



14 March 2022

File ref: EIR2022/00085

J. Dennis

Sent by email: request-833219-
f55dea49@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear J. Dennis

Environmental Information Regulations request: EIR2022/00085

Thank you for your email of 14 February 2022 requesting information about asbestos at King's Buildings.

The University of Edinburgh is a global university, rooted in Scotland. We are globally recognised for our research, development and innovation and we have provided world-class teaching to our students for more than 430 years. We are the largest university in Scotland and in 2020/21 our annual revenue was £1.18 billion, of which £324 million was research income. We have over 45,000 students and over 16,000 staff. We are a founding member of the UK's Russell Group of leading research universities and a member of the League of European Research Universities.

Environmental Information Request (EIR)

Information relating to asbestos at King's Buildings is environmental information as described in the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIRs). As the University is required to respond to requests for environmental information under EIRs, the information you request is exempt under section 39(2) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA). This exemption is subject to the public interest test. The University acknowledges the public interest in openness and transparency.

However, as the public has a statutory right to access environmental information under EIRs, the University considers the public interest in withholding this information under FOISA outweighs the public interest in disclosing it under FOISA because there is no public interest in dealing with the same request under two different regimes. This is essentially a technical point and has no material effect on the outcome of your request; the only distinction is that the information you requested has been provided to you under EIRs, rather than FOISA.

Asbestos

The University has significant responsibilities under the [Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012](#) including a duty under Regulation 4 (3) Duty to Manage 'To manage the risk from

asbestos in non-domestic premises, the duty holder must ensure that a suitable and sufficient assessment is carried out as to whether asbestos is or is liable to be present in the premises’.

The University [asbestos management plan for 2021/22](#) is available to view online.

Asbestos at King's Buildings

You asked a series of questions regarding asbestos at King's Buildings.

The King's Buildings

The King's Buildings is the main campus of the College of Science and Engineering, housing the majority of the College's seven Schools. The King's Buildings is home to several education and research organisations: Scottish Agricultural College - Edinburgh Campus, British Geological Survey, Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland (BIOSS). More [information on the Kings Buildings](#) can be found on the University website.

Percentage of buildings at King's Buildings thought to have asbestos

You asked what percentage of buildings at the King's Buildings are thought to have asbestos. The University has carried out surveys of all buildings at King's Buildings to fulfil its responsibilities under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

The University asbestos management system lists 49 live buildings on the King's Buildings Campus. These are not all teaching/academic buildings and include boiler houses and stand-alone stores that have their own building numbers, following University space management conventions. 32 buildings, or 65%, contain asbestos or are presumed to contain asbestos.

Percentage of asbestos removed from buildings at King's Buildings

You asked what percentage of asbestos has been removed from buildings at King's Buildings. Asbestos identified in registers is not consistent in size or extent and thus it is impossible to quantify into a meaningful percentage. As such, the University does not hold this information.

Total spent on removing asbestos from King's Buildings since 2015

You asked how much has been spent on removing asbestos from King's Buildings since 2015. The total spent on asbestos removal at King's Buildings since 2015 is £11,522,028.

Measures to identify and remove asbestos from buildings at King's Buildings

You asked what ongoing measures University has to identify and remove asbestos from buildings at King's Buildings. The University has carried out surveys of all buildings on the King's Buildings campus. A United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited surveying company undertook these surveys within the University's dedicated asbestos management system and these formed the basis of the University asbestos register. All

items identified within the register are inspected at prescribed intervals by an expert in-house resource. A programme of management in accordance with best practice and statutory guidance, which includes removal where appropriate, is undertaken. Planned alterations or intrusive work within the fabric of a building are further assessed for the presence of asbestos hidden or obscured by building fabric by way of an asbestos refurbishment or demolition survey to fulfil the University's responsibilities under Section 5 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

Compensation for asbestos exposure

You asked how much compensation the University has paid for historical asbestos exposure, which I am interpreting to refer to claims made in relation to the entirety of the University estate.

Though the University holds the exact figure on compensation paid for historical asbestos exposure, I am not disclosing it in this response. This is because disclosing these low numbers could enable individuals to be identified. This would breach the data protection principles set out in data protection legislation. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 does not require us to provide this sort of information as it is exempt under section 38(1)(b).

Please note it does not matter who makes the request under FOISA, if we disclose information to one person we are expected to disclose it to all. While you may not be able to identify individuals from the information you have requested, others may be able to do so.

I can however state that the total amount the University has paid for historical asbestos exposure claims is between £300,000 and £350,000.

Staff members with mesothelioma as a result of working at King's Buildings

Finally, you asked whether any staff members suffered from mesothelioma as a result of working at King's Buildings. The University has no record of any staff who suffered from mesothelioma as a result of working at King's Buildings.

Right to review

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may ask the University to conduct a review of this decision by contacting the University's Records Management Section in writing (e.g. by letter or email) or in some other recorded form (e.g. audio or video tape). You should describe the original request, explain your grounds for dissatisfaction, and include an address for correspondence. You have 40 working days from receipt of this letter to submit a review request. The contact details for the Records Management Section are at the top of this letter. When the review process has been completed, if you are still dissatisfied, you may use the [Scottish Information Commissioner's guidance on making an appeal](#) to make an appeal to the Commissioner. If you do not have access to the Internet, please let me know and I will provide a copy of the relevant web pages.

Privacy notice for information request applicants

[The University of Edinburgh's request privacy notice](#), which describes how we use the information you have supplied about yourself and your request, is published on the University website.

Yours sincerely

David Ward
Records Management Section

If you require this letter in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact the Records Management Section on 0131 651 4099 or email recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk