

# Public Document Pack



## CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY, 2016

A MEETING of the CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST will be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, MEMORIAL HALL, LEITHEN ROAD, INNERLEITHEN on WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2016 at 4.15 pm

J. J. WILKINSON,  
Clerk to the Council,

19 May 2016

<b>BUSINESS</b>		
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
2.	<b>Order of Business</b>	
3.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
4.	<b>Minute</b> (Pages 1 - 4)  Minute of Meeting of 2 March 2016 for approval. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
5.	<b>Chambers Institution, Peebles</b> (Pages 5 - 44)  Draft Community Consultation. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
6.	<b>Chambers Institution, Peebles: Community Consultation</b> (Pages 45 - 46)  Consider paper updating the Chambers Institution Trust on progress with the community consultation on the future of the Chambers Institution and seeking approval on the next steps in this process. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
7.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  Consider.	
8.	<b>Any Other Items Previously Circulated</b>	
9.	<b>Any Other Items Which The Chairman Decides Are Urgent.</b>	

## NOTES

1. Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members' discussions.
2. Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.

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**Membership of Committee:-** Councillors W. Archibald, S. Bell, C. Bhatia, K. Cockburn, V. M. Davidson, G. H. T. Garvie and G. Logan

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Please direct any enquiries to Kathleen Mason Tel 01835 826772  
email [kmason@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:kmason@scotborders.gov.uk)

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**CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST**

MINUTE of MEETING of the  
CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST held  
in the Council Chamber, Council Offices,  
Rosetta Road, Peebles on 2 March 2016  
at 4.15 p.m.

Present:- Councillors W. Archibald, K. Cockburn, G. Garvie (from para 2),  
G. Logan.  
Apologies:- Councillors S. Bell, C. Bhatia, V. Davidson.  
In Attendance:- Capital and Investments Manager, Democratic Services Officer  
(K. Mason).  
Una Richards, Director and Audrey Dakin, Project Officer, Scottish  
Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT).

**MINUTE**

1. The Minute of Meeting of the Chambers Institution Trust of 31 August 2015 had been circulated.

**DECISION  
APPROVED.**

**APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

2. With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of Meeting held on 31 August 2015, Councillor Logan proposed that in the absence of the Chairman at any future meeting, Members appoint a Vice-Chairman at that time.

**DECISION  
AGREED that in the absence of the Chairman at any future meeting, Members  
appoint a Vice-Chairman at that time.**

**MEMBER**

Councillor Garvie joined the meeting.

**PRESENTATION – CONSULTATION PROCESS**

- 3.1 Una Richards, Director, Scottish Historic Buildings Trust advised that the consultation process in respect of the Chambers Institution, Peebles had been concluded. A paper had been previously circulated advising that 208 questionnaire responses had been submitted, a further 173 additional people attended the stakeholder workshops, giving an overall total of 381 people involved in the consultation. An analysis of the questionnaire indicated that:-

- (a) the building was highly valued by the local Community and there was strong support for it to remain a building for Community use and one where the Community came first.
- (b) the majority of respondents also identified that there was a need for change at the building including upgrading of access, facilities and services, more investment in maintenance and for innovation and revitalisation of some of the existing services housed in the building. There was general acknowledgement that this would require a re-ordering of the layout of the building, especially to

improve access to those parts of the building most used by the Community, although opinions varied as to the scale of the re-ordering exercise needed.

- (c) Peebles Library was the most regularly visited space in the Chambers Institution, and was identified as the anchor use within the building. The other spaces most regularly used by the community were the Burgh Hall, the Tweeddale Museum and Art Gallery and the courtyard. The inclusion of a variety of uses within the building was viewed as positive, helping to increase vibrancy of the building.
- (d) of all the important spaces in the building, the Burgh Hall was identified as the one most clearly underperforming currently and consequently the one with most scope for increasing its relevance to the community and intensifying its usage. A wide range of preferences for use of this space and a variety of proposals for increasing floor area through the introduction of another floor or gallery at high level were expressed.
- (e) some challenges were identified by the Community. A more user-friendly booking facility for the Burgh Hall was suggested, plus it was noted that the uncertainty over who was responsible for management and decision-making – the Chambers Institution Trust, Scottish Borders Council or the new Sport and Culture Trust – was unhelpful in terms of retaining and building ongoing Community support for the building.

### 3.2 An analysis of the stakeholder workshop responses were as follows:-

- (a) there was general support for the library to have ground floor space, as a means both to improve access to this service and to provide a welcoming entrance to the building and gateway to other uses housed there.
- (b) more flexible accommodation in the building was desired, in particular in relation to removing the fixed staging in the Burgh Hall and providing more smaller meeting or breakout spaces.
- (c) there was a strong desire to promote use of the building by young people and for education.
- (d) there was an appetite for closer collaboration between the uses in the building e.g. the Tweeddale Museum and the John Buchan Story. Individual comments on the use of space showed the community exploring how a re-ordering exercise for the building could help promote this collaboration by ensuring uses with greater synergy were located near to each other.
- (e) the cost of hiring the Chambers Institution should be affordable for the local Community.
- (f) there was also recognition that Peebles was generally well served with community halls, and that any decision on the future uses of the Burgh Hall should be mindful of the need to avoid duplication and hence competing with other venues in the town. Respondents recognised the potential scope for synergy with other venues, and that this should be explored. These findings were supported by evidence gathered from interviews with key contacts, including research into other community venues in Peebles.

- 3.3 Una Richards went on to advise that the Community consultation results had fed into a proposed updated Vision for the building in the following terms: “local people wanted the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the Community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable. The key uses of the building were identified as: library, museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.” She recommended that the updated Vision for the building be adopted as it summarised the Community’s aspirations for the building and identified the uses that the community had highlighted as critical to be housed in the building. It was further recommended that a re-ordering exercise was undertaken for the Chambers Institution. This should include the appointment of a design team to prepare a number of sketch schemes to explore the architectural feasibility of delivering the ideas for the building put forward by the Community. The sketch schemes should be the subject of a further Community consultation to determine a final scheme. The final scheme should be costed and a viability appraisal prepared for it. This would provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for the building.
- 3.4 In response to a question raised Una Richards advised that the Design Team costs were incorporated within the £30,000 approved at the meeting held on 31 August 2015. As part of the re-ordering exercise an outline of the costs of the capital works would be provided. She explained the options available for sourcing capital funding and it was noted that SHBT would liaise with the Council’s Chief Financial Officer to confirm whether the Design Team would be appointed by Scottish Borders Council or SHBT. Interviews would be held in regard to the appointment of the Design Team. In answering a question relating to time-lines, Una Richards advised that SHBT would report back in approximately 6 months to help the Trust agree the way forward and give a steer financially on the best funding route. It was noted that the Council’s capital programme was oversubscribed over the next few years. Una Richards advised there was money available out there for the right building/scheme depending on the delivery route.

## **DECISION**

### **AGREED**

- (a) **to adopt the recommended updated Vision for the building because it summarised the Community’s aspirations for the building and identified the uses that the Community had highlighted as critical to be housed in the building, namely:- “local people wanted the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the Community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable. The key uses of the building were identified as: library, museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.”**
- (b) **to undertake a re-ordering exercise for the Chambers Institution including the appointment of a Design Team to prepare a number of sketch schemes to explore the architectural feasibility of delivery the ideas for the building put forward by the Community and that the sketch schemes should be the subject of a further Community consultation to determine a final scheme. The final scheme should be costed and a viability appraisal prepared for it, this would provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for the building.**
- (c) **SBHT would liaise with the Council’s Chief Financial Officer regarding whether the Design Team would be appointed by Scottish Borders Council or SHBT..**

**FUTURE MEETING DATES**

4. The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 May 2016 at 4.15 p.m.

**DECISION**

**AGREED that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 May 2016 at 4.15 p.m.**

*The meeting concluded at 4.50 p.m.*

SCOTTISH HISTORIC BUILDINGS TRUST

# CHAMBERS INSTITUTION, PEEBLES

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

16 May 2016

Present Upgraded Enjoy Friendly Museum Commercial  
Burgh Hall Expand Local Support Vision  
CAB Social Ceiling Removed Peebles  
Relevant Continue Not SBC Needs Carry  
Hub Decide Space Longer Culture Regular Council  
Public



Scottish  
Historic  
Buildings  
Trust

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, Riddle's Court,  
322 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2PG  
T: 0131 220 1232, E: [info@shbt.org.uk](mailto:info@shbt.org.uk), W: [shbt.org.uk](http://shbt.org.uk)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

Scottish Borders Council commissioned the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) to carry out a community consultation exercise to define an agreed Vision for the future use of the Chambers Institution in Peebles. SHBT has over 35 years of experience in finding sustainable uses for important buildings across Scotland and has worked directly with Scottish Borders Council on a number of projects in the Borders, including recent projects to secure the future of the Greenlaw Town Hall and the Haining estate, Selkirk.

### Community consultation exercise

The consultation process has included background information gathering, a questionnaire and a series of stakeholder workshops and was undertaken in the period from September 2015 to April 2016. In total:

- 923 people and
- 124 local organisations or businesses were engaged with through this exercise;
- 237 completed questionnaires were submitted and
- 10 interviews completed.

### Vision for the Chambers Institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The Vision for the building was generated from the community's ideas for the building and has been tested through further focussed consultation. The final version was agreed by the Chambers Institution Trust at its meeting on 2 March 2016:

Local people want the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable.

The key uses of the building were identified as: library, museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.

### The community's views

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Chambers Institution today were identified through the community consultation exercise.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strong community support</li><li>• General endorsement of continued relevance of Chambers' vision that the building is for the 'improvement of the community'</li><li>• Different uses seen as positive, making it a more lively place to visit</li></ul>	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access difficulties</li><li>• Shortage of facilities e.g. toilets / catering / storage</li><li>• Lack of flexibility of spaces</li><li>• Opening hours vary across services</li><li>• Affordability and ease of booking</li></ul>

Internal (cont)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Library and Burgh Hall are the spaces most regularly visited</li> <li>• War memorial and quiet and contemplative courtyard much valued</li> <li>• Peebles' High Street is a vibrant place</li> <li>• Peebles is an attractive and creative place</li> </ul>	<p>the Burgh Hall and Chamber</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of regular maintenance</li> <li>• Most visited spaces are not the most prominent and accessible</li> </ul>
Recommendations arising	<p><i>Reinforce Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate the importance of the building</li> <li>• Maintain and enhance the Chambers Institution's role as the cultural heart of the community</li> </ul>	<p><i>Address Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver an attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable building</li> </ul>
External	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the past</li> <li>• Most scope for change identified for the Burgh Hall, e.g. remove fixed staging, range of ideas for removing false ceiling, and introducing gallery or floor at high level</li> <li>• Scope to improve collaboration between the providers of services at the Chambers Institution</li> <li>• Scope to address current social concerns – young people and education</li> </ul>	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging population of Peebles</li> <li>• Lack of clarity over building management (CIT, SBC and Live Borders)</li> <li>• Peebles is well provided with community spaces</li> </ul>
Recommendations arising	<p><i>Seize Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-order the building to increase flexibility and hence use, especially of the Burgh Hall</li> </ul>	<p><i>Overcome Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure service delivery is responsive to current needs of the community</li> <li>• Build the trust of the local community through delivering effective building management in conjunction with other venues in the town, as appropriate</li> </ul>

### Next steps

At their meeting on 2 March 2016, The Chambers Institution Trust agreed that SHBT should deliver a re-ordering exercise to provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a Chambers Institution fit for the 21st century. The agreed process to be adopted is:

- the appointment of a Design Team to prepare a number of sketch schemes to explore the architectural feasibility of delivering the ideas for the building put forward by the Community
- the sketch schemes to be the subject of a further Community consultation to determine a final scheme
- the final preferred scheme will be costed by the Design team
- a viability appraisal will be prepared for it by SHBT, based on our experience of previous projects to repair important historic buildings and sensitively adapt them to sustainable new uses to benefit local communities. This will set out the potential funding for the Capital development project for the Chambers Institution.

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DRAFT

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Objectives of the community consultation exercise

The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) was commissioned by Scottish Borders Council in July 2015 to carry out a community consultation exercise to determine how the Chambers Institution in Peebles can sustain itself and be relevant to the people of Peebles and beyond in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The key product of the community consultation at this stage is an agreed Vision for the future use of the building.

This report describes the process and results of the community consultation exercise carried out from August 2015 to May 2016.

### 1.2 Scope

The community consultation exercise was designed to be as inclusive as possible and to gather views both from those who currently use the Chambers Institution and those who currently do not. The community was defined widely to include the following groups:

- residents of Peebles
- residents of Tweeddale
- residents of the broader Scottish Borders
- visitors to Peebles

### 1.3 Background

#### 1.3.1 The Chambers Institution – a brief description

William Chambers (16 April 1800 – 20 May 1883) was a Scottish publisher and politician. He was born in Peebles and moved to Edinburgh where he founded the publishing firm of W. & R. Chambers Publishers in 1832. His publishing firm continues to this day, now most famous for the Chambers Dictionary.

In 1857, Chambers bought the previous buildings on the site of the Chambers Institution to the south side of the High Street of Peebles, including the 16th century Queensberry Lodging. He commissioned the architect John Paris to extend and improve them. The Chambers Institution was completed in 1859. A major extension to the building in 1912 was funded by Andrew Carnegie, who cited Chambers as influencing his own approach to philanthropy.

The complex currently includes the following accommodation:

- Peebles Library
- Tweeddale Museum and Art Gallery
- Visit Scotland shop
- SBC Customer services Contact centre
- John Buchan Story Museum
- Citizens Advice Bureau

- SBC Customer services Registrar Office
- Burgh Hall
- Shop (Food for Thought)
- War Memorial

The importance of the Chambers Institution is recognised by its inclusion on the list of buildings of special, architectural or historic interest at Category A, indicating that the Chambers Institute is a building of national or international importance. Note the War Memorial in the courtyard of the Chambers Institution is separately listed at Category B. See Appendix I for the list descriptions.

### 1.3.2 **William Chambers' bequest**

The Chambers Institution was given to the Provost, Magistrates and Councillors of the Royal Burgh of Peebles as Trustees under the terms of the Disposition and Mortification by William Chambers dated 1 January 1859. The bequest specifies that the building is to be used for the community and the uses to which the building can be put:

*“[the building is for the] social moral and intellectual improvement of the community of the said Burgh and County of Peeblesshire general and comprehends [to] ... be used as a public Reading Library, Gallery of Arts and Museum of natural and other objects for the instruction of the public, and a great Hall for public meetings and exhibitions of various kinds”.*

The terms of the bequest still apply to the building today and this community consultation exercise acknowledges its restrictions.

### 1.3.3 **Management of the Chambers Institution: role of the Chambers Institution Trust, Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders**

The Chambers Institution Trust was established by William Chambers in his bequest of the building to the Town Council in 1859. The Scottish Borders Council holds the Chambers Institution ‘in trust’ as the statutory successor authority under section (1) of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, but the Chambers Institution Trust has always been and remains a separate legal entity from SBC itself.

In 2010, SBC decided to revitalise the Chambers Institution Trust and put it on a more independent footing and in 2012, an application for charitable status was submitted by Chambers Institution Trust. Following clarification from legal counsel regarding this application, in 2014, SBC agreed to pause and reflect, to allow time for a consultation with Tweeddale residents and Trustees. In 2015, SBC

agreed to the Chambers Institution Trust reverting to sole Council control.

The current uses of the Institution complex are complicated and are regulated by a lease and management agreement. These arrangements have been updated following the establishment of the new Culture and Sport Trust, Live Borders, on 1 April 2016. The following services delivered at the Chambers Institution are now provided through Live Borders: Libraries and Information Services, Museums and Galleries Service, Public Halls

#### 1.3.4 **Appointment of Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to undertake this community consultation**

In May 2015, SBC approved the undertaking of a community consultation exercise by Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT).

The reasons for commissioning SHBT were noted:

*'The Council has limited experience of running this type of engagement event and therefore proposes to retain the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to assist with this process.'*

#### 1.3.5 **Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT)**

SHBT are a charitable organisation dedicated to regenerating significant historic buildings for the benefit of local communities across Scotland. SHBT is an established building preservation trust and has over 35 years of experience in delivering complex projects that repair and re-use listed buildings, often stepping in as the last resort to save a Building at Risk. SHBT is the largest and most active building preservation trust in Scotland, and have worked extensively in the Scottish Borders.

The success of SHBT projects is due to the organisation's collective skills in building conservation, architecture, fundraising and project management, and through collaborative working with partner organisations to identify and secure a compatible and sustainable end use for important historic buildings.

In addition SHBT offers its skills and services to other organisations and individuals such as trusts, community groups and building owners to help them to develop their own historic building projects.

This means SHBT is uniquely well placed to deliver community consultation projects, balancing the views of the community against what is deliverable when working within the constraints and opportunities of important historic buildings.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

The following process was adopted to consult with the local community on the future of the Chambers Institution:

#### *Stage 1: Information gathering, research and preparation*

- a. Information gathering and research
- b. Preparation of new interpretation panels based on new material, for use at the Community consultation open event and Stakeholder workshops
- c. Developing, testing and promotion of questionnaire to understand how the community currently use both the Chamber Institution and other buildings for community use within the town and their aspirations for the Chambers Institution's future

#### *Stage 2: Consultation*

- a. Open event, held at the Chambers Institution on 3 October 2015 to launch the questionnaire and get informal feedback
- b. 4 Stakeholder workshops, held in Peebles in January 2016, targeted to follow up on initial findings from the questionnaire
- c. Preparation of draft report drawing together all aspects of the community consultation, including a draft Vision for the future use of the building
- d. Presentation of summary of draft report to the Chambers Institution Trust and the Tweeddale Forum meeting of local councillors and community councils
- e. Refinement of final report in response to feedback received.

### 2.2 Number of people and organisations engaged via the exercise

The total number of people directly engaged in this community consultation was **923** and the total number of organisations and local businesses was **124**.

The people engaged included:

- 740 questionnaires were handed out at the Open Event on 3 October 2015
- 173 people attended the stakeholder workshops
- 10 interviews were completed

The organisations engaged included:

- 84 local businesses distributed flyers for the Open event on 3 October 2015
- 28 local organisations contacted directly with information on the consultation and the Open event on 3 October 2015
- 12 Tweeddale Area Community Councils contacted directly with information on the consultation and the Open event on 3 October 2015.

### 2.3 Number of responses received to the consultation

The total number of questionnaire responses received was **237**. In addition, **10** interviews were completed, 8 with representatives of the services currently

occupying the Chambers Institution and 2 interviews with representatives of other venues in the town.

Two types of questionnaire responses were gathered:

- 209 responses were received to the initial community consultation questionnaire
- 28 responses were received to the additional questionnaire for the stakeholder workshops.

#### 2.4 **Stage 1a – Information Gathering and Research**

The first stage in the process was to gather background information on the town, the Chambers Institution and its current service delivery and uses, visitor numbers and income as well as undertaking research into what other services/facilities are available within Peebles. This was done through a combination of:

- desk-based research of online and hard copy sources (including material deposited with Scottish Borders Council by the Chambers Institution Trust),
- 8 interviews with representatives of all the services occupying the building (undertaken on 11, 15 September and 3 October 2015),
- and visits and 2 interviews at other venues in the town (undertaken on 6 and 19 January 2016).

#### 2.5 **Stage 1b - Preparation of new interpretation panels**

The Tweeddale Museum had recently prepared a display on the history of the Chambers Institution which covered the period from 1859 to 2009. In addition, information on more recent changes to the building was prepared by SHBT as an additional display board covering the period from 2009 to the present day.

It was also important to help consultation respondent understand the complex layout of the building, so boards with illustrated annotated plans were prepared. A suggestions board was also prepared to enable respondents who preferred to submit a single idea to contribute to the process. See Appendix IV for copies of the Interpretation display boards.

#### 2.6 **Stage 1c - Developing, testing, promotion, and release of questionnaire**

##### 2.6.1 **Developing the questionnaire**

Quantitative data was sought on the following aspects, with questions devised to be of checkbox type wherever possible to assist in data analysis:

- How often respondents visit the building and what they do there
- How often respondents visit other venues in the town and what they do there
- Any community interest or community groups who should be asked to contribute to the consultation
- Information on age, gender and where respondents live.

Qualitative data was sought on the following aspects, with scope for free text answers to some questions to allow respondents to use their own words to express their views:

- Importance of the building
- Identifying how the current uses of the building reflect William Chambers' original vision (that the building supports the 'social, moral and intellectual improvement of the community')
- Respondent's own vision for the building
- How respondent's own vision will help achieve the Scottish Government's National Outcomes

#### 2.6.2 **Testing the questionnaire**

A draft of the questionnaire was circulated to the Chambers Institution Trust meeting on 31 August 2015 and the questionnaire amended on the basis of the comments received. See Appendix III for a copy of the final questionnaire, which was available both in printed hard copy and online, hosted on SurveyMonkey website.

#### 2.6.3 **Promotion and release of the questionnaire**

Hard copy questionnaires were available at the Chambers Institution, via the Museum, Library and Registrar from October 2015 until February 2016, with completed questionnaires being collected by the Peebles Library.

The SHBT website hosted a link to the online version of the questionnaire from September 2015 until February 2016.

A description of the consultation and link to the online version of the questionnaire were also included on the Consultations section of the SBC website from September 2015.

Awareness raising for the Questionnaire was carried out as part of the process of promoting the Open Event held at the Chambers Institution on 3 October 2015 (see 2.7.2).

### 2.7 **Stage 2a Open event**

#### 2.7.1 **Preparation**

It was considered that holding the consultation event on a Saturday would maximise the visibility of the event and the number of local people of all ages able to attend. The 3 October 2015 from 10am until 4pm was selected as a suitable date and time. It was agreed with Scottish Borders Council and the Chambers Institution Trust to erect a gazebo to one side of the courtyard, which would be the main base for the SHBT team for the day. Interpretation displays (see 2.5) were put on display in the Burgh Chamber.

### 2.7.2 **Awareness raising**

Raising awareness locally was viewed as important to promote the initial consultation event and hence raise awareness of the consultation process generally. The following awareness raising activities were therefore carried out:

- 2 SHBT representatives distributed flyers or posters, as appropriate, to a wide range of shops, hotels, banks, coffee shops, churches etc., with a particular focus on the High Street in Peebles on 15 September 2015. 84 locations in the town promoted the community consultation.
- A banner promoting the initial consultation event was in place on the railing of the Chambers Institution from 21 September 2015 until 5 October 2015.
- 28 local organisations that had been identified by Alison Tait of Peebles Library and the Chambers Institution Trust as being the key groups with active membership in the local community were all contacted direct with details of the initial consultation event and the community consultation exercise and encouraged to circulate the information as widely as possible to contribute to a 'local multiplier effect' to encourage maximum participation.
- All 12 Tweeddale Area Community Councils were also contacted direct with details of the initial consultation event and the community consultation exercise and encouraged to circulate the information as widely as possible to contribute to a 'local multiplier effect' to encourage maximum participation.
- Scottish Borders Council issued a Press Release about the consultation and media coverage was secured in the Peeblesshire News, which published an article promoting the initial consultation event on Friday 18 September 2015.
- SHBT promoted the event via social media on Facebook and Twitter and provided a link to the SHBT webpage from which the online survey could be accessed.
- An article was posted on the Peebles Life website and messages included on the Peebles 4W Facebook page.

### 2.7.3 **On the day**

6 SHBT representatives were in attendance to hand out questionnaires, lead guided tours of the building if desired, answer any questions and to listen to and record informal feedback. The Tweeddale Museum arranged to be open until 4pm to allow attendees at the initial consultation event to see the Museum spaces after their usual closing time on Saturday.

A total of 740 questionnaires were handed out, 67 completed questionnaires were returned and 16 post-it note ideas were received on the suggestions board.

## 2.8 **Stage 2b - Stakeholder workshops**

In addition to the initial consultation event, a series of stakeholder workshops were held, the purpose of which was:

- to gather information from some key groups (especially those under-represented in the initial responses received to the questionnaire, i.e. young and working age people in the town)
- receive input on a draft updated vision for the building and
- to test some of the ideas emerging from early questionnaire responses in more detail.

Workshops were arranged as follows:

- Tweeddale Area Forum on 2 December 2015
- Vision for Peebles event on 16 January 2016
- Bookbug event on 19 January 2016
- Parish Toddlers and St Andrews Leckie Parent and Toddler groups, both on 26 January 2016.

An additional short questionnaire was prepared. This included a draft of a proposed new vision for the building. A selection of ideas which had emerged consistently from early responses to the questionnaire were also presented, to test to see if a consensus view was emerging from the community. See Appendix VI for a copy of the additional questionnaire.

A total of 173 people attended these events in total and 28 responses were received to the additional questionnaire.

## 2.9 **Stage 2c, d and e - Preparation of report**

A summary of the draft report was presented to the Chambers Institution Trust and the Tweeddale Forum meeting of local councillors and community councils held on 2 March 2016. The meeting of the Chambers Institution Trust approved the final version of the Vision presented to them.

### 3.0 FINDINGS OF THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

All the information gathered through the community consultation exercise was analysed to determine if it illustrated a strength, weakness, opportunity or threat for the Chambers Institution (SWOT analysis). This was a key stage to ensure that a rounded analysis of both positive and negative factors influencing the future of the Chambers Institution was carried out, allowing these to be weighed and balanced and ultimately used to shape the Vision for the building.

#### 3.2 Strengths of the Chambers Institution

##### 3.2.1 Strong community support

The building is highly valued by the local community.

*'It is a beautiful building and an important focal point of the town. As the population increases so does the need for all of its facilities.'*

*'This building is at the centre of the town and should be a thriving hub, used all day and every evening'*

Comments from questionnaire respondents

##### **Evidence in support:**

- Questionnaire respondents overwhelmingly viewed the Chambers Institution as important (99% of respondents viewed the building as very important or important to the history of Peebles).
- Common words in questionnaire respondents' visions for the building for the 21st century were Peebles (27 counts) Social (22), Continue (20), Vision (17), Needs (16), Local (15), Hub (14), Burgh Hall (12). Text analysis of questionnaire responses to this question produced the word cloud below (see Figure 1). The emphasis on words related to the local community demonstrates how important the building is to local people.



Figure 1: Word cloud generated from questionnaire respondents' visions for the building for the 21st century

- A further analysis of responses to this question was carried out by categorising them into some key themes. 72% of respondents emphasised that the community's needs should come first for this building.
- The Institution's importance as a community facility, rooted in the variety of services that can be accessed here was noted in the Peebles Community Trust's Draft Town Action Plan. The Registrar is omitted from the list of services delivering community benefit noted in the report<sup>1</sup>.
- There was strong support for the draft vision presented at the stakeholder workshops (100% of questionnaire respondents), which had two key aspects: the buildings should support community life in Peebles and that it should retain its valued public service role.

### 3.2.2 **General endorsement of continued relevance of Chambers' vision**

There is strong support for it to remain a building for community use and one where the community comes first.

*'Respect Chambers' 'clear vision' for improvement of the community.'*  
*'To keep his vision to the fore of what happens to the Chambers Institution'*

Comments from questionnaire respondents

#### **Evidence in support:**

- When asked about their ideas of what the Vision for the Chambers Institution should be, 50 of the 157 questionnaire respondents' answers to this question emphasised continuity and that Chambers' original vision for the building remained relevant.
- Questionnaire respondents also noted that the Peebles Library was the closest fit with William Chambers' vision for the Institution, (95% of respondents thought this use related closely to Chambers' vision). Next highest scores were for Peebles Library event (90%), Tweeddale Museum temporary exhibition (90%), Art exhibition (88%), War memorial (86%), enjoy courtyard (86%), Beltane Festival (86%) and Tweeddale Museum permanent displays (85%). The lowest scoring use was the shop (currently rented to Food for Thought deli) (20%).

### 3.2.3 **Different uses seen as positive, making it a more lively place to visit**

The inclusion of a variety of uses within the building was viewed as positive, helping to increase vibrancy of the building.

<sup>1</sup> Peebles Community Trust (nd) *Draft Peebles Town Action Plan*

*'Peebles [is] all about the community and different parts of the community use different parts of the building.'*

Comment from questionnaire respondent

**Evidence in support:**

- The majority of those who work in and deliver services from the building considered that the mix of uses present made the building more of a destination for the local community.
- A number of examples of close partnership working were noted by occupants of the building, particularly between the Library and Tweeddale Museum and Art Gallery, for example the Art Gallery was used for the Summer Reading Challenge awards ceremony organised by the Library, but also between the Tweeddale Museum and Art Gallery and the John Buchan Story.
- The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)'s relationship with other services provided was of a subtly different type – they found that the anonymity afforded by being located alongside well used public services, especially the library, avoided possible awkwardness in visiting the CAB.
- The only occupant who did not feel synergy with other users was the Registrar, for whom noise coming from the adjacent Burgh Hall and shared use of the Burgh Chambers were cited as occasional problems.
- A number of the occupants identified that improved signage, both physical and online to help visitors explore other services available in the building they might be interested in would be helpful. Some examples of this already exist e.g. The John Buchan Story website notes visitors may also wish to see the Tweeddale Museum.

- 3.2.4 **The Library and Burgh Hall are the spaces most regularly visited**  
Peebles Library was the most regularly visited space in the Chambers Institution and was identified as the anchor use within the building.

*'Library should be extended, improved, fully qualified librarian with library and humanities priorities employed.'*

Comment from questionnaire respondent

The Burgh Hall was the space next most frequently used, especially for craft fairs and fundraising events.

**Evidence in support:**

- Visitor numbers and income figures for the building were supplied by Scottish Borders Council. These confirm that the part of the building that welcomes most visitors is the Peebles Library (54988 in 2014/5, plus 90 events), followed by the Tweeddale Museum and Art Gallery (9364 in 2014/5, plus 55 events) and Scottish Borders Council Customer Services Contact centre (6615 face to face meetings recorded in 2014/5). Visitor numbers for the John Buchan Story were reported recently as 2000 per year.
- In terms of income generated by the various services in the building, Scottish Borders Council figures confirm Scottish Borders Council Customer Services Registration Services has the highest income (£97,498.00 in 2014/5, of which £9125 relates to Civil Marriages in the office), then the rental for the shop (currently rented to Food for Thought) (£10,500 in 2015/6) followed by rental for the John Buchan Story museum and offices (£9,450 in 2015/6) and the Burgh Hall (£8,809 in 2014/5).
- This official visitor numbers for the library are supported by the results of the questionnaire, where the most regularly used spaces were the Peebles Library (28% of respondents visited once a week or more) followed by the Burgh Hall (18%), Tweeddale Museum (7%), Art Gallery (4%). The questionnaire figures helpfully fill in some gaps in the information available in the official visitor numbers and confirm that the Burgh Hall is regularly used by the local community.

3.2.5

**War memorial and quiet and contemplative courtyard much valued**

The special character of the War memorial in its courtyard setting was cited by many people as a key component of the importance of the Institution complex.

*'Gardens enjoyed at War Memorial'*  
Comment from questionnaire respondent

**Evidence in support:**

- As noted at 3.1.4 above, figures from the questionnaire analysis helpfully fill in some gaps in the information available in the official visitor numbers and confirm that the War memorial is also regularly used by the local community (3% of questionnaire respondents regularly visit the War memorial and 14% visit once a month).
- When looking into what visitors do at the Chamber Institution, the Peebles Library and enjoying the courtyard were equal highest scoring in questionnaire responses (74%). Next most popular uses

were temporary exhibitions at the Tweeddale Museum (70%), Craft fair (67%) and fundraising events (61%)

### 3.2.6 **Peebles' High Street is a vibrant place**

The vibrancy of the High Street generally has been recognised as an important part of the appeal of Peebles for visitors and the local community.

#### ***Evidence in support:***

- Peebles' High Street scored highest in Scotland in a recent survey of towns for 'home town identity' principally based on the number of independent shops present<sup>2</sup>.
- The Conservation Area Statement included in the current Local Plan highlights the importance of the High Street 'with its rich assortment of commercial properties and churches'<sup>3</sup>. The High Street is at the centre of the Peebles conservation area, which has been classified by Historic Environment Scotland as "outstanding". Conservation Area legislation requires that changes that affect the character of the area require formal permission. Thus, there is a level of control over the future appearance of the High Street. For any buildings that are also listed, Listed Building Consent will also be required for changes affecting their character.
- Mapping the location of Listed Buildings in Peebles, shows a marked concentration of these buildings, designated for their 'special' architectural or historic interest, around the High Street (see Figure 2).

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<sup>2</sup> p13, New Economics Foundation (2005) *Clone Town Britain: The survey results on the bland state of the nation*

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Borders Council (2011) Scottish Borders Consolidated Local Plan

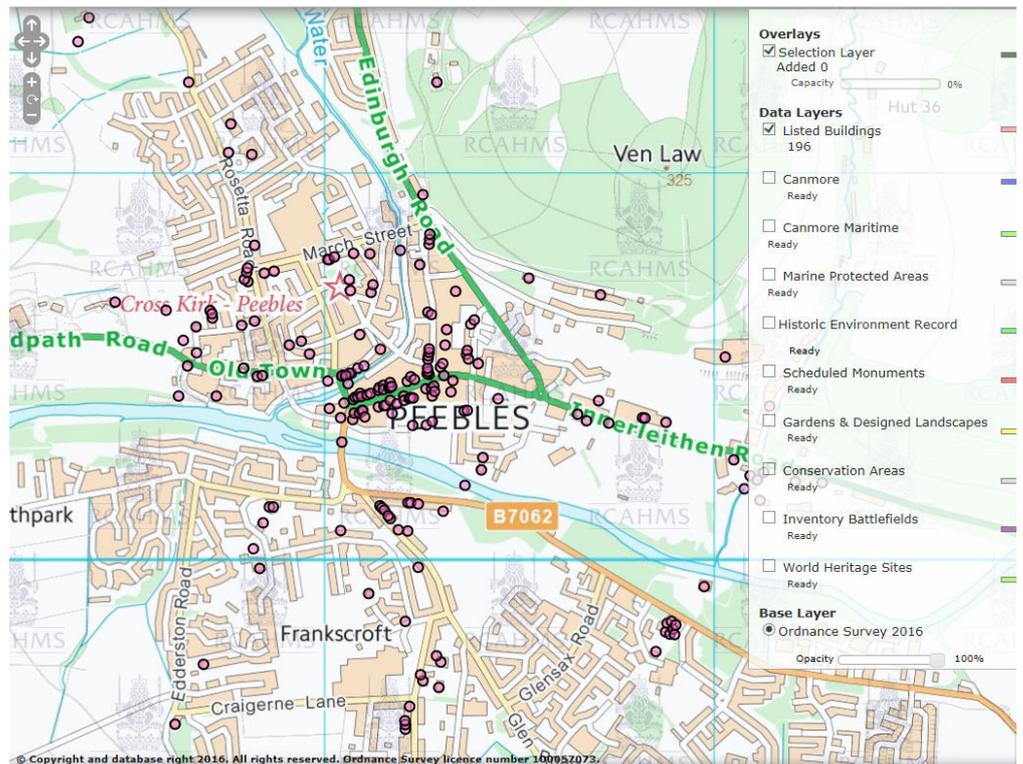


Figure 2 Map generated on <http://pastmap.org.uk/> showing Listed Buildings in Peebles on 1 April 2016

- ‘Town Centres First’ is the key principal defined in the recent National Review of Town Centres<sup>4</sup> report. The provision of Accessible Public Services was a key work area for the review and the report stresses the importance of locating public services in town centre locations for the overall economic health of communities.
- This view was reinforced by the occupants of the building who all saw significant benefits of being located in the Chambers Institution, principally relating to its prominent High Street location, for example, the John Buchan Story noted that visitor numbers had increased significantly from 700 to 2000 per year, with the relocation of the museum from Broughton to Peebles High Street considered to be responsible for the increase<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.2.7 Peebles is an attractive and creative place

Peebles is accessible and attractive and in recent years has established a reputation as a creative hub for the Borders.

<sup>4</sup> National Review of Town Centres External Advisory Group (2013) Community and Enterprise in Scotland’s Town Centres

<sup>5</sup> Education Scotland (29 February 2016) *Peebles Creative Place Review*

**Evidence in support:**

- Peebles was awarded Creative Scotland's Creative Place 2014 award in recognition that it is the most creative place of its size in the whole of Scotland.<sup>6</sup>
- an independent review by Education Scotland published in February 2016 notes that Peebles is a place with a high level of cultural and artistic opportunities where a vibrant community of creative artists, organisations and volunteers work together to develop engagement and participation<sup>7</sup>. This is illustrated by the wide variety of cultural organisations in Peebles, including Peebles In Chorus, Peebles Singers, Peebles Concert Band, Peebles Silver Band, Peebles Players, Peebles Orchestra, Peebles Youth Orchestra, Sing Out children's choir, Music In Peebles, Peebles Folk Club, Nomad Beat music teaching centre, Tweed Theatre, Fiona Henderson School of Dance, Southside Dance, Pan Dance, Peebles Film Club, Peebles Photographic Group, several commercial galleries, Peebles Art Club, Chambers Institution, Embroidery Guild, Beltane Studios bronze foundry, John Buchan Story<sup>8</sup>
- Peebles is an accessible town. It is located approx. 23 miles south of Edinburgh on the A703, with a travel time of approximately 45 minutes. The town is approx. 52 miles east of Glasgow on the A72, with a travel time of approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Travel times to Carlisle and Newcastle are 1 hour 50 minutes and 2 hours 30 minutes respectively. It is estimated that 4.5m people live within a two-hour drive time of the central Scottish Borders and nearly 8m people live within a three-hour drive time<sup>9</sup> (see Figure 3).

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.peeblescreativeplace2014.com/> accessed on 13 May 2016

<sup>7</sup> p5, Education Scotland (February 2016) Peebles Creative Place review

<sup>8</sup> p13, Noble Openshaw Ltd (March 2014) *A Cultural Strategy for the Scottish Borders*

<sup>9</sup> Our Scottish Borders (nd) The best move of your life ...

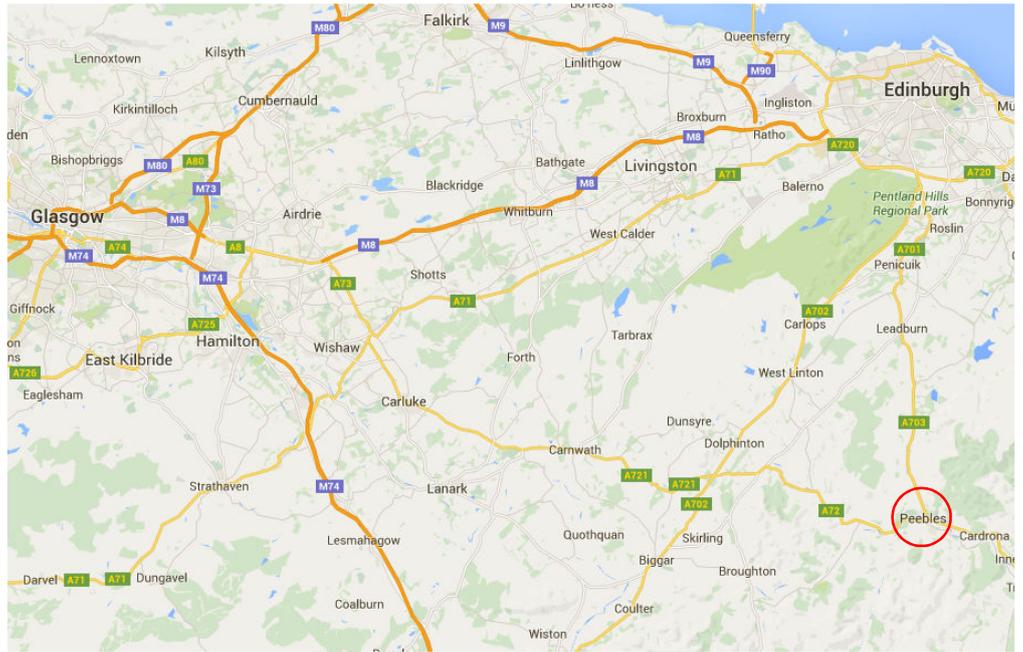


Figure 3 Location map. Source: Google.

- Tourism is facilitated by the accessibility of the town and is now the key industry in Peebles following the decline of the textile industry. In 2011, British residents took an estimated 1.24 million visits to Southern Scotland, staying 4.46 million nights and spending £255 million. Overseas visitors made 89,000 trips, staying 545,000 nights and spending £87 million. Glentress Forest is the principal tourist attraction near to Peebles, and welcomed 301,000 visitors in 2011.
- Part of the appeal of Peebles relates to the fact that it maintains a strong community actively concerned to preserve its heritage, engage with the present, and play its part in determining the future. This has been demonstrated through the good levels of participation in the preparation of the Vision for Peebles process, led by the Peebles Community Trust and through the flourishing of over 100 local community groups run by volunteers<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.3 Weaknesses of the Chambers Institution

#### 3.3.1 Access difficulties

There are significant shortcomings in the current access arrangements for the building, with access for all not possible to all of the public spaces, especially the Art Gallery.

#### **Evidence in support:**

- The majority of those who work in and deliver services from the building identified significant shortcomings in the current access

<sup>10</sup> Peebles Community Trust (nd) *Draft Peebles Town Action Plan*

arrangements. The most significant issue is the very limited lift access – the current lift is smaller than recommended and only serves the Peebles Library and Chambers Room spaces, with access down to the main Tweeddale Museum space via a short stair lift.

- A series of access audits were carried out on the building by Scottish Borders Council in 2003. Many of the recommendations were acted upon, but a number of the recommended actions are outstanding, principally:
  - Car parking provision for people with reduced mobility is not available. The only parking available is in the busy main street at the entrance to the courtyard. None of the available spaces are reserved for people with reduced mobility. The town also has two main public car parks, which are both a considerable distance from the building. This poses a major problem for Disabled People visiting the Museum, Art Gallery and Library.
  - The lift car is smaller than the recommended minimum size.
  - There is currently no toilet provision for disabled people visiting the Museum, Art Gallery and Library. There is a duty under the Equality Act to provide an accessible toilet if a reasonable solution can be found.
- In addition, it is not possible for vehicles to drop off or pick up next to any external door of the Burgh Hall. The nearest location to park when loading is at School Brae, with access to the Burgh Hall via steps to the fire escape door to the west of the Hall.

### 3.3.2 Shortage of facilities e.g. toilets / catering / storage

The allocation of support spaces has developed organically over time, and does not reflect the current needs of the public or those who work in and deliver services in the building.

#### ***Evidence in support:***

- There are 15 toilets at the Chambers Institution, but only 1 (on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and not accessible to all) is permanently allocated to public use. 9 toilets are allocated for staff use only. The remaining 5 toilets (of which 1 is accessible to all) are only available in conjunction with use of the Burgh Hall.
- Catering provision in conjunction with the Burgh Hall is very limited and restricts the catering options for events that take place in the Hall.

*'incorporate kitchen facilities so venue [Burgh Hall] can hold dinners, conferences etc.'*

*'[Burgh Hall] roof opened up and stairs to balcony reinstated. Proper PA and lighting system'*

Comments on Post-it note board at Open event on 3 October 2015

- A number of people who work in and deliver services from the building noted that provision of services was affected by very constrained storage space. This was particularly the case for the Tweeddale Museum, whose collections are currently housed on the balcony above the principal museum space and in an adjacent storage room, which is accessed from this balcony. A further space which still houses the display cases for the natural history collection is used for storage too. Space in the Museum office on the third floor is also partly allocated to storage of materials that are regularly in use e.g. recent graphic display material and handling collection boxes taken on visits to schools and residential care homes locally.

### 3.3.3 **Lack of flexibility of spaces**

More flexible accommodation in the building was desired, in particular in relation to the Burgh Hall.

*'Accessible public building, flexible accommodation and affordable community asset.'*

*'Take the current span of occupants' activities; give more resources and floor space/ storage'*

Comments from questionnaire respondent

*'A flexible restoration of the Burgh Hall [is needed]'*

Comment from stakeholder workshop questionnaire respondent

#### ***Evidence in support:***

- There was a good level of support for the introduction of flexible staging in the Burgh Hall (77%) from stakeholder workshop questionnaire respondents. A number of respondents identified that this was just one aspect to consider and that the Burgh Hall needs to be adaptable to a variety of uses if it is to make a full contribution to the community.
- There was strong support for more rooms suitable for meetings and classes from stakeholder workshop questionnaire respondents (92%). The provision of more rooms of this type will increase the flexibility of use of the principal public space of the Burgh Hall, as they will also be suitable to serve as breakout rooms or support spaces for serving lunches and coffees.

### 3.3.4 **Opening hours vary across services**

The variety of opening hours across the different services is confusing for visitors and results in some practical difficulties where public spaces are accessed via other service's areas.

**Evidence in support:**

- The following public spaces are access via other service's areas:
  - Scottish Borders Customer Services Contact centre and Visit Scotland share a ground floor space accessed from the High Street.
  - Peebles Library is accessed via stair, with access for all via lift from Scottish Borders Customer Services Contact centre and Visit Scotland spaces. Outside opening hours for the SBC Customer Services Contact centre and Visit Scotland offices, lift access to the Peebles Library is arranged via intercom call from the street and it was noted that the lift was less used after hours than during the day when it is easier to get to.
  - Tweeddale Museum's spaces are accessed from the stair and access for all is via the lift in the Peebles Library. Access for all to the Museum spaces is particularly hard to achieve when the Museum is open later than the Library and the Scottish Borders Customer Services Contact centre / Visit Scotland spaces.

**3.3.5 Affordability and ease of booking the Burgh Hall and Chamber**

It was suggested that a more user-friendly booking facility for the Burgh Hall and Chambers and more affordable pricing structure would increase levels of use of these spaces by the community.

*'Bookings to use the facility should be easy to arrange and pricing rates should be readily available'*  
*'To be a community hub for the town available at reasonable cost to local organisations.'*  
Comments from questionnaire respondents

**3.3.6 Lack of regular maintenance**

It is clear that major repairs to its fabric and services are needed urgently to bring the building into a good condition.

**Evidence in support:**

- A condition survey of the building was carried out in 2010. Among the outstanding recommendations are the following:
  - Electrical rewiring is necessary to the majority of the building.
  - A heating engineer should report on the cost and suitability of extending the current heating system together with zoning the building's heating controls to allow different areas to be operated separately to reduce operating costs.
  - The front and rear elevations of the Burgh Hall Roof are suffering from nail sickness and require stripping and re-slating.
  - The rear portion [of the Burgh Hall entrance vestibule roof] has a flat felt covered roof. Renewal of this roof is recommended within the next 5 years.

- Rainwater goods will require renewal within the next 10 years. To avoid additional scaffolding costs, it is suggested that the gutters and down pipes are renewed when the roof is re-slatted.
- The harling to the sides and rear of the Burgh Hall are badly weathered and are expected to require renewal within 5 to 10 years.
- The rear and gable Burgh Hall windows suffer from extensively flaking paint and require to be repainted. There is also a small area of wet rot to the front timber wall of the entrance vestibule at ground level which requires repair.
- A number of slates have slipped at the East courtyard range Roof or are missing due to nail sickness. It is recommended that the roof is re-slatted to avoid an escalating maintenance issue and prevent water ingress into the Secret Room [now called the Chambers Room] with its valuable artwork.
- The harling to the rear of the East courtyard range is extensively weathered and will require renewal within the next 5 to 10 years.
- High Street range Roof is in reasonable condition, however, approximately 12 No individual slates are missing and require replaced, the 3 No timber ventilation roof vents require re-painting and one of the fixed roof lights is leaking and been temporarily repaired using flashband. This can only be considered temporary and the roof light will need to be replaced within the next 5 years.
- The rear flat lead roof has split at 3 No. batten row positions and the roof has been temporarily repaired with flashband. The roof covering will require replacement in 2 to 5 years.
- The High Street range gutters and downpipes are likely to have to be replaced within the next 10 years.
- Harling to the rear of the library, reading room and picture gallery is badly weathered and will require renewal in the next 5 to 10 years.

### 3.3.7 **Most visited spaces are not the most prominent and accessible**

Although the building has an extensive High Street frontage, the most visited spaces in the building – in particular the Peebles Library – are not easy to find or to physically access. There is an opportunity to provide a welcoming entrance to the building and gateway to other uses housed there.

*'Some sort of entrance from the street might be a good idea (coming to the courtyard, it is easy to miss the Library / Exhibitions in the corner though events at the Big Hall are right in front of you!).'*

Comment on Post-it note board at Open event on 3 October 2015

***Evidence in support:***

- In the stakeholder workshop questionnaire responses, there was strong support for the Peebles Library to have ground floor space (92%).

**3.4 Opportunities for the Chambers Institution**

**3.4.1 Preserve the past**

There is an appetite from both the local community and visitors for learning more about Peebles' history and the High Street has proved to be a good focus for public interest and engagement.

***Evidence in support:***

- For example, a recent successful HLF-funded project, led by Peebles Civic Society, entitled Peebles High Street: one thousand years of history included a documentary film and oral history recording. Over 400 people came to the open reminiscence event, over 200 additional photographs were added to the archive and 2000 people attended the accompanying exhibition held in the Tweeddale Museum in autumn 2013.



*Figure 4 'High Street Blethering' event, held in the Burgh Hall in February 2015, was a follow-up event to the 'Blethering about Peebles' event held as part of the HLF-funded Peebles High Street project. Photo copyright SBC Museums Service*

3.4.2 **Most scope for change identified for the Burgh Hall, e.g. remove fixed staging, range of ideas for removing false ceiling, and introducing gallery or floor at high level**

Of all the important spaces in the building, the Burgh Hall was identified as the one most clearly under-performing currently and consequently the one with most scope for increasing its relevance to the community and intensifying its usage.

*'Open it up - welcome more people in. Show new fun Burgh Hall'*  
Comment from questionnaire respondent

**Evidence in support:**

- When questionnaire respondents were asked for their Vision for the building for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a sizeable majority of respondents (66%) suggested that updating and upgrading of the building was needed, although opinions varied as to the scale of the exercise required.
- Of these, the highest number (13% of the total responses) were ideas relating to the Burgh Hall, indicating this was the part of the building where the community sees most scope for change.

*'Open up the Burgh Hall to full height and let the light flood in'  
'I would like to see our Burgh Hall refurbished completely with all ceiling removed and new kitchen facilities. This is a well-used hall in the centre of our town and must be available for the whole community as set out by W. Chambers'*  
Comments from questionnaire respondents

- A wide range of preferences for use of this space and a variety of proposals for increasing floor area through the introduction of another floor or gallery at high level were expressed:

*'restoration of the Burgh Hall with a mid-floor and opening up of the roof space'*  
Comment from questionnaire respondent

- There was recognition that the Burgh Hall had a number of Unique Selling Points that differentiate it from other hall spaces available in the town. These were identified in this community consultation as:
  - central location off the High Street,
  - history and architecture,
  - views out over Tweed (potentially),
  - large size.

*'could we insert glass side walls to Burgh Hall to open up the views?'*  
Comment on Post-it note board at Open event on 3 October 2015

- Impediments to increased usage were identified as:
  - fixed staging (which limits flexibility of use of Burgh Hall), see 3.2.3
  - suspended ceiling and general institutional feel of room,
  - poor catering facilities, see 3.2.2
  - limited storage, see 3.2.2
  - restricted access (for deliveries), see 3.2.2
  - fire escape restrictions on occupant numbers.
- Some of the text comments received via the stakeholder workshop additional questionnaire indicated that participants at the stakeholder workshops were considering in more detail how the spaces within the Chambers Institution should be re-ordered to improve accessibility and efficiency of the layout of the building.

*'Move JB Museum to Tweeddale [Museum] space. Use JB space for drop-in coffees etc. for people using whole building. CAB space should be used by Library and CAB re-located to vacant shop.'*

Comment from Vision for Peebles event Stakeholder Workshop questionnaire respondent

### 3.4.3 **Scope to improve collaboration between the providers of services at the Chambers Institution**

There was an appetite for closer collaboration between the uses in the building.

#### ***Evidence in support:***

- While those who work at the Chambers Institution report good working relationships across the various department and organisation boundaries, there is scope to improve collaborative working.
- There was strong support from the community for closer collaboration between uses (the example included in the stakeholder workshop questionnaire was between the Tweeddale Museum and the John Buchan Story Museum, which 91% of respondents approved).
- The Peebles Community Trust in their Draft Town Action Plan have identified potential scope to more closely integrate services for visitors and the local community. Their idea is that:  
*"Visit Scotland's Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in the Chambers Institute is no longer meeting the needs of the town. Its former function of connecting visitors with accommodation has been*

*effectively side-lined by the internet: Peebles has the most visitors of Visit Scotland's five TICs but the lowest booking rate. The resultant drop in revenue has led the centre to become a souvenir shop – in competition with local enterprises.*

*The solution is for Peebles to have its own information centre with a museum-type exhibition telling the stories of the town and its people and making use of material currently displayed in the rarely used Chambers Room – the reference library. Residents as well as visitors would be able to find out about current events in the town. This would help to promote the excellent local amenities, open up the town centre, and encourage visitors to wander beyond the High Street.”<sup>11</sup>*

- Individual comments on the use of space received via the questionnaire showed the community exploring how a re-ordering exercise for the building could help promote this collaboration by ensuring uses with greater synergy were located near to each other.

*‘Burgh Hall – create mid floor with refurbished hall on first floor and library / museum on Ground floor. Use current library / museum for commercial letting.’*

Comment on Post-it note board at Open event on 3 October 2015

#### 3.4.4 **Scope to address current social concerns – young people and education**

Responses to the community consultation indicated that the community was exploring what ‘social improvement’ [the term used in Chambers’ bequest] might mean today. Key ideas in response were that there was a strong desire to promote use of the building by young people and for education.

*‘Also, offer evening classes /community education classes. Borders College no longer operates leisure classes in Peebles - Why not?!’*

Comment from questionnaire respondent

*‘Can main hall be adapted to accommodate smaller scale indoor sports for kids? There is a definite need to engage with all groups’*

Comment from stakeholder workshop questionnaire respondent

#### **Evidence in support:**

- Stakeholder workshop questionnaire respondents overwhelmingly endorsed that use by young people be promoted (96%). However, when the views of parents of children in the town were gathered through interviews at the Stakeholder Workshops, it was clear that there was already a good provision of activities for young

<sup>11</sup> Peebles Community Trust (nd) *Draft Peebles Town Action Plan*

people in the town, some of which were currently delivered at the Chambers Institution e.g. Peebles Library and events, but others of which were not e.g. Nomad Beat. Any provision for young people at the Chambers Institution should complement the existing offer, addressing any gaps that are identified.

- There was strong support for community education classes to be run at the building (91%) reported by stakeholder workshop questionnaire respondents.

### 3.5 Threats for the Chambers Institution

#### 3.5.1 Aging population of Peebles

The demographic of the Peebles population shows a marked skew towards older people, which it is predicted will increase until by 2035, 33% of the population of the town will be of pensionable age.

This has marked implications for the future access needs of the population that the Chambers Institution will serve. Currently there are barriers to accessing the building for those with reduced mobility or with visual and hearing impairments, all of which are likely to prevent older users from accessing services delivered at the Chambers Institute.

#### **Evidence in support:**

- Peebles is the third largest town in the Scottish Borders, with a population at the most recent census of 8798.
- Looking at the age distribution of the population, figures for 2011<sup>12</sup>, show that Peebles has a higher proportion of people of pensionable age than the Scottish Borders average, which itself is above the Scottish average. Peebles is also a family-friendly town with buoyant numbers and proportions of children, but the proportions of working-age people are correspondingly lower.

	Peebles	Scottish Borders	Scotland
<b>Total population</b>	8798	113,870	5,295,403
<b>% children</b>	17.5	17.0	17.3
<b>% working age</b>	60.3	62.1	65.9
<b>% pensionable age</b>	22.2	20.9	16.8

- Based on predictions of changes to the age structure of the Scottish Borders population, if Peebles maintains its current age distribution with a particular skew towards older people, it is likely

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Borders Council (2014) *Royal Burgh of Peebles Community Council Area Socio-economic profile March 2014, with a focus on the 2011 Census*

that 33% of the population of the town will be of pensionable age by 2035.

- A general upwards trend in total population has been noted for Peebles<sup>13</sup>, particularly after 2000 when the town has expanded significantly following the construction of a number of new housing developments (see Figure 5).

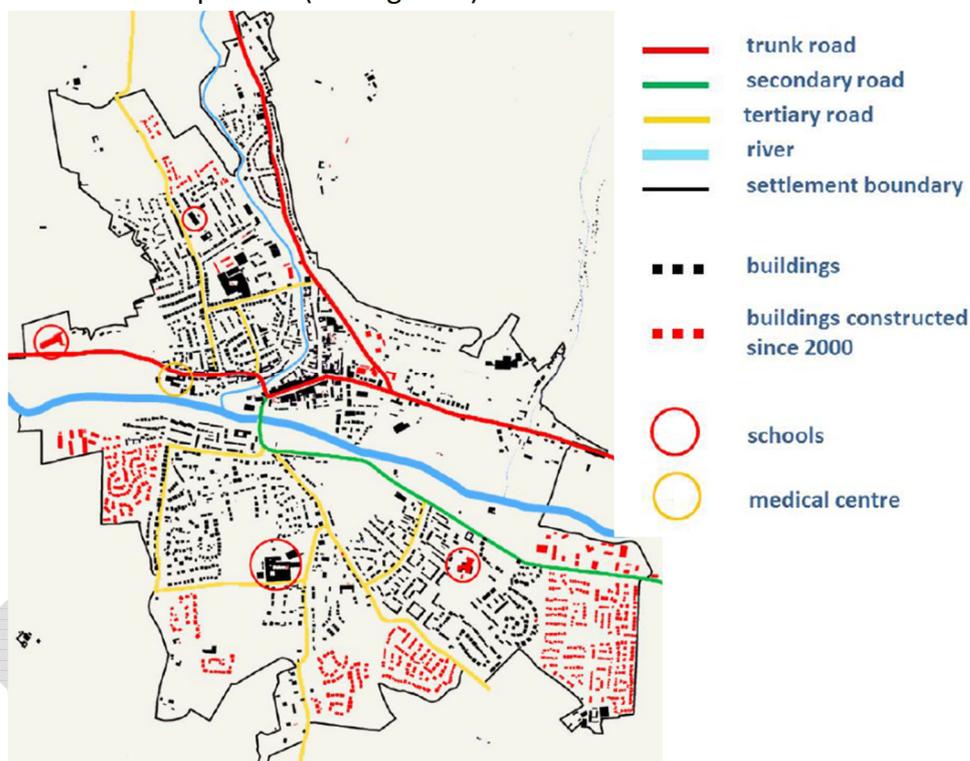


Figure 5 Map of the settlement of Peebles. Buildings constructed since 2000 are highlighted in red. Source: Peebles Community Trust (nd) Draft Peebles Town Plan. Copyright Peebles Community Trust

- There are some economic challenges for people living in the town. There is a pattern of underemployment and lack of accessible full-time work that is typical of rural economies. The 2011 Census shows that, rates of unemployment and inactivity due to sickness are low in Peebles, as are rates of youth unemployment as young people tend to leave the town to look for work rather than remain unemployed in the community<sup>14</sup>. This is a trend seen across the Scottish Borders for adults aged 16-24, but is particularly acute in Peebles. The town has a continuing need for investment in jobs and leisure facilities as it continues to compete with Edinburgh, which is within comfortable commuting distance, to keep its economically, socially and physically active under-25s in the town.

<sup>13</sup> Peebles Community Trust (nd) Draft Peebles Town Action Plan

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Borders Council (2014) Royal Burgh of Peebles Community Council Area Socio-economic profile March 2014, with a focus on the 2011 Census

- Particular problems are experienced by people in the 50-74 age group in finding jobs, indicating a need for investment in employee jobs for the older workforce. A higher proportion of these are long-term unemployed than the Scottish Borders and Scottish averages.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.5.2 **Lack of clarity over building management (CIT, SBC and Live Borders)**

The uncertainty over who was responsible for management and decision-making – the Chambers Institution Trust, Scottish Borders Council or Live Borders – was unhelpful in terms of retaining and building ongoing community support for the building.

*'[The Chambers Institution should be] Demonstrably independent of Scottish Borders Council'*

*'The building should not be allowed to be turned into more offices for Scottish Borders Council.'*

*'At the moment the building appears to be looked at in sections ... rather than as a whole and this should change or we will not achieve anything from this exercise.'*

Comments from questionnaire respondents

### 3.5.3 **Peebles is well provided with community spaces**

Peebles has many community facilities, in particular halls. There was recognition that any decision on the future uses of the Burgh Hall should be mindful of the need to avoid duplication and hence competing with other venues in the town. However, the community recognised that there was scope for synergy with other venues, and that this should be explored.

*'The Chambers Institution should NOT be developed in such a way as it duplicates (and therefore competes directly) with the Eastgate Arts Centre and the Drill Hall'*

*'Peebles is well provided for in terms of reasonably priced meeting spaces. If the Chambers Institution is to be developed with this vision, there has to be a unique aspect.'*

Comment from Vision for Peebles event Stakeholder Workshop questionnaire respondent

#### **Evidence in support:**

- Other venues in the town were regularly used by questionnaire respondents. The highest scoring was the Eastgate Theatre (20% of respondents used the Theatre once a week or more). This indicates a good potential to co-ordinate management and marketing with

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Borders Council (2014) *Royal Burgh of Peebles Community Council Area Socio-economic profile March 2014, with a focus on the 2011 Census*

other venues in the town, especially Eastgate Arts to avoid duplication of facilities and unhelpful competition.

- Scottish Borders Council owns a number of properties in Peebles (see Appendix II.4). These include
  - Peebles County Buildings,
  - Peebles Drill Hall,
  - Schools (Peebles High School, Priorsford Primary and Nursery School, Halyrude St Joseph's R C Primary School and Nursery Wing, Kingsland Primary and Nursery Schools),
  - Residential homes (Flat 1 Tweedbridge Court and 7 Riverside House) and a Day Centre (the Victoria Park Day Centre (ALEO)).In addition, other spaces regularly used for community events include:
  - Church halls at Peebles Parish Church (McFarlane Hall), St Andrews Leckie, St Joseph's RC Church,
  - Ex-Serviceman's Club,
  - Eastgate Theatre,
  - Gytes Leisure Centre
  - Rugby and other clubrooms
  - Hotel function rooms.
- an independent review by Education Scotland published in February 2016 notes suggests building on Peebles' strengths by developing a shared creative vision for the town<sup>16</sup>.
- Scope for possible collaboration with Eastgate Arts, especially in relation to management of the Burgh Hall, was raised by them.

*'[Eastgate Arts is] keen to work in partnership with whatever emerges from the community consultation for the Chambers Institution.'*  
Interview with Caroline Adam, Eastgate Theatre

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<sup>16</sup> p5, Education Scotland (February 2016) Peebles Creative Place review

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

Structuring the analysis of the community consultations findings as a SWOT analysis allowed recommendations to be derived directly in response to the community's views.

### 4.2 Principal recommendations

For each of the quadrants of the SWOT analysis, principal recommendations were derived. These were:

#### *Reinforce Strengths*

Celebrate the importance of the building

Maintain and enhance the Chambers Institution's role as the cultural heart of the community

#### *Address Weaknesses*

Deliver an attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable building

#### *Seize Opportunities*

Re-order the building to increase flexibility and hence use, especially of the Burgh Hall

#### *Overcome Threats*

Ensure service delivery is responsive to current needs of the community

Build the trust of the local community through delivering effective building management in conjunction with other venues in the town, as appropriate

## 5.0 VISION FOR THE CHAMBERS INSTITUTION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

### 5.1 Introduction

The Vision for the building serves to summarise the community's aspirations for the building and identify the uses that the community highlights are critical to be housed in the building.

This is a vital stage in the process of considering the future of any important historic building, as the Vision will provide a sound, agreed basis on which architectural proposals for the repair and re-ordering of the building can be prepared.

### 5.2 The agreed Vision

Local people want the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable.

The key uses of the building were identified as: library, museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.

*Vision agreed by the Chambers Institution Trust at its meeting on 2 March 2016*

### 5.3 Developing the vision

The Vision for the building was generated from the community's ideas for the building and has been tested through further focussed consultation at stakeholder workshops. The following process was adopted:

- Initial responses to the community consultation questionnaire endorsed the continued relevance of William Chamber's original vision for the building and suggested ways in which the layout of the building or functions housed could be updated to provide for continued delivery of the vision.
- This led us to develop an updated version of the Vision:  
*The Chambers Institution in the 21st century*  
*... should be at the heart of community life in Peebles. I recognise that this may require change to the buildings' layout to ensure access and facilities are appropriate*  
*... should retain its valued public service role. Always mindful of the requirements of William Chambers' bequest, I recognise that the range of services provided may change with time in line with the needs of the community.*
- This draft vision was tested at all the Stakeholder Workshop events and unanimously endorsed by respondents at these events.
- Based on the community's comments received at the Stakeholder Workshops, the final version of the Vision, which has now been formally

agreed and adopted by the Chambers Institution Trust was developed. At this stage, the process also tied the developing Vision to the overall results of the analysis of the community consultation, in particular responding to the 'Reinforce strengths' and 'Address weaknesses' principal recommendations.

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## 6.0 NEXT STEPS

### 6.1 Introduction

At their meeting on 2 March 2016, The Chambers Institution Trust agreed that SHBT should deliver a re-ordering exercise to provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a Chambers Institution fit for the 21st century.

### 6.2 Feasibility study outline

#### 6.2.1 Delivery process

The agreed process to be adopted is:

- the appointment of a Design Team to prepare a number of sketch schemes to explore the architectural feasibility of delivering the ideas for the building put forward by the Community
- the sketch schemes to be the subject of a further Community consultation to determine a final scheme
- the final scheme will be costed by the Design team
- a viability appraisal will be prepared for it by SHBT, based on our experience of previous projects to repair important historic buildings and sensitively adapt them to sustainable new uses to benefit local communities.

#### 6.2.2 Recommended outline scope of appointment of Design Team

We recommend that, following a competitive tendering exercise, a design team is appointed to undertake a feasibility study including the following work:

- Provide a Condition Survey on the building fabric together with Budget Costs for any recommended repairs. The condition survey undertaken in 2010 will provide a useful starting point for this exercise, but it needs to be updated to reflect the current condition of the building and its current repair needs.
- Prepare initial sketches for 2 architectural scheme designs for the Chambers Institution. Taking the lead from the community consultation exercise, the aims of the re-ordering are to improve access and facilities, promote flexibility and efficiency of layout and revitalise and make relevant the principal historic spaces.
- The preparation of these sketch schemes will allow a thorough exploration of the potential benefits and disbenefits of each scheme to be presented. The sketches will be used at a public meeting where the Vision and range of responses can be explained, after which smaller focus groups can be formed to

consider the vision and architectural solutions in more detail. A final sketch scheme (prepared to RIBA Stage C (Plan of Work 2007)) will be prepared on the basis of this community input and the final scheme costed.

A draft brief for the condition survey and architectural re-ordering exercise is included at Appendix IX of this report.

**6.2.3 Recommended outline scope of Viability Appraisal**

A viability appraisal will be prepared by SHBT to determine the outline capital costs for delivering the final sketch scheme, as well as exploring the potential for securing capital funding to deliver it.

**6.2.4 Recommended outline scope of Final Report**

The final deliverable for the Community Consultation will be an updated version of this report, including the results of the feasibility study, including viability appraisal.

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## 7.0

### REFERENCES

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## 8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SHBT are especially grateful to the following – who are included with thanks for their response to a number of detailed individual requests for information and meetings:

- David Robertson, SBC
- Sandra Oliver, SBC
- Lizzie Turner, SBC
- Lisa Davenport, SBC
- Liz Paxton, SBC
- Rosemary Hannay, SBC
- Alison Tait, SBC
- Melanie Nairn, CAB
- Caroline Adam, Eastgate Theatre
- Ronald Ireland
- Tweeddale Councillors and Community Councillors
- Peebles Community Trust, in particular Crick Carleton

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**Paper for the Chambers Institution Trust meeting on 25 May 2016**

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**Chambers Institution, Peebles: Community Consultation**

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**Purpose of paper**

This paper is to update the Chambers Institution Trust on progress with the community consultation on the future of the Chambers Institution and to seek approval on the next steps in this process.

**Introduction**



*Courtyard of the Chambers Institution*

Scottish Borders Council commissioned the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) to carry out a community consultation exercise to define an agreed Vision for the future use of the Chambers Institution in Peebles. SHBT has over 35 years of experience in finding sustainable uses for important buildings across Scotland and has worked directly with Scottish Borders Council on a number of projects in the Borders, including recent projects to secure the future of the Greenlaw Town Hall and the Haining estate, Selkirk.

**Community consultation exercise**

The consultation process has included background information gathering, a questionnaire and a series of stakeholder workshops and was undertaken in the period from September 2015 to April 2016. In total:

- 923 people and
- 124 local organisations or businesses were engaged with through this exercise;
- 237 completed questionnaires were submitted and
- 10 interviews completed.

**Vision for the Chambers Institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The Vision for the building was generated from the community’s ideas for the building and has been tested through further focussed consultation. The final version was agreed by the Chambers Institution Trust at its meeting on 2 March 2016:

Local people want the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable.

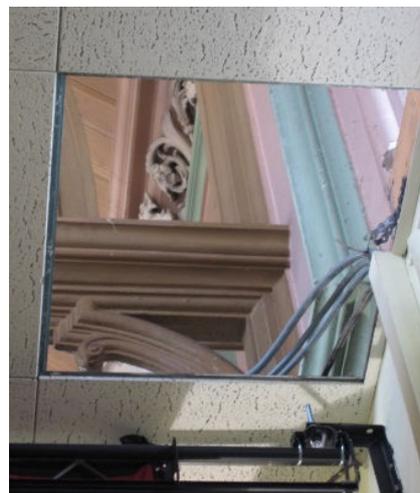
The key uses of the building were identified as: library, museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.

## Delivering the vision

At their meeting on 2 March 2016, The Chambers Institution Trust agreed that SHBT should deliver a re-ordering exercise to provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a Chambers Institution fit for the 21st century. The agreed process to be adopted is:

- a Design Team to prepare a number of sketch schemes showing re-ordering of the building
- further Community consultation to consider the options
- the Design Team to prepare a final preferred scheme
- a viability appraisal to set out the potential funding for a Capital development project for the Chambers Institution.

The report on the community consultation exercise has been drafted and a copy is circulated with this paper. The report appendices are available on request.



*View through the suspended ceiling of the Burgh Hall showing the ceiling / roof structure beyond*

## Next steps

1. Confirm the procurement process for appointing the Design Team following liaison with Martin Joyce, Service Director - Capital Projects, SBC.
2. The proposed outline timescale for completion of the community consultation is:
  - appointment of Design team in early summer (tbc after SBC input on the procurement process is received)
  - presentation of the architectural scheme designs to the community in late summer / early autumn 2016
  - presentation of the draft community consultation report, including preferred sketch scheme and viability appraisal to the Chambers Institution Trust in early winter 2016
  - completion of community consultation exercise in winter 2016.

## Recommendations

We recommend that the Chambers Institution Trust

- **makes comment on** and **approves** the draft report on the community consultation
- **agrees** to the appointment of the Design Team in line with the advice to be received from SBC on the procurement process
- **agrees** to the outline timetable for completion of the community consultation.

19 May 2016