



20 December 2019

RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION

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Jamie Mann

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Dear Jamie Mann

### **Freedom of information request**

Thank you for your email of 16 December 2019 requesting further information about the University's assets.

### **University context**

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 425 years. We are the largest university in Scotland and in 2017/18 our annual revenue was £984 million, of which over £279 million was research income. We have over 41,000 students and more than 15,000 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.

High-quality infrastructure is key to enabling the University to achieve its strategic goals. We continue to transform our estate in order to provide innovative, safe and sustainable spaces which support our world-class academic activities. These developments create outstanding facilities which will benefit students, staff and visitors, as well as the local community. Our Estate Strategy is described in *Quality Infrastructure: Estate Strategy 2010-2020* published at <http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EstatesBuildings/Strategies/EstateStrategy.pdf> and information about current projects is at: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/estates-buildings/about/current-projects/overview>.

### **University assets**

You asked for a list of all the property and land assets that the University has sold in the last five years.

In my response to your previous request dated 13 December 2019, I provided the following information about 'publicly owned' assets that the University has sold during the period.

The University has disposed of four flatted residences during the period that were purchased using an interest free loan from the Universities Grants Committee. The residences were located in Rankeillor Street, Gladstone Terrace, Panmure Place and Montague Street in Edinburgh. The sale prices were £365,000, £310,000, £242,500 and £186,187 and the dates of the sales were 17 July 2018, 28 September 2016, 20 May 2016 and 1 August 2014 respectively.

The University does not hold a record of who the buyers were for the flats in Gladstone Terrace and Montague Street. We do hold the names of the buyers for the properties in Rankeillor Street and Panmure Place, however as the properties were purchased by private individuals I cannot provide you with the names as 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).

During the period, the University also sold areas of land and an outdoor centre which had received public funding. The first plot of land was on Bilston Moor Road in Bilston and was sold on 31 July 2019 to Barratt Development West Trading Limited. The second plot of land was on Penicuik Road, Roslin and was sold to CALA Management Ltd in two lots on 16 March 2017 and 18 September 2018. The outdoor centre was in Woodlands, Kingussie and was sold for £320,000 on 5 April 2019. The buyers were private individuals and again providing the names would breach the data protection principles set out in data protection legislation.

I have not provided the sale prices for the two areas of land. This is because disclosing this information is likely to substantially damage the effective conduct of the University's legitimate business, and would also be likely to substantially damage the University's commercial interests. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 does not require us to provide this sort of information as it is exempt under sections 30(c) and 33(1)(b). The Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 do not require us to provide this sort of information as it is exempt under Regulation 10(5)(e).

These FOISA exemptions and EISR exception are subject to the public interest test. There is clear public interest in openness, transparency and the accountability of public authorities. This is why we are disclosing other information about the land sales. However, there is also inherent and strong public interest in allowing the University to operate its business in a way to compete commercially, and undertake management planning with the purpose of maximising revenue, which is reinvested our estate or used for the procurement of equipment, that are used for teaching, research and related activities. This includes maintaining the confidentiality of information where disclosure could harm the University's position in future negotiations with potential buyers. If the University disclosed how much it previously sold land for this could compromise any future negotiations on land sales and adversely effect the sale price. In this case, the University considers that the public interest in withholding the redacted information outweighs the public interest in releasing it.

In addition to the above sales, the University has sold one further property that was not 'publicly-owned'. On 21 March 2016, the University sold a property on Heriot Row for £2,260,000. The property was previously the official residence of the Principal and used for official functions and university events. The proceeds of the sale allowed the establishment of an endowment fund to provide scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate students.

Again, as private individuals purchased the property I cannot provide you with the names of the buyers as 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).

I note you have asked for information in a spreadsheet. Please find this enclosed.

### **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

**Ann-Marie Noble**

Information Compliance Manager

**Enclosure:** Information about sales of property and land in the last five years

**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](mailto:recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk)**