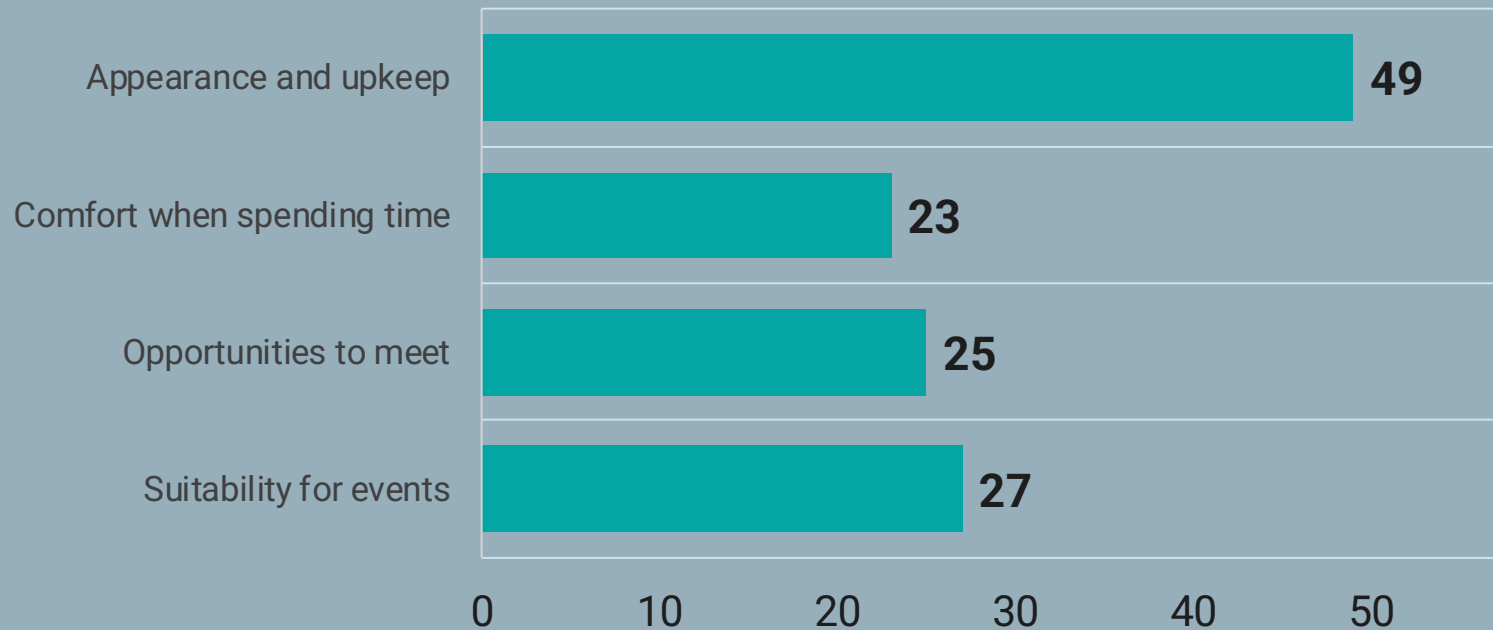
The explanation given

The supervisor reports removing protective covers from drainage channels to resolve standing water. A check after rainfall is needed.

A photo records the water present. Establishing the cause requires information about the incident.

Users' perceptions

Respondents who think the appearance has improved



59 submissions, one blank response excluded. Voluntary participation, non-representative sample. Bars show counts out of 58 people, including views from those who have not used the forecourt.

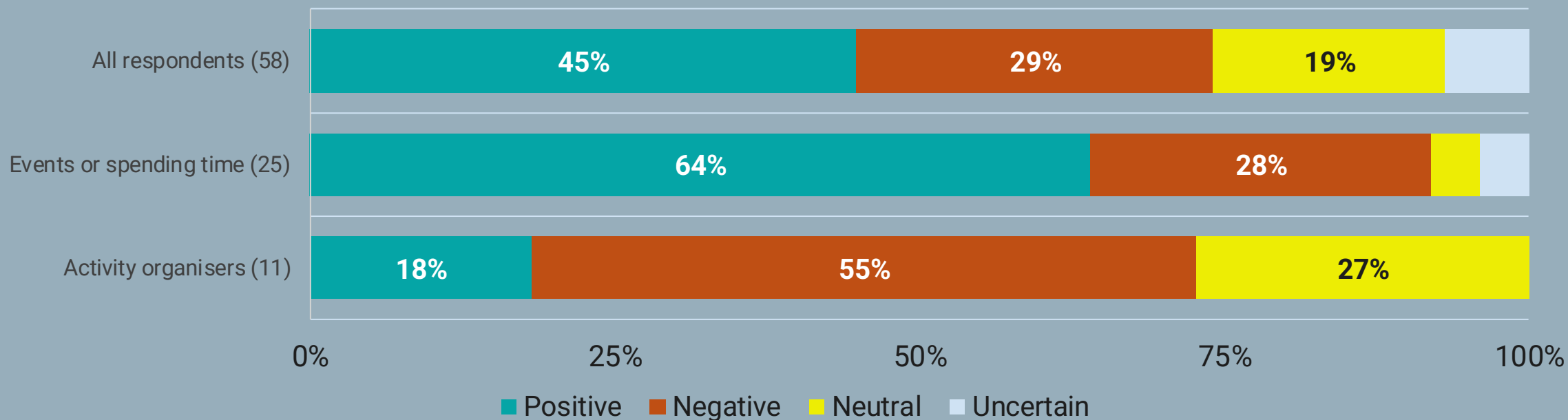
58

substantive responses

More users see improvements in appearance than in comfort or opportunities for use.

Survey perceptions complement visits and interviews.

Experience varies with use



16 out of 25

Positive views among those reporting events or spending time and meeting people.

6 out of 11

Negative views among those who run or help organise activities.

Interpreting the comparison

The groups overlap. The differences raise questions but do not establish causal relationships.

9 October: questions on site

We see ramps and tiered seating partly excluded from the contract in the documents we reviewed. We ask how they came to be included in the completed works.

The supervisor refers to tender savings and funding to launch activities. He describes options for the outdoor area still under consideration.

13 October: the project officer's account

The project officer distinguishes the main contract, Lot A, from its variation and from Lot B, covering complementary works to launch activities.

She assigns lighting to Lot B and states that the outdoor parking among the trees is complete. She considers further outdoor parking spaces unfeasible.



Methodology

Comparing documents with the works observed raises a question. The follow-up interview clarifies the contracts. A detailed list of works under each contract remains to be completed.

Possible follow-up checks

Access and parking

Agree routes to keep clear and loading areas. Test the layout with vehicles used for the activities. Check parking availability near the water tower.

Ramps and connections

Check route continuity with people using wheelchairs or pushchairs and locate obstacles.

Water and lighting

Check drainage after rainfall and lighting in the evening, distinguishing the incidents and areas concerned.

Use and maintenance

Clarify responsibility for planting and event equipment. Explore lasting arrangements for using the performance area.

Completion date stated by the works supervisor: late November, with leeway until the first week of December.
Documentation by 31 December 2026.

Working materials

[Photo archive](#)

[User survey responses](#)

Credits

Giulia Pegogaro and Alessandro Casotti took part in the visit on behalf of Scuola Sviluppo Territoriale. For Monithon Europe, Luigi Reggi prepared the visit record, took part in the visit and edited this site visit notebook.

How to read this notebook

The associations' views are anonymous summaries of the interviews on 9 October. They are not verbatim quotations.

Photographs document what they show. Technical explanations and clarifications retain their dates and sources.

Survey participation is voluntary. Groups based on use may overlap.