From: Freedom of Information
Sent: 16 July 2021 12:35
To: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/233)

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/233)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/233)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 14 May 2021, reference K/21/233. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your request read:

“Many universities have a plan or plans for on-site emergencies. It is sometimes referred to as a Major Incident Plan, a SERP (Strategic Emergency Response Plan) or ERP (Emergency Response Plan), whatever it is called, it is drawn up for large-events that threaten life or property. Examples would be large-scale flooding, leakage of hazardous material or a hostile attack (these are meant as examples, not an exhaustive list).

• Do you have an emergency plan for your university?
• Please send me a copy of the document.
• When was the last time this plan was revised?
• When was the last time this plan was practiced?
• Has this plan ever been activated?”

The University of Leeds holds this information. However, we are withholding this information under sections 31(1)(a) and 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 31(1)(a) sets out that information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

We consider that the release of this information would be likely to reveal actual or perceived security and/or health and safety weaknesses. To disclose how we plan to respond to major incidents would provide motivated individuals with information which could be used to target the University in an attack, or to evade detection.

Section 31(1)(a) is a qualified exemption, and as such we are required to consider whether the public interest is in favour of maintaining the exemption or disclosing the information. We recognise that there is a public interest in understanding that the University’s serious incident response is sufficiently resourced and that our and security, health and safety processes are adequate to support the needs of the University community. We also appreciate that the public may be interested in understanding our emergency plans. However, we consider that these interests vastly outweighed by the public interest in protecting members of the university community from harm. We therefore consider that the public interest is strongly in favour of withholding this information.
Section 38(1)(b) sets out that information is exempt if its disclosure would or would be likely to endanger the safety any individual. We consider that disclosing emergency planning information would endanger the safety of members of the university community by providing information which would be likely to be of value to those motivated to cause harm. As outlined above, the information could be used by would-be attackers to target perceived weaknesses in the university’s infrastructure, thus jeopardising the safety of staff, students, and others.

Section 38(1)(b) is a qualified exemption, and as such we are required to consider whether the public interest is in favour of disclosing or withholding the requested information. We consider that the risk to the health and safety of members of the university community outweighs the general public interest in our emergency planning measures. We are therefore satisfied that the public interest is in favour of withholding the information.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle  
Deputy Secretary  
The University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT  

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Chloe Wilkins  
Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat  
University of Leeds