Chambers Institution Trust: Update report for PCC 12/11/26

Tenders for the Phase 1 works were issued last month and the results are awaited with bated breath. Meanwhile the preliminary enabling works have now commenced on site, after a delay due to the unexpected time taken to discharge pre-commencement planning and building warrant conditions.

A copy of the most recent Phase 1 summary progress report from the Project Board is attached for further details.

The fundraising sub-group continues to meet regularly with representatives from SBC, Chambers Institution Trust, Friends of the Chambers Institution, Live Borders, South of Scotland Enterprise, and our fundraising consultant Jason Dyer. Looking beyond the securing of the required match funding for Phase 1 which is in hand, funding applications to10 smaller trusts and charitable foundations have already been made in the name of FoCI, and all other potential sources of funding are being considered.

Looking ahead to completion of Phase 1, representatives from CIT and FoCI have been engaging with Live Borders and Eastgate Theatre to consider how the Chambers Institution and Burgh Hall should operate when the doors open again in March 2028, and what improved physical and operational arrangements could be planned for in advance. Live Borders are also considering plans for the achievable refitting of library and museum areas for this next stage. A public consultation is planned for early in the new year to gather views on what interim changes would be worth making to improve the use and sustainability of the Burgh Hall in particular from 2028.

To support our objectives for the transition period between the completion of Phase 1 and the future Phase 2 vision as set out in the full business plan, which we are currently referring to as Phase 1.5, our project consultants will be assisting with some further staged feasibility and business planning work as yet to be confirmed.

The Friends of the Chambers Institution is actively gathering new members, and membership from outwith Peebles is particularly sought as the Chambers Institution is for the benefit of everyone in Tweeddale. Members from communities outwith Peebles can help by shaping the relevance of the Chambers Institution to their interests. We also hope to get more young people involved in due course, but it's early days yet, and the role of the group is still developing. The first meeting of members is now likely to be in Spring or so of next year after further recruitment, when the contractor will be on site with the potential for a members' site visit if practical.

Quotes are currently being gathered for the stonework repair and restoration work at the War Memorial as identified in the recent specialist consultant's survey and report, and the repair specifications and material selections are being finalised. SBC's Lead Heritage and Design Officer is supportive of the proposed approach to the necessary repairs, while stressing the need for a sensitive and minimal intervention due to the monument's Category A listed status. External grant funding will be sought once the costs have been fully identified. In the meantime, following concerns raised by our own Secretary, measures were taken to renew and improve the lighting within the dome of the memorial, including the illumination of the central memorial plaques, while as part of the annual maintenance programme the plaques were cleaned and polished to improve the legibility of the inscriptions. All this work was completed in time for Remembrance Sunday.

Sam Coe

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

Project Overview

- Reporting Period: October 2026 (22/09/26-21/10/26)
- Project Stage: RIBA Stage 4
- Planning permission approved
- Total Budget: £4,662,000 (£4,195,800 LUF, £466,200 CIT Fundraising)

Progress & Activities

- Stage 2 of main works tender issued on Monday 12th October.
- Due to statutory consent issues regarding the building warrant and planning conditions, SBContracts are now programmed to commence enabling works by Monday 9th November.
- Following review of master project programme, TTPM are confident the delay to the enabling works will not have a negative impact on the overall construction programme due to the likelihood of a main contractor having capacity to enhance current timescales.
- TTPM have further confidence in programme enhancement opportunities following successful removal of all known asbestos and the enabling works repairing the building for construction.
- Master project programme will be updated and re-issued when the main contractor is onboarded and a confirmed construction programme is established.
- Master project communication plan is 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
- Development of proposed VE list
- Agreement with SBC procurement of revised timelines for issuing tender information to market
- Receipt of Stage 1 tender information for the market
- Issuing of Stage 2 tender information to the market

Key Issues

- Conflicting stakeholder feedback
- 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

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.