

As has been positively reported in the Peeblesshire News following the most recent Trust meeting, Phase 1 is currently on track to be completed by the end of 2027, with “recanting” expected to be complete by about March 2028. This all depends on the outcome of the tendering process, which has now progressed to the critical pricing stage. Contingency plans are in place for making savings on the Phase 1 contract if needed to keep the costs within the strictly limited budget. Meanwhile, the enabling works to be carried out by SB Contracts (including preliminary investigation works and removal of the old lift) are now finally able to commence following the discharge of planning pre-commencement conditions.

A copy of the most recent summary progress report from the Project Board is attached for further information.

Discussions are continuing between representatives of the Chambers Institution Trust and Friends in looking ahead to possible staged improvements in the sustainable operation of the Chambers Institution following the completion of Phase 1, particularly in the Burgh Hall area, and to building capability for the eventual implementation of the Phase 2 objectives. To assist in this, proposals are being prepared by our consultants for a transition business plan and feasibility study, the outcome of which will form the basis for the next stage of community consultation.

Following the appointment of a specialist consultant earlier this year, a stonework condition survey was carried out and a detailed report has now been received, with specifications for proposed masonry repairs along with an assessment of the closest-matching and most compatible stones available in the UK for repairs. As highlighted in the report, a plaque at the site entitled ‘Description of the Memorial’ states: “The high class, but soft stone, unfortunately did not weather well from the start. Renovated in the early 1950s, the memorial was restored again in 2003, and in about 1980 the screen walls were clad in a yellow sandstone”. The extensive deterioration now evident is mainly within the areas of original stonework dating back to the installation of the memorial in 1922, and the first challenge will be to find the most compatible materials to enable lasting and visually matching repairs. SBC Estates department is now preparing to seek tenders for the specified works from specialist stonework contractors, and it is hoped that grant funding may be obtained from charitable trusts that specialise in supporting the repair and conservation of significant war memorials.

The Friends of the Chambers Institution is now firmly established and will be playing an increasingly key role in working with the Chambers Institution Trust on the future development plans, and in representing the interests of the beneficiaries of William Chambers’ bequest in this as well as in ongoing housekeeping matters. As this role develops, we will likely be needing more hands to the pumps, and we are keen to see more member representation from the outlying areas of Tweeddale. The first meeting of members is to be held before the end of the year, to be confirmed, and I will be glad to speak to anyone interested in attending.

Sam Coe



Chambers Institution Levelling Up Fund Project High-Level Report for Sharing

Project Overview

- Reporting Period: September 2026 (11/08/26-22/09/26)
- Project Stage: RIBA Stage 4
- Planning permission approved
- Total Budget: £4,662,000 (£4,195,800 LUF, £466,200 CIT Fundraising)

Progress & Activities

- Stage 1 of main works tender concluded Monday 21 September.
- SBC, LDN and TTPM form the review panel and will determine most suitable contractors to take forward to Stage 2.
- TTCM nearing conclusion of Bill of Quantities which form part of Stage 2 tender pack of information.
- SBContracts currently programmed to commence enabling works package on Monday 5th October.
- All required information submitted to discharge the planning and listed building consent pre-commencement conditions. Planner has advised a decision will be received imminently. Once pre-commencement conditions are discharged, the enabling works package can commence.
- Master project programme currently being reviewed and will be re-circulated once enabling works package commence.
- Master project communication plan currently being finalised and will be shared with the board for final agreement ahead of Stage 5 commencing.

Programme

- Current forecast completion: **March 2028 (including building recant)**
- Key milestones:
- Stage 3 approved: **4 December 2025.**
- Decant completed: **April 2026.**
- Main works start: **November 2026.**

Key Achievements

- Preparation and submission of the detailed planning application and listed building consent
- Full building decant
- Approval of the full planning application and listed building consent
- Submission of Stage 4 report
- Stage 4 design approval
- Receipt of Stage 1 tender information from the market

Key Issues

- Adequacy of approval periods
- Discharge of planning and listed building consent conditions
- Enabling works conclusion to allow the main contractor to commence works
- Potential need for further refinement of 12-month construction period
- Sufficient procurement periods
- Obtaining full LUF funding



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Financial Overview

- TTCM recently carried out a full budget review to ensure the Stage 4 costs were brought back in line with the available budget position. This exercise involved collating a value engineering list which can be engaged at short notice, if contractor prices are returned in excess of the available budget.