



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Our Ref: Fol/Req/19/011

Date 04/02/2019

Dear Mr Deegan,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

'The total amount spent by the Dept of Foreign Affairs on capital/refurbishment works on the country's network of embassies in 2018'.

'A breakdown in the costs of the refurbishment works at the top eight embassies where the capital/refurbishment costs were highest in 2018'.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on the 16th of January 2019.

I have identified 2 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the attached schedule. I have made a decision to grant 1 and part-grant 1 of the records. The attached schedule has a breakdown of costs at four out of top eight embassies where capital/refurbishment costs were highest in 2018. These records are extracts from the Department's accounts, which were drawn down on the 17th of January 2019.

Total expenditure on refurbishment works on our Embassy network in 2018 amounted to €3,601,163 throughout our network of Embassies.

Access has not been granted to four of the top eight embassies where capital/refurbishment costs were highest in 2018. Access is not being granted under section 36 of the 2014 Act – Commercially Sensitive Information. The records relate to commercial information where disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in financial loss or gain to the person to whom the information related or could prejudice the competitive position of that person in the conduct of her/his profession/business/occupation. I have considered the public interest in releasing this information as the public have an interest in how the Department spends tax payers funds. However, on balance, I believe that the public interest is best served by not disclosing commercial information at this time where it could prejudice the competitive position of the Department. The Department is open to considering granting access to this record on conclusion of these projects. These projects are expected to be completed at the end of quarter 2 2019.

The Embassy network is used by the Department in pursuit of its goals on behalf of the State. They consist of offices and official accommodation which provide platforms for our Missions to promote

Ireland's political, economic and cultural interests and values, provide services to our citizens, develop strategic stakeholder relationships and represent Ireland in international organisations.

The Department must ensure that security and health and safety standards are met, as well as providing universal access facilities as part of our duty of care to staff, their families and visitors to our buildings. The Department maintains appropriate health, safety and security in our missions and any additional international standards depending on location.

Differences may be caused by currency fluctuations, possible higher local costs, and the need for expert advice and specialist contractors, in conjunction with the particular refurbishment needs of the mission.

All refurbishment at Embassies are conducted in line with the Department's procurement obligations under Government public tendering and contracting rules, including both National and EU Public Procurement thresholds.

Record 3 relates to the relocation of the Embassy of Ireland to The Republic of Turkey in 2017/2018. This has resulted in a modern, secure office for the Embassy staff and Irish citizens seeking to access services. The office provides an improved space for Visa processing to support the trade relationship between Ireland and The Republic of Turkey. The redacted elements relate to specific security items and are redacted under 32 (1) (a)(ix) of the 2014 Act.

Record 5 relates to the relocation of the Irish Secretariat in Belfast. This office supports our engagement with Northern Ireland and our continued support of the Good Friday Agreement.

Record 6 relates to the required maintenance of a State owned asset, including replacing the heating system to provide adequate work place for staff, improving the outdoor area for use for engagement with key interlocutors in Washington and required basic maintenance.

Record 7 relates to Ireland's new Mission in Sao Paulo in its permanent home in 2017. The records relate to the fit-out of the office space. The redacted elements relate to specific security items and are redacted under 32 (1) (a)(ix) of the 2014 Act.

Right of Appeal

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to foi@dfa.ie. A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfa.ie, or 01-4082857. You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Carr