

University of Cambridge

THE COUNCIL

Draft Statement Condemning Vandalism of University Property

Summary: In recent weeks, acts of vandalism – the smashing of large glass doors, graffiti and paint being thrown across front doors – have been committed against the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology and the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences. They follow previous attacks on University premises. Although in both cases the Police has been notified, it is unlikely that charges will be brought because perpetrators have been unidentifiable via CCTV.

The University's leadership must reassure staff and students that it will not condone acts like these. The Council is therefore asked to issue a statement that condemns vandalism of University property while reiterating the Council's unequivocal support of freedom of speech and the right to protest within the law. A draft Notice is provided as Annex A.

Action requested of the Council: the Council is asked to **approve** the statement for publication in the *Reporter*.

Previous decisions/decisions taken by sub-committees: n/a.

Next steps: Subject to the Council's approval, the Notice will be published in the *Reporter*.

Originating office/body: The Vice-Chancellor's Office

Annex:

Annex A: Draft Notice for publication in the *Reporter*

Draft Notice for publication in the Reporter

Council statement regarding vandalism of University property

The Council unambiguously and unanimously condemns the recent acts of vandalism committed against the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology and the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences. They follow other such attacks on University premises. Such threatening behaviour and senseless damage to University property are unacceptable.

We deeply regret that this violent, cowardly behaviour is creating a growing sense of insecurity for staff and students across the University, who understandably feel upset and intimidated.

While all of us share the urgent goal of tackling climate change, we know it will not be achieved through violent behaviour, vandalism and wanton damage. The University of Cambridge is uniquely well-placed to support the transition to a sustainable and equitable net-zero world, but can only do so if it is able to work collaboratively, exercising academic freedoms and in pursuit of new technologies and creative solutions.

A small number of aggressive campaigners carry out these pointless acts to achieve publicity, apparently ignorant that what they do means we spend time and resources to protect our people, distracting everyone from the true issues facing us.

The Council unequivocally supports freedom of speech and the right to protest within the law. However, acts of vandalism and criminal damage run completely against the spirit of considered public discussion that we embody at this University in pursuit of our mission to pursue education and research and to have a positive impact on society. The University of Cambridge must remain a place for open, evidence-based discussion about critical issues such as climate change.