

# Public Document Pack

## SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST held via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 28th February, 2024 at 4.00 pm

---

- Present:- Councillors R. Tatler (Chair), D. Begg, M. Douglas, J. Pirone, E. Small and V. Thomson
- Apologies:- Councillors E. Small
- In Attendance:- Director Corporate Governance (from 16:30), S. Coe (Beneficiaries Group), J. Dyer, Democratic Services Officer (L. Cuerden)

### 1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting. Item 6 was to be taken in Private due to commercially sensitive information.

### 2. BENEFICIARIES GROUP UPDATE

- 2.1 The Chair shared the main points from the meeting of the Beneficiaries Group on 27 February 2024, the Note of which was to be appended to this Minute, along with the draft project vision document and the consultation report. The application to the Levelling Up Fund had been submitted to Scottish Government on 9 February and a response was expected in the next two weeks. If the bid was successful a project team was to be established. There had been a discussion on the wider Chambers Institution Trust vision, led by Jason Dyer, and Mr Dyer summarised the draft vision for attendees. The draft vision document had brought together the work previously undertaken with Members and stakeholders and defined what was to be incorporated into Levelling Up Funding envelope and the elements that required funding beyond. Potential income generation and the charitable community aspects were also considered. A summary of each **proposed** floor plan was provided as follows:

- the ground floor was to incorporate a new reception and information space, the children's library and associated activities, access to the Burgh Hall and Registrar maintained and a small informal café space with landscaping to the courtyard area;
- the first floor was to incorporate a state-of-the-art modern museum space, adult library and public access computers;
- the second floor was to incorporate a GIS compliant art gallery with thought to be given to how to make the balcony area health and safety compliant; and
- the third floor was to provide general storage and exhibition packing areas.

Consideration was to be given to the siting of the lift type and access. There was potential to develop a mezzanine level in the Burgh Hall for both income generation and museum collection storage. Feedback on the draft vision document was to be provided and a drop-in event was to be held on 18 March in the Burgh Hall.

- 2.2 The governance framework for the Chambers Institution Trust was to be developed. A new Chair was needed for the Beneficiaries Group who was not also a Trustee and it was hoped that someone would be identified soon. Trustees were to hold a meeting to discuss wider governance issues in relation to the organisation and the project to be undertaken through the Levelling Up Fund award.

- 2.3 An update on the Burgh Hall renovations had been shared by Gareth Smith (SBC), the details of which were provided in the Beneficiaries Group Note attached to this Minute.
- 2.4 With regards to the installation of acoustic panels, there was to be further discussion and a decision to be taken on colour matching the panels to the walls and appropriate consultation with the Heritage Officer.
- 2.5 The art work was to be temporarily displayed in the foyer for the drop-in meeting at the Burgh Hall on 18 March to gather feedback on its situation in the building. Discussions were to continue regarding a legal agreement between the Trust and the artist and costs to be incurred for a display cabinet.
- 2.6 There had been an enquiry made about the vacant shop and discussions were to continue on any plan to advertise the unit for rental.
- 2.7 Crick Carleton, Chair of the Peebles Place Making Working Group, had drawn attention to the need for the Trust project to contribute to the overall town plan.

**DECISION**

**NOTED the update.**

**3. JOHN BUCHAN MUSEUM**

- 3.1 The Chair had no further update to provide on possible measures to improve the frontage and signage of the museum. There was a request that an update be brought to the next meeting and the Chair agreed to liaise with Gareth Smith to that end. Further dialogue was to be had with Planning officers.
- 3.2 Sam Coe reported back on the status of the flat; the tenant had rented from the Trust since before 2014, and from SBC since 2014.

**DECISION**

**AGREED that an update be obtained from Gareth Smith for the next meeting.**

**4. PRIVATE BUSINESS**

**AGREED** under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

**5. P.H.D. FUNDAMENTALS POP-UP SHOP**

Members considered a request to use the vacant unit for a fundraising pop-up shop.

**6. BURGH HALL FOYER CABINET**

Members considered a quotation for the supply and installation of a wood and glazed display cabinet.

**7. GOVERNANCE OF CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST**

Members discussed key priorities for the governance structure of the Chambers Institution Trust.

***The meeting concluded at 4.55 pm***

## **Chambers Institute Beneficiaries**

### **Meeting held 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 on MS Teams**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Robin Tatler, SBC (Chair)  
Lorna McCullough, Borders Community Action (Minutes)  
Cllr Marshall Douglas  
Cllr Julie Perone  
Cllr Viv Thomson  
Cllr Drummond Begg  
Sam Coe, Peebles Civic Society  
Laura Scott, Peebles Pensioners  
Gareth Smith, SBC  
Peter Maudsley, PCC  
Crick Carleton, PCT  
Ian Buckingham  
Chris Clarke, Eastgate Theatre  
Chris Whitmore, Clovenfords CC  
Malcolm Bruce  
Gill Westwood  
Lady Stewartby  
David Brackenridge JBSM  
Martin Quirke

#### **Apologies**

Cllr Eric Small  
Geoffrey Hamilton

- 1. Welcome/Introductions**
- 2. Levelling Up Bid – update**

Awaiting update from UK Government, project plan needed soon after that. Funding needs to be committed by the project by the end of March 2026.

Ian Buckingham – The John Buchan Story Museum. Positive that the Chambers Institute will be developed. Everyone in the JBSM is aware and prepared to provide feedback as to how it might progress. Transition period is a key issue, if location is moved, how will that affect visitors and volunteers?

Gill Westwood from CAB – Welcomed the meeting and found it useful to have conversations at this time in the process. Viv Thomson confirmed CAB will be moved out of the Chambers Institute and following conversations with John Currie in SBC Estates they are seeking alternative venues. A central location is needed that can provide private space.

One other tenant in the flat above the museum needs to be involved in the conversations. SBC Estates will have contact details.

**3. Update from Jason Dyer on work so far, also Project Vision Workshop proposal, decision required.**

Robin went through the vision in summary, ground floor main entrance, atmospheric and family friendly, possible café space with Go Tweed Valley part of the vision. Box office booking, possibly in joint partnership with Eastgate Theatre. Visitor facilities separate to staffed areas. Aim to ensure building is accessible and used as much as possible. Lifts to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. Registers Office would need to be preserved and private separate to public busy areas. Possibly move JBSM location.

1<sup>st</sup> floor museum space and library, modern and accessible. Specialist bronze age and possible museum of the written word and JBSM. Chambers room with plaster freeze.  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor, art gallery  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor general storage as it is now.

Burgh hall – look at creating access from the main building with a mezzanine level. Feasibility study to look at how this can be done. Precedence Black Adder church a good example to look at, with similar dimensions. This would make it easier to heat, improve sound and increase space which can increase income.

Courtyard – keep as is, as much as possible.

Peter expressed concern at competition with Eastgate Theatre and referenced use of the Rosetta Road SBC building, noted it had more tenants now and few available spaces.

Laura Scott from Peebles Pensioners expressed concerns at what has been spent on the hall already to then change it by introducing a mezzanine level. She believes this would finish the PP group as no other alternative space suitable to move while the work can be done. The work done so far was in line with funding available at the time with the aim to remove the suspended ceiling, whereas now further funding is available to achieve greater space. Recognise the challenge of finding alternative accommodation. Phased approach will be taken to minimise disruption, hopefully other space will be available by the time the hall development is being done.

**4. Governance issues – working group?**

Needs a chair led by the community, not by Robin. Deadline next meeting to appoint new chair from beneficiaries group as needed ahead of the project starting.

Cllr Begg reinforced this asset belongs to everyone in the community, Cllrs as trustees have different roles and do from time adhere to corporate responsibilities.

Management team needs to link to the Trust and structure of the beneficiaries group, particularly chair needs to sit with the trustees on the trust in decision making. Legal structure of the trust needs reviewed in relation to the personal liability, sits separate to SBC.

Professional project team will be in place to manage the project separate to these structures.

#### **5. Burgh Hall update – acoustics, decoration etc.**

Gareth Smith from SBC volunteers to come along an update at these meetings.

Curtains all now in place

Balcony outer window at the turret is fitted, with the option of added curtain over the balcony £1200 estimate, leave for now and monitor heating in the hall.

Joiner will fit vents to pipe boxing to allow more circulation into the hall.

Sany Robertson happy with acoustics plans, order can be placed. Panels are white, can these be painted to match the wall colour?

Peebles Pensioners happy with last meeting, hall was warm. Request to avoid works for the next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

#### **6. Artwork display – update**

Price for art work cabinet in foyer area now received and is reasonable. £2633 plus VAT. Plus painting £200-300. Legal agreement with artist, Susan Mitchell needs to be put in place. Trustees will discuss costs and make decision.

The artwork is concertina stand up 12 feet long, painting of the whole of both sides of Peebles High Street. 360 degree view of Tweed Bridge still for discussion, Trustees to view and make a decision, possibly inter change to avoid increased display costs.

#### **7. Any other updates**

An enquiry to lease the vacant shop has been made which will be considered (previously 'Della's').

Peebles Place Making - Spaces in Peebles needs to be reviewed holistically, multiple venues being used for different and similar activities, not clear where is for what. Organisations also occupying commercial properties and paying commercial rents – a more sustainable approach is needed to maximise the use of community spaces by community organisations. This approach when looking at the use of the Chambers Institute is needed and welcomed.

#### **8. Date of Next meeting**

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March in person in the Burgh hall to go through the plans and vision, possibly as a drop in. Anyone with queries or concerns before then can drop robin an email - [robin.tatler@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:robin.tatler@scotborders.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

**Chambers Institution Trust**  
**Draft Full Project Vision and Ambition**

**Project Vision Statement**

*A vibrant cultural and heritage hub at the heart of the Tweeddale community in line with the original vision of William Chambers, providing a comprehensive range of social, education and business facilities and creating a unique, accessible and self-sustaining attraction for local people and visitors now and in the future.*

**Original Vision of William Chambers**

*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.*

**Purpose of this Document & Background**

The purpose of this document is to articulate the full capital ambition for the Chambers Institution and to set in the context against that ambition, the scope of works envisaged to be undertaken with support from the Levelling Up Fund.

In November 2023 it was confirmed that a joint bid by Dumfries and Galloway Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Borders Council had been successful. This was for funding of up to £22,809,416 from the UK Government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support the Three Rivers Active Tourism Project.

The Three Rivers Active Tourism Project consists of three projects, one led by each council as follows:

- Annan Harbour Project (Dumfries and Galloway) – the refurbishment of a B listed former warehouse (Collett's Building) into a hub of activities including a workshop for heritage boat craft skills; a flexible café; meeting/community and event space and harbourside landscape improvements, including the construction of a new footbridge, to create a new focal point for water sports and activities for the local community and tourists.
- Chambers Institution in Peebles (Scottish Borders Council) – Refurbish the A listed Chambers Institute to become a cultural and heritage hub for the Tweeddale community and to become a visitor attraction within the region.
- The Clydesdale Way (South Lanarkshire Council) - a vision for a brand-new route for walkers and cyclists – the Clydesdale Way – that will hugely enhance connectivity across southern Scotland by joining up our communities and beauty spots with the Southern Upland Way, the River Ayr Way and the John Buchan Way.

The three councils aim to build on the above to foster joint marketing and to develop the tourism offering, bringing in additional tourists right across the area. All three areas are linked by the three great Scottish Rivers that have their source in the Southern Uplands – the River Annan, the River Tweed and the River Ayr. All three rivers supported the development of ancient cultures and communities that imbue this region with a unique culture and history that encapsulates the whole of the south of Scotland. This culture gave rise to a rich mythology that in turn led to the development

of a strong literary and folk tradition, encompassing Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, John Buchan, James Hogg and William Chambers.

The Chambers Institution Trust is committed, as part of its vision, to support the development of the Three Rivers Active Tourism Project and is ideally placed to link this project with other tourism and cultural projects underway in the region, including the Connecting Threads: Tweed River Culture project which is part of the Destination Tweed initiative and the South of Scotland Cycling Partnership strategy.

### **The Full Capital Ambition for the Chambers Institution**

The Chambers Institution Trust has an ambitious vision for what the building could be once all capital works have been completed. The vision incorporates all the following to be delivered to the highest standards and fitting for the local community and visitors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The building will incorporate museums, an art gallery, a public library, changing exhibitions space, meeting spaces, events spaces, information points for the council and for tourists to the Tweed Valley and Tweeddale as well as a connected museum store.

This ambition extends beyond the scope of what will be covered by funding from the Levelling Up Fund, with the Trust looking to secure further funding to achieve the final ambition from a range of philanthropic sources. This document walks through the full vision floor by floor with an acknowledgement by the Trust that depending on costs, some ambitions may have to be revised to deliver maximum cost/benefit ratios.

### **The Ground Floor**

The vision for the Ground floor pivots around creating a new entrance to the building from the High Street. This new entrance will lead into an atmospheric modern space where there will be a reception space (staffed) as well as self-orientation digital screens that can be always accessed and when the reception area is not staffed.

There will be digital signage in this part of the building, visible from the high street, indicating what is on within the building.

The reception area will contain tourist information, linking to the Tweed Valley and the Three Rivers Tourism project. There will also be a community accessible point focused on Scottish Borders Council information. This space will include waymarking for the rest of the building and all it will have to offer and some digital interpretation pertaining to the history and heritage of William Chambers. A box office facility for booking tickets could also be offered from this space, again inclusive of a digital box office provision for out of hours use (this could also act as a box office for other venues in the town).

Flowing through from the Visitor Reception will be the Children's Library including a co-located child focused museum offer, a dedicated space for Bookbug activities, with a raised stage within the round and also a dynamic learning space that incorporates storage for school group needs (coats, places to eat packed lunches, facility for wet and dry work including sinks/materials storage) and accessible toilet provision with baby changing facilities, for all users of the building. The vision for this space is for a vibrant noisy, family-friendly and children focused area – a place that highlights the building as a living and vital community asset.



There is a desire to include an internal connection including security zoning to facilitate out of hours access at ground floor and first floor levels to the Burgh Hall and at ground floor level to the Registrar's Office/Burgh Chambers.

An accessible lift to all floors will be accessed from the ground floor – this lift will need to also be able to act as a lift for the movement of various museum objects, library items and goods to all floors.

Also on the ground floor, the ambition is to have a small, informal café space, run as a community café or run by local young people/special needs groups – it is important to ensure the café is not in competition with established businesses in the town and has direct community benefits. Alongside this there will be a retail space.

Consideration needs to be given for being able to secure/divide off the café, retail and museum spaces out of hours through security keypad/zoning access, if and when people are accessing the building for evening and weekend events.

Ideally, across the Pend, in what is currently the John Buchan Museum, new museum/library/halls service staff offices will be created with separate kitchen and toilet facilities, possibly extending into the flat on the first floor above this museum (which may also provide some much-needed work/equipment and stock storage spaces). The John Buchan Museum Trust will be approached to see if they will move into the main museum space on the first floor, hopefully connecting the cultural and literary links and optimising visitor flow.

The Citizens Advice Bureau will be helped to identify a new home with appropriate privacy and security required for its clients, out with the institution building, therefore freeing up more space on the ground floor.

### **The First Floor**

The First Floor will be home to a state-of-the-art modern museum space and adult lending library/public access computers.

The Museum will have modern display cases and dynamic interpretation displays, including interactive digital displays. The aim will be for the Museum to become a destination that highlights Tweeddale and the regions covered by the three rivers, highlight showstopper objects within the collection. In terms of the collection, it will incorporate the town collections and blend with the archives. Importantly the Museum will be fully compliant with the government indemnity scheme (GIS), which means the Museum will need to demonstrate that it can meet certain requirements around security, environmental control, and standards for packing, transport, and display.

The Museum layout will need to incorporate a separate space for the John Buchan Museum (which has its own management body and collects donations and so will need clear definition as an independent tenant space on this floor) if feasible.

The development work will highlight Tweeddale's permanent collections of regional/national importance. There is an opportunity to create highlights including – a Museum of the Bronze Age and/or a Museum of Tweeddale's Written Word Heritage as part of the overall Peebles museum & library/and the John Buchan museum offer and for the Museum to be able to work with National partners and private lenders in museum/archive sector. This could attract touring exhibitions of local and national importance, and iconic loans from the National Museums /Archive Records Scotland, if the space is GIS compliant.

The Chambers (Plaster Frieze) Room is a long windowless room housing neo-classical plaster cast replicas of the Parthenon Sculptures and another frieze entitled The Triumph of Alexander, re-created from the original by Danish sculptor, Bertel Thorvaldsen. This could become an atmospheric extension to the Museum (and fits into the Bronze Age period that incorporates this period of Ancient Greek history), using lighting and effective interpretation to tell the stories locked away within the friezes. This is a unique element of the collection, allowing visitors the only opportunity to get up close to the Parthenon friezes, aside from the originals held in the British Museum and some fragments remaining in the Acropolis Museum in Greece.

The Adult Library will be spacious and comfortable and provide access to computers for study/self-directed browsing. As co-located services, the library and museum will present an immersive, merged presentation of book stock, information, digital access, interpretation and museum objects/artworks.

### **The Second Floor**

The Art Gallery will become a GIS compliant space with adequate fire safety provision so that it again can house important loans to the collection and highlight key items in the regional permanent collections, acting as a changing exhibition space. If the Art Gallery remains in the current location, there will need to be lift access to this level and storage for equipment/exhibition packaging.

The area above the current first floor Museum Room is currently of limited use as it is a balcony area with adjacent museum collections stores leading off. This area does not comply with health and safety rules for public access/safe working practices. The preferred vision for the space is to floor over the void while retaining the original balcony, to create a quiet and reflective space for the public, with interpretation on how the room originally looked, with emphasis on the written word relevant to Tweeddale including life and work of William Chambers/Chambers dictionary and encyclopaedia publishing history. This space will need thought depending on how best to resolve the current health and safety issues.

### **The Third Floor**

This area will remain for accommodating equipment/general storage/exhibition packaging etc., noting that storage and access to this floor level will be limited by lack of lift provision and adequate fire escape routes.

### **The Burgh Hall**

The Burgh Hall has enormous potential, and the vision would see the creation of a Mezzanine floor space. This space could create a high value meeting space for commercial hire and to create a new sustainable public hall at the upper level. There will be additional accommodation at ground floor level to provide space for a professional catering kitchen, high quality meeting rooms and hot desking facilities and a Green Room for visiting performers in the Hall. The Mezzanine level will also provide the public with the opportunity to get up close to the detailing at roof level in the Burgh Hall and see the views down to the River Tweed.

If possible, an extension will be created at the rear of the Burgh Hall (depending on the status of land currently used/designated as allotments) to facilitate the creation of the meeting and kitchen spaces mentioned above.

### **Museum Collection Stores**

As part of the full vision for the building, ideally a new Museum Collections Resource Centre will be created offsite but nearby. This will provide space for, development and care of Tweeddale's Museum Objects and Fine Art reserve collections. Display-storage approaches would also enhance access for behind-the-scenes tours, incorporate museum/archive volunteer workspace, collections focused activity spaces and full security/environmental controls. Where security allows, there could be other adjacent community engagement spaces.

The Centre could offer behind the scenes tours/masterclasses and skills development programmes on a regular basis for members of the community, schools and other learning groups and visitors to the region to see parts of the collection not on show. It will reveal documentation/conservation work etc underway and providing opportunities for Tweeddale communities to become involved in various museum/archives collections volunteer activities. A suitable building/site near to the Chambers Institution, with level vehicular access, will need to be identified for the Museum Collections Resource Centre.

### **The Courtyard**

This should be an attractively landscaped, welcoming and contemplative space that helps to draw people in and down to the Burgh Hall. The space needs to work sensitively with the War Memorial and should have spaces where people can sit and reflect.

### **Other Considerations**

Adequate space will be needed for storage across the building as well as for plant and control rooms for utilities, the lift, environmental controls and security.

Full connectivity public access WIFI for the main building is currently problematic. WIFI is a key requirement and in particular, for the library/museum will be essential to fulfil service user and staff communications needs/digital interactive interpretation aspirations. In addition, to future proof the building it will be essential to ensure that power and data is easily accessible across all floors of the building.

The Burgh Hall and courtyard external space have fully functioning WIFI at present but could benefit from additional interpretation highlights accessed through use of Q code information links, a heritage trail APP etc.

Green credentials/Transition to Net Zero – the vision is for the building to be as energy efficient and sustainable as possible. Specialist advice will be required to investigate this potential but there is funding available from a range of sources that could support this.

### **Income Generation Opportunities**

The full vision has been developed to maximise commercial income generation opportunities as follows:

- Hire of various spaces created in the building for events (the Burgh Hall, the Burgh Hall Mezzanine, the Visitor Reception Area, possibly the Courtyard as an outdoor venue space (weather permitting))
- Hire of spaces for Weddings, Corporate Entertaining and Product Launches (The Burgh Hall and Burgh Hall Mezzanine)
- Hire of Meeting Rooms (created within the Burgh Hall full vision) and hot desking facilities.
- Retail Space

- Café space (direct or as a franchise)
- Tenancy income
- Museum donations
- Social Prescription activities to enhance culture-based health and well-being activities and foster partnership-funded programmes with NHS, SBC, Social Care, Dementia support, Tackling Poverty/Isolation etc.
- Museum Collections Resource Centre- paid-for offer including talks/tours, employability skills/training placement partnerships, and premium masterclass events.
- Commission income from high quality art exhibition gallery sales- of commercial benefit to creative practitioners in art/crafts as a retail opportunity for highlighting and selling works.
- Digital links to free and paid-for access to digitised archives, purchasing photographic images and bespoke genealogy research services (including the Scotland's People records database and the Archive service/borders collections on-line).

### **The Levelling Up Funded Scope of Works**

Considering the full vision for the building as outlined above in this document and considering the priorities identified through consultation to date, the key focus for Levelling Up funding is around accessibility across the building.

Levelling up funding 2024-2026 will focus on:

- The creation of a new entrance from the high street.
- The fit out of a new visitor reception on the ground floor and the creation of the new spaces for the Children's Library, Children focused museum displays, the Bookbug activity space and a co-located education/learning space.
- Lift access to all floors
- Second Floor Art Gallery made accessible by lift, and where funding in phase 1 allows, fire exit compliant.
- New link corridor to provide an internal connection to the Registrar's office, Burgh Chambers/Marriage Room and Burgh Hall.
- New fire exits from rear wing at first floor and scoping of second floor level alignment for fire exit requirements, to comply with fire safety.

It is likely that all the above, inclusive of all professional fees will meet the Levelling Up funding being allocated to the Chambers Institution Trust for period 2024-2026.

The work to achieve the vision for the First and Second Floor, the Museum Collections Resource Centre, the Burgh Hall, the moving of the John Buchan Museum and subsequent creation of staff rooms and offices would all fall into a second phase of development for which the Chambers Institution Trust is committed to securing funding. If there is room within the Levelling Up funding to include any elements of this work, the Trust will prioritise which elements of work should move into the Levelling Up phase of refurbishment.

### **Next Steps**

The key next steps in relation to all the above is:

1. Identify the estimated costs to achieve the full vision.
2. Confirm the costs identified for the Levelling Up Funded phase and related to this, clarify the full scope of works in consideration of Levelling Up time scales.

3. Appoint a design team to assist with all the above and begin to produce artist impressions for the Levelling up Phase and for the full ambition. These will be hugely helpful for additional fundraising effort and for further community consultation.
4. Appoint a project manager to co-ordinate project delivery phase 1, monitoring/evaluation, budget reporting and communications across the partners/tenants/communities.
5. Commence discussions with key tenants in the building – The Citizens Advice Bureau, Live Borders, SBC contact centre, Go Tweed valley, Registrar’s Service, The John Buchan Museum, and private tenancy (courtyard flat).
6. Undertake new community consultation on plans for the full vision for the building.
7. Identify potential alternative destinations in the locality for relocating services/bookings, staff and collections impacted by anticipated closure periods during building works. Consult with tenants/key community groups on decant plans.

DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Institution Trust (Chambers Institution) Consultation Summary Report**

### **Introduction & Brief History of the Building**

The Chambers Institution have carried out extensive community and stakeholder consultation over the past decade with major consultation exercises undertaken in 2016 and in 2022. These consultations aimed to collect opinions around future capital plans for the Chambers Institution and the various services provided from within the building.

The Chambers Institution is a Category A listed building located in a central position on the High Street in Peebles. The oldest parts of the building date back to 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century when it belonged to the Cross Kirk and was known as the Dean's House. The property was acquired by John Hay, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Tweeddale in 1624 before eventually passing into the ownership of the Dukes of Queensbury in 1687. The Queensbury's sold it to the Provost, Dr James Reid in 1781 and it remained in the ownership of that family until 1857, when it was acquired by William Chambers, the Scottish publisher and politician (who with his brother published the Chambers Encyclopaedia and the Chambers Dictionary).

William Chambers remodelled the building to create a space for the social improvement of Peebles. This remodelling was carried out in the Scottish Baronial style made popular by Sir Walter Scott at nearby Abbotsford and was designed to incorporate a museum, art gallery and new Burgh Hall. The building opened for the benefit of the local community on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1859 (165 years ago this year). Ownership of the building passed to the Burgh Council in 1911, who took up an offer from the great Scottish American philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, to finance a five-bay extension to the building, which was designed by the famous architect, George Washington Browne (his most notable buildings are the Central Library and the Royal Hospital for Sick Kids in Edinburgh).

The Chambers Institution Trust was created in 1859 by Disposition and Mortification from Sir William Chalmers to the Provost Magistrates and Councillors (and their successors in office) of the Royal Burgh of Peebles, as Trustees (Trust Deed). Since 1859 there have been several local government re-organisations, changes in Trust Law and significant changes in the way that local services are delivered to the community.

The Trust Deed vested the Chamber Institute in the Town Council in Trust for the community of Peebles in 1859. The Trust Deed provided that the building was to be held in Trust and devoted to "the social, moral and intellectual improvement" of the Peeblesshire Community; for use as a public reading room, public library and 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 Trust Deed appointed a board of Directors to manage the property consisting of William Chalmers, the Provost and Magistrates of the Burgh, the Member of Parliament for the County of Peebles, various notable office holder and 5 elected subscribers who were connected to the town or neighbourhood. The Directors were given equal powers to the Trustees "as if the same were actually vested in themselves".

In 1905 the Directors were authorised by the Court of Session to borrow money to provide cloakrooms, following an application to the Court as the Trust Deed did not provide for this. In 1910 to facilitate expansion and improvement of the library, museum and art gallery, a gift of £10,000 was received from Andrew Carnegie. The gift to the Trust provided the funds required to acquire the shop premises 23 and 25 High Street to support the library and museum extension. It was a condition of the gift that the Town Council adopt the Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887, with the administration of the Institute being transferred at that time from the Board of

Directors to a committee set up in terms of the 1887 Act i.e. a committee to administer the library and museum functions of the Council. The committee members were to be appointed by the Town Council and were to include 2 householders from the burgh of Peebles. The conditions of this gift were formalised in the Chambers Institution Peebles Order Confirmation Act 1911.

These committees were then replaced following the Local Government Scotland Act 1973 which transferred the powers to the local councils. As a result Borders Regional Council became responsible for the management and administration of the Institute in addition to the property being vested in them in Trust. In 1994 the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act transferred the functions of Borders Regional Council to Scottish Borders Council (SBC). The Institute is therefore vested in SBC in Trust and SBC is the body responsible for the management of the Institute by virtue of the 1973 Act. Currently the Trust comprises of the six elected Tweeddale Councillors as Trustees, with wider community consultation taken into account via a beneficiaries group who meet prior to each Trustee meeting so that their views are represented and considered. The Trust and SBC are investigating the possibility for the Chambers Institution Trust to become a SCIO.

Over the past 100 years, the building has undergone unsympathetic subdivisions and alterations to the detriment of the building aesthetic and also presenting increasing challenges for the various services delivered from within the building.

The original narrative of the building has become confused and disjointed and the visibility of the institution and its intended purpose have been lost, with poor connectivity between the services within the building. There is no clear entrance from the High Street with no space for a public welcome to the building. There is little interpretation about the history and heritage of the building. There is poor accessibility across the building and no lift to the top floor, with limited accessible toilet provision. Staff accommodation is too small, uncomfortable and restricts the services that staff can offer.

Today the building complex houses the War Memorial, the Burgh Hall, the Library, the Tweeddale Museum, the Registrar's Office, the SBC Contact Centre and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The John Buchan Museum opened within the building complex in 2013 and is managed by an independent Trust.

## **The Consultations**

Scottish Borders Council and the Chambers Institution undertook a significant public consultation on from September 2015 to April 2016. This engaged with 923 local people and 124 local organisations.

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

### ***Strengths***

- the building is highly valued by the local community
- there is strong support for it to remain a building for community use and one where the community comes first
- the different uses of the building are seen as positive, making it a lively place to visit
- the Library and Burgh Hall are the parts most regularly visited
- the war memorial and the quiet courtyard are much valued
- Peebles High Street is a vibrant place
- Peebles is an attractive and creative place



### **Opportunities**

- there is a desire to learn more about the history of Peebles
- the part which has most scope for change was identified as the Burgh Hall and the removal of fixed staging. There were a range of ideas for removing the false ceiling and adding a gallery or floor at a high level (much of this has now been addressed in recent restoration work).
- there is scope to improve collaboration between those providing services at the Chambers Institution
- there is a desire to promote the use of the building by young people and for education

### **Weaknesses**

- access to, and within, the building can be difficult for some people
- there is a shortage of facilities such as, toilets, catering, storage
- there is a need for more flexible accommodation within the building
- opening hours vary between the services based in the building, which can be confusing for visitors, and can cause problems accessing some parts of the building
- the booking system needs to be more user friendly and the cost of booking a space should be more affordable
- major repairs are needed to bring the building into a good condition
- the most visited spaces in the building are not easy to find or to physically access

### **Threats**

- the older population of Peebles is predicted to increase over the next 20 years. There are currently barriers to accessing the building for those with reduced mobility, visual or hearing difficulties. These are likely to prevent older users from accessing services provided at the Chambers Institution, but this also presents an opportunity to develop spaces for this age group and others, including dementia friendly spaces and activities and spaces that facilitate social prescribing, connecting people to activities, groups and services in their communities to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that effect their health and wellbeing.
- lack of clarity over who is responsible for the building management (Chambers Institution, Live Borders or SBC) is unhelpful in building ongoing community support for the building
- Peebles has many community facilities, particularly halls. People understand that any decision about future use of the Burgh Hall must avoid duplication, the possibility of co-operation with other venues should be explored.

Consultations identified the following threads:

### **Placemaking**

- Link to the Peebles Place Plan
- The building is highly valued by the local community and seen as an important community facility. There is a strong desire for it to remain as a focal point in the community.
- A belief that the building should continue to respect the original vision of William Chambers – that it be for the improvement of the local community
- War memorial a key focal point and much valued by the community.
- Location in a much-visited town in the Borders considered to have a vibrant high street and creative community.

- Opportunity to address social concerns within the town (anti-social behaviour, make the building more attractive for young people)
- Important the building enhances and does not compete with other community spaces in the town (such as the Eastgate Theatre).
- Maintain and enhance the Chambers Institution's role as the cultural heart of the community

### **Building Usage & Access**

- Support for multiple uses and services in the building
- Library and Burgh Hall most visited spaces
- Full access a big issue – parts of the building not fully accessible. No disabled toilets for those visiting museum and art gallery.
- Car parking an issue
- Lack of catering facilities and a lack of storage across the building
- Inflexible spaces – flexible staging for the Burgh Hall, more spaces suitable for meetings and classes
- Confusing opening hours across all services in the building
- Confusing access to some services within the building and a lack of connectivity between these services
- More user-friendly booking services
- Lack of regular maintenance
- Location of services in Building – most used are not visible from the High Street and hard to find.
- Lack of clarity around building management
- Co-location of Library, Museum and Art Gallery
- Improved Fire Safety provision
- Environmentally Controlled storage
- Creation of Off Site Collections store for Tweedale that could be open to the public
- Staff and volunteer accommodation
- Creation or welcome/orientation point

### **Learning & Engagement**

- Desire for a place to learn about the history of Peebles and the High Street
- Creation of modern and fit for purpose learning spaces

### **Economic Potential**

- Could be important to the local tourism economy
- The Burgh Hall has huge potential, but the opportunities here have not yet been fully explored, although works to remove the suspended ceiling has been a significant improvement. It was highlighted during the consultation in November 2022 that the most recent Page & Park feasibility study did not address the Burgh Hall area or the need for additional and/or improved operational space, and particularly the idea of introducing a mid-floor that had been raised in the previous public consultations in 2016, and again in 2022. This was discussed at the presentation with the architect, who said that this had not been part of their feasibility brief but agreed that this would be worth investigating. This piece of work has yet to be completed.

All of the above can be summarised as follows:

To seize opportunities to re-order and refurbish the building, increasing flexibility and hence use, especially of the Burgh Hall. This will deliver an attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable building that celebrates its unique history and heritage. In so doing, to engage local people in a unique piece of their community story and to attract new audiences into the town, contributing and enhancing the local economy. To ensure service delivery is responsive to current needs of the community and to build the trust of the local community through delivering effective building management in conjunction with other venues in the town, as appropriate.

### **Chambers Institution – Transformation and Renewal**

Following on from the community and stakeholder consultation process in 2015-16, Page and Park prepared an options appraisal for SBC and the Chambers Institution within the context of the statement that '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'.

Two main strands were identified for possible capital works:

1. Physical changes to the building to improve accessibility, legibility and welcome.
2. Operational changes to the services, to increase the range offered, increase engagement and attract a diverse audience of local people and visitors to Peebles.

To achieve this the following physical changes were identified:

- More visible and accessible entrance.
- Improved access to all levels.
- Regulation compliance, especially in terms of fire safety.
- New sanitary facilities, including accessible toilets.
- An updated interior that enhances the heritage of the building.
- Better connections between the courtyard and to public areas.

Operational changes needed were identified as:

- Must be developed in consultation with stakeholders
- To retain the Library, Museum and Art Gallery, meeting spaces and the contemplative courtyard.
- A need to modernise and futureproof the Museum and Library service.
- Museum and Library staff to work together as a team to enhance the service to the local community.

Two different options were then outlined in this document with the preferred option seeing the following work undertaken:

- New entrance from the High Street.
- Welcoming reception area for the whole building.
- Retain the existing staircase
- A new glazed lift providing access to all floors with floor void at first floor to reveal upper level.
- Ground floor rooms opened up with partitions removed to create connected spaces.
- New link corridor connection to Register office, Burgh Chambers and Burgh Hall.

- New glazing to link in front of Burgh Hall opening up the space to the courtyard garden.
- First floor rooms reorganised to provide a temporary exhibition space.
- Environmentally controlled storage space.
- New fire exit from rear wing at first floor level .
- New staff base in former Museum room
- Second floor art gallery made accessible
- Lift access to collections storage at second floor level.

## 2022 Public Consultation Exercise

The 2022 consultation exercise saw a series of banners to inform the public about the context of the work and describe what the architect's proposals were coming out of the options appraisal. A UX display was then created to gather feedback on what the public thought of the proposals; whether there were any gaps in the proposals and whether there were any gaps in the Peebles community that could be co-located in the space. The public were asked to put gold stars against proposals that they supported and red dots against those that they objected to with the results (in order of highest to lowest scoring) as follows:

1. Accessible Public Toilets First Floor – 30 votes
2. Accessible Public Toilets Ground Floor – 25 votes
3. Accessible second floor art gallery – 25 votes
4. New Entrance to the High Street – 23 votes
5. Lift access to collections store on second floor – 22 votes
6. Welcome Reception for whole building – 20 votes
7. New fire exit from rear wing at first floor level – 18 votes
8. First floor rooms reorganised to provide different temporary exhibition space – 17 votes
9. New glazed lift to provide access to all floors – 16 votes
10. Ground floor opened up, with partitions removed, to create connected spaces – 15 votes
11. New glazing to link in front of Burgh Hall opening space up to the courtyard garden – 15 votes and one against
12. New link corridor connection to Registry Office, Burgh Chambers and Burgh Hall – 14 votes
13. Retain existing staircase – 12 votes
14. Environmentally controlled storage space – 12 votes
15. New Staff Office in current Museum Room – 3 votes (2 against)

The above highlights that accessibility was a key concern and the need to improve accessible toilet provision and improved accessibility on the second floor were the top scoring proposals, with lift access also being a high scoring desire.

Less popular were provision for staff/office accommodation, the need for environmentally controlled storage and retaining the existing staircase, but these could have scored less as participants may not have as great an understanding of the needs around these issues.

Staff working in the building also undertook a similar exercise with a new entrance on the high street, accessible toilets, a new fire exit at the rear of the first floor and better access to the second-floor gallery all being the top scorers. Lift access also scored highly. The least popular were placing the new staff provision in the current museum room, due to its aesthetic and heritage importance, environmentally controlled storage spaces, and a new link corridor to the Registry Office, Burgh Chambers and Burgh Hall.

Themes around What Might be Missing from plans were as follows:

- How to engage local people in the work, opportunity for local people to be involved and learn new skills.
- Green/Net Zero credentials (this will be very important for funders as well)
- Interpretation of the history and heritage of the building, the link to Chambers etc.
- Be ambitious with the Refurb (Bigger Museum mentioned)
- A desire to keep the library space distinct from Museum and gallery spaces.
- Learning and engagement plans, how will these be incorporated and catered for.
- Design of the outdoor spaces (the courtyard – a suggestion for a veggie plot)
- Burgh Hall – better catering facilities, better use of balcony area
- Combine the Buchan Museum and Tweedale Museum
- Space for a café? – Lots of café facilities near by could cause competition concerns?
- Modern meeting rooms and facilities, dementia friendly spaces and flexible multipurpose spaces.
- Better bike and car parking
- Robust policing
- True community representation
- Must be the building that is the true heart of the community in line with the original bequest – a hub for charities, a space for ideas sharing and one that is well marketed.

To summarise the above, accessibility improvements seem to be the highest priority work for the building. Installing a new lift, providing accessible toilets and improving public access on the second floor seem to be the most desired work to the building as a priority. In terms of what was felt to be missing, effective marketing scored highly across the board, with a feeling that more needed to be done to raise the profile of the building, the museum and the Burgh Hall. Several individuals also stressed the need to develop learning and engagement plans, to better engage the local community in the history and heritage of the building and create learning spaces for the Museum and Library.

Creating a new visible entrance on the High Street and a dedicated welcome space for visitors also scored highly across both groups and was mentioned in all consultation exercises. This requires thought on how best this could be achieved within the context of listed building consents and internal spaces within the building – it could require high cost to achieve this, so this needs to be properly costed to ascertain in what phase of works this should be undertaken.

Both staff and public mentioned the desire to separate the Museum and Library spaces and to provide a more comfortable and engaging space for the Library. Staff felt a refurbished building might address some of what was missing in the local community – more activities for teenagers and more spaces for evening classes, adult classes and workshops.

There is an opportunity for the Chambers Institution to develop spaces that meets the needs of all age groups to fulfil local social prescribing needs. The term ‘social prescribing’ is used to describe a variety of approaches by which individuals are linked to resources and services within local communities with the aim of improving mental and physical health and wellbeing. It encapsulates the concept that people’s health is largely determined by socio-economic factors, and that people who have access to social supports within their communities are healthier. It covers a range of needs around mental health, social isolation, dementia and a range of other factors and conditions that impact on health and wellbeing. The Scottish government have identified the importance of arts, culture and heritage in tackling these needs and see local community activities around these as important within Social Prescribing – as such there are many funding opportunities for organisations looking to facilitate this.

## November 2023 Whiteboard Scoring Exercise

In November 2023 the Trust undertook a whiteboard scoring exercise to identify activities that could be delivered or should take place within the building. It should be noted that not all members of the Trust took part in this exercise.

The Tweedale Museum, Art Gallery and the Library were identified as essential as they are a core purpose of the building and all part of the original intent of Chambers when he bequeathed the building to the town.

Catering was identified as a key issue as the current kitchen is not adequate for being able to generate possible commercial income through the hire of spaces within the building and running of various events. The kitchen does present issues in terms of how a professional catering kitchen could be made to fit with the current physical challenges within the building.

A need to be sensitive to other offers in the town was identified and that the Chambers Institution should not aim to compete or detract from these offers, such as the various cafés in the town and the Eastgate Theatre.

Taking all of the above into account, the possible activities that scored the highest were:

- Music professional classical concerts - Strong potential for income generation as the Burgh Hall is a prestigious venue, better potential acoustics than Eastgate, but requires suitable stage and backstage facilities.
- Cultural Exhibitions - Ideal central location, activity fully in line with bequest conditions.
- Professional Catering Kitchens – this would enhance the attractiveness of the Burgh Hall and other spaces for venue hire and open up more income generation opportunities.
- Bookable Creative Spaces - Bookable flexible spaces for education and learning activities for groups/clubs or related to library/museum
- Coffee Morning activities – The building is a good central location for these types of activities.
- Silver Band – provide a venue for Peebles Silver Band
- Beltane Events - Would be appropriate activity for Chambers Institution, but dedicated space allocation for Borders College use would likely conflict with other priorities.
- Peebles Cycling Club – Provide a space for the cycling club
- Tourism Hub/Go Tweed Valley – provide a space for tourist information
- Museum of the Bronze Age/Historical Finds – The Borders and Tweedale have a rich bronze, Iron Age and Roman history with among the highest concentrations of sites from these periods in the UK – this Museum could tie in nicely with the recently refurbished Trimontium Museum in Melrose.
- Museum of the Written Word – The Borders has a rich literary history with strong associations with John Buchan, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns, James Hogg (The Ettrick Shepherd), Jane Bathgate, and more recent authors such as Douglas Jackson. The Borders also hosts the annual Borders Book Festive in Melrose and the Beyond Borders Festival at Traquair. Such a Museum could bring this rich history into a unique narrative and be a significant visitor attraction, but thought is needed on how such a Museum could impact on/compliment offers like the John Buchan Museum and on Abbotsford (The Home of Sir Walter Scott)
- Visiting Exhibitions – important to maintain interest and fulfil role as a cultural place for the people.

## Further Views from Staff

Summary: Accessibility for lib/museum service users is key priority

- A need for the library, museum and art gallery to be co-located with a public reception area, environmentally controlled secure collections storage, public toilets and staff work area.
- Flexible activity spaces for use to drive income generation and participation-including Burgh Hall as large space for accommodating cultural and community events/meetings/private or commercial hire.
- A separate learning/activity space for accommodating museum/library learning activity participants.
- Storage spaces for museum collections with appropriate environmental controls, weight-bearing floors and safe emergency exit routes in case of fire.
- Fit for purpose wiring and public access to WIFI throughout the buildings on campus, for online information and interpretation access.
- Access is unsatisfactory regarding existing lift provision to upper floor and is very inconvenient for staff/public to use.
- Fire Safety/Emergency Exit (from top floor and art gallery) - Current top floor museum storage/former office cannot be used for regular access to collections storage as it does not meet fire evacuation safety regulations. There is no emergency exit to outside from current art gallery and only a single escape route via stairs which is a concern regarding safety standards, being via an unenclosed stairwell
- Office space is not adequate for staff but the best use of space for staff office accommodation requires consideration- There is a staff preference to free up the current upper floor backroom office and make this a library/museum public space. One option was suggested to relocate staff into the current museum exhibition room which is adjacent to current library floor. This is not supported by consultation to date and it would be preferable to retain the museum room for improved public access to collections/information and relocate office staff to a new ground floor office.

## Priorities Emerging from Consultations to Date

Taking into account all of the consultation undertaken to date, it is clear there are some key priority areas of work that should be addressed as soon as is possible. However, it is also clear that a final concept encapsulating a full vision for the building also needs to be mapped out.

The overriding priority that leaps out from all the consultation undertaken to date is around accessibility. This includes improving access to and across all floors, installing an improved accessible lift, improving and making access from the High Street much easier and clearer, including the creation of a reception/visitor orientation point on entering the building. As part of this, fire safety improvements are also required.

The above scope of works could be drawn up as a plan for the first phase of work to be funded through the Levelling Up Fund, but it is crucial that before this work commences, there is a clear plan for the future use of the building and the ambitions for the final design, to ensure any work undertaken now is cohesive and connects with the final ambition and the wider capital works required to achieve this.

This requires work to articulate and agree what this design ambition and concept should be and, importantly what services will be delivered from where within the building. For example, reconfiguring the Library, Museum and Art Gallery were identified as fairly high priorities, mirrored

by concerns from some people to keep these three areas as distinct within the building. The current library has inadequate space for children and is squeezed into a space on the first floor – it may be better suited to move this space to the ground floor and possibly also incorporate within it the Visitor Welcome and Orientation space (it could also make sense to incorporate the tourism information into this area as well but this all requires discussion with staff and other stakeholders).

Learning space has also been identified as a high priority and the location of such a space also needs careful thought (ideally near to the Library, Museum and Art Gallery, but also near to the Burgh Hall).

The functioning of and access to the Registrar’s Office needs consideration in terms of the overall operation of the building once completed.

The current room that is home to the important Parthenon freezes is poorly presented and hidden away and the freezes, so unique to the building, are poorly marketed. This could become an important element of the building but requires thought around access and the spaces that it should connect with.

Consideration is needed around the site of the Citizens Advice Bureau, whose requirements also present challenges about where this service could be sited if it continues to be housed within the Chambers Institution. Likewise, thought is needed around the location of the John Buchan Museum and how this could function alongside a possible museum of written words.

The positioning of a professional standard and accessible catering kitchen needs thought and how best this can be sited within the challenging footprint of the building.

Page and Park did present options for the building following on from the consultations, but these options did not fully address all of the above ambitions and so a new design vision (building on those produced by Page & Park) should be commissioned as a priority.

Perhaps most importantly from all the consultation undertaken to date, has been the evidence of how much the local community want to see the Chambers Institution Building used and operating as a cultural place within the local area, and how much the current offers within the building are valued and loved by the local population. It is clear from the consultations, that people are engaged with and enthused by the future plans for the building and it will be important to keep them connected and involved as these plans develop.

From a wider funding perspective, ambition and vision are key to success. Funders like value for money but they also want to fund something that is truly creative, groundbreaking and ambitious and, in the world of heritage funding, preserves all that is unique about a historic building while injecting new life fit for a modern world. The Trust should look to develop a vision and ambition for the building that achieves this.

### **Recommended Next Steps**

Following on from the consultations that have taken place to date and in consideration of the above and also the funding secured through the Levelling Up Fund, key next steps are recommended as follows:

1. Identify and confirm the full project vision and within this, the scope of works feasible within the Levelling Up funding envelope. To achieve this requires a brainstorming/workshop session, as soon as is practicable, to run through the findings from all the consultation to



date and ascertain what could be achieved in different phases of the project, and how best the project should be phased.

2. Identify and appoint a design team who can draw up reworked plans for the building and provides costings.
3. Identify the full fundraising target as well as specific matched funds that may be required to support the work undertaken as part of the Levelling Up funding. Following on from this, draft a comprehensive fundraising strategy for the project.
4. Based on the above, draft a new business plan for the project (both for the works to be completed within the Levelling Up fund envelope and for the full project) with full costs, detailed cash projects and realistic timescales.
5. Programme future consultation sessions to keep the local community and all stakeholders engaged and on board with all future plans.
6. Increase marketing and PR activity to help drive up interest (which in turn helps to make the fundraising easier) and encourages community engagement.

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank