

Mystery donor makes £10 million funding pledge to university

An unnamed benefactor has given £10 million to the University of Edinburgh to make it possible for the transformation of the former Royal Infirmary building into a state of the art Institute.



The building which is part of the Quartermile Development and [which was sold to the University](#) two years ago is the former surgical department.

The university plans to make it home for the Edinburgh Futures Institute. The academics, both students and staff, working there will tackle major issues within the economy, education and world societies along with other researchers from the entire university.

A public piazza will be incorporated into the design along with garden spaces, and a subterranean multi-functional space for lectures and other events.



This is the largest single capital donation to the university and it will mean that the Futures Institute will open its doors in 2021. The A-listed building has been empty since 2003 when the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh moved to Little France.

The university claims expertise in the humanities, social sciences, the arts and data science and aims to use the new Institute launched today to showcase that work.

The hope is that Edinburgh will become the data capital of Europe, and the combination of teaching, research and engagement with partner bodies will address some of the world's most demanding issues.

Some of the suggested ways this will work is perhaps by using theology to tackle climate change, business management to tackle the refugee crisis or law to foster creativity and design informatics to deal with the problem of inequality.



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 Bennetts, 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.”