

Chambers Institute – Consultation – 2015/16

The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust was commissioned to carry out a community consultation exercise to define an agreed Vision for the future use of the Chambers Institution in Peebles.

The consultation took place from September 2015 to April 2016 and included background information gathering, a questionnaire and a series of stakeholder workshops.

You said

- 923 people and 124 local organisations were engaged with
- 237 questionnaires were completed
- 10 interviews took place

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified for the Chambers Institute 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, 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
- 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 Institute
- lack of clarity over who is responsible for the building management (Chambers Institution Trust, Live Borders or ourselves) 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.