



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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Multi-million pound gift boosts hub's vision for shaping the future

An anonymous donor has pledged £10m to fund a University of Edinburgh initiative that will address some of society's most pressing concerns.

The gift – the biggest ever capital donation to the University – will help transform the city's former Royal Infirmary into a state-of-the-art home for the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

Launching today, the Institute will bring together researchers from across the University with other partners to tackle major issues within the economy, education and societies across the world.

Upon moving into the former Royal Infirmary in 2021, it will be one of the largest centres for interdisciplinary learning and research in Europe.

It will showcase the University's world-renowned expertise in the humanities, social sciences and arts, alongside its sector-leading work in data science – the collecting, organising and interpreting of large sets of digital information.

The Institute will also build on the city and University's existing strengths and connections in public policy, finance, and the arts.

It will combine teaching, research and engagement with partner organisations to strengthen the University's collaborative work in addressing a range of the world's most demanding issues.

Researchers will, for example, consider how areas such as theology can help tackle climate change or what business management can do to alleviate the refugee crisis.

They will also grapple with ways in which lawyers can foster creativity and reflect on how design informatics can tackle inequality.

The Institute will play an important part in ambitious plans to make Edinburgh and its surrounding area the data capital of Europe.

The £10m gift will help give the Institute a permanent home. It will sensitively renovate a wing of the Category A-listed former Royal Infirmary, which is now part of the Quartermile development.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

The restored building, which will be open to the wider public, is due to be complete in 2021. It has lain empty since 2003.

The donation will create a flexible space that enables collaboration among students, staff and partner organisations.

In recognition of the historic building's importance to the wider community, the multimillion pound development will include a public piazza, garden spaces and a large subterranean multi-functional space for events and lectures.

The University has appointed Faithful+Gould as project managers, Bennetts Associates as architects, and Consarc as conservation architects. Construction work has begun on site.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea said: "We are deeply grateful for this visionary gift to the University, which will help us to create a truly exceptional teaching and research environment within the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

"The Institute will challenge us to think differently about how we can affect change, both locally and globally. By marrying our world-class expertise in the humanities, arts and social sciences with our sector-defining research in new data technologies, it will produce practical solutions and new approaches for the common good. This generous gift will help realise this vision."

Vice-Principal Professor Dorothy Miell, Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, said: "The world is experiencing major changes: climate volatility, political discontent, advances in artificial intelligence, economic upheavals. This presents big challenges. We need different ways of thinking about these issues and of devising new solutions.

"Edinburgh Futures Institute will make that difference. It will blend theoretical and practical knowledge. It will work with organisations dealing directly with these challenges and curate meaningful interactions between seemingly disparate disciplines. We want our students to embody this approach and our partners to share the vision and help us to develop it."

Rab Bennett, Founding Director and Architect, Bennetts Associates, said: "Transforming the Category A-listed Royal Infirmary into the University's Edinburgh Futures Institute is an incredibly important project for the institution and for the city. The building is one of the top-ten listed buildings in Edinburgh. It has enormous potential for rejuvenation, providing a completely new and more open identity, especially with a public square on Lauriston Place.

"We have a unique opportunity for this to become a world-renowned example of respectful and innovative modernisation, by preserving key original features, while adapting the building for modern use."

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