



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

Our Ref: FoI/Req/19/312

28 November 2019

Dear Mr Corkery,

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:

All correspondence exchanged internally and externally by officials above (and including) the grade of principal officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding preparations for a united Ireland or preparations for a border poll on a united Ireland.

The correspondence should include all correspondence or communication, sent by email, text message, whatsapp, letter or any other format, between November 1, 2018 and October 30, 2019.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 6 November 2019.

I have identified 4 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant 2 records.

Where access has been refused, the records are exempt from release under the following sections of the Act:

- Section 29 (1), which refers to the deliberative processes of FOI bodies.
- Section 33(1)(c), which refers to records which, if released, could reasonably be expected to adversely affect matters relating to Northern Ireland.

In the context of your FOI request I would note that the full implementation and effective operation of the Good Friday Agreement is a priority for the Government. The principle of consent and the possibility of change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland are fundamental elements of the Good Friday Agreement, endorsed by the people of this island North and South.

The Government respects everyone's right on this island to make the case for the constitutional future they wish to see for Northern Ireland - whether nationalist, unionist or neither. The Good

Friday Agreement - and the two sovereign Governments - explicitly recognise and validate the legitimacy of both of these constitutional positions, which are deeply held.

In the absence of the prospect of a referendum in the near future, the Government has no immediate plans for specific preparations on this issue, nor has there been in the past.

Accordingly, no substantive records on this issue exist.

In the event of a future referendum within the consent provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, the Government would make all necessary preparations in accordance with the terms of the Constitution and the principles and procedures of the Agreement.

The Government has further laid out its approach in this area in the National Risk Assessment which was published in July 2019 and is available [here](#).

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@dfat.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@dfat.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,

Andrea Wickham Moriarty
Ireland, UK and Americas Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade