



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

Our Ref: FoI/Req 2020/42

19 March 2020

Dear Mr. Foxe,

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:

*Under the FOI Act 2014, I am seeking copies of the invoices/receipts associated with the following transactions and an information note on what each of them related to if possible:*

*A6 RENTED PREMISES - MAJOR MAINTENANCE ONLY 18/04/2019 I5202 Property Management Unit 248009 1270456.48*

*A6 RENTED PREMISES - MAJOR MAINTENANCE ONLY 08/03/2019 I5202 Property Management Unit 244772 1161914.73*

*A6 RENTED PREMISES - MAJOR MAINTENANCE ONLY 04/01/2019 I5202 Property Management Unit 242432 255467.41*

*A6 RENTED PREMISES - MAJOR MAINTENANCE ONLY 04/04/2019 I5202 Property Management Unit 246934 216545.62*

*A6 RENTED PREMISES - MAJOR MAINTENANCE ONLY 14/03/2019 I5202 Property Management Unit 245371 169126.67*

*I would prefer to receive this information electronically, ideally in its original electronic format.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

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.

I have identified 5 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to part grant 2 of the records.

Records 1, 2 and 4 are not being released to you at this time. They are not being granted under section 36 (1)(b) 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 payer's funds. However, on balance, I believe that the public interest is best served by not disclosing commercial information where it could prejudice the competitive position of the Department. The Department is open to considering granting access to this record on conclusion of this project. This is expected to conclude at the end of the second quarter of 2020. The records which are not being released relate to ongoing capital and refurbishment works.

Records 3 and 5 relate to the Embassy of Ireland to Great Britain Roof Repair Project. This project was necessitated by our lease obligations with Grosvenor Estate. The building is a grade 2 listed 19<sup>th</sup> century building located on a prominent corner overlooking Buckingham Palace Gardens. The roof comprises 11 different conditions and complex detailing. Listed building consent was granted however a number of conditions relating to this consent could not be discharged until significant scaffolding was in place so that detailed surveying could be conducted.

In addition, various items were required to be approved by Westminster Borough Council after works had commenced, these items have included: decorative lead-work, metal work, stone condition, slates. Significant additional variations have been required to facilitate the completion of this project such that a water-tight, safe and compliant project could be delivered that meets both lease and statutory obligations. Some of these variations relate to significant safety and health issues including structural defects and asbestos.

#### **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](mailto: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](mailto: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