



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Our Ref: Fol/Req/21/064

Date 29/03/2021

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:

'- a copy of any progress reports from the development of the Ireland House in Tokyo.'

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request, which was sent to you on 5th March 2021.

The Embassy network worldwide is used by the Department and state agencies in pursuit of its strategic goals on behalf of the State. The network provide a platform 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 its buildings meet security and health and safety standards, as well as providing universal access facilities as part of our duty of care to staff, users and visitors to our buildings. The Department, in addition, must comply with any additional national standards/requirements in local jurisdiction obligations.

Building a new Ireland House in Tokyo will directly advance the Department's High Level Goals of expanding its global footprint as contained in the *Global Ireland 2025* Strategy and represents and meets the needs of the ambition and scale of Ireland's partnership with Japan into the future.

It will incorporate the best of Irish design and technology and will be a showcase into the future for Ireland and for Irish values, business, culture and the arts and of which Irish people can be proud.

As a small country with a highly globalised economy, Ireland's engagement with the wider world is important for ensuring the long term prosperity of our people. In order to maximise Irish influence abroad, smart investment in platforms that will enable Ireland to promote it's culture, it's people and it's economy to international partners will be essential.

The new Ireland House project is a tangible sign of strengthening our relations and will be a major milestone marking Ireland's commitment to deepening our strategic partnership with Japan. It will assist Ireland greatly in promoting its influence and engagement with key partners.

The completed building will serve as a flagship example of the Ireland House concept in which business and community events will be hosted as well as showcasing the vibrancy of Irish arts and culture. It will contain a chancery, offices for State agencies, an official residence, and promotion and outreach spaces suitable for conferences, exhibitions, performances and other events.

The new building will have the capacity to meet the needs of Team Ireland, both now and into the foreseeable future, as Ireland continues to strengthen its existing warm bilateral relations with Japan.

This project is needed to provide the appropriate platform for promotion of Ireland and Irish goods and services in the world's third largest economy. Ireland's peer countries utilise a similar approach in order to raise their visibility in the complete Japanese market. The completion of the Ireland House Project in Tokyo will also cement Ireland's relations with one of our biggest strategic partners in Asia.

I have identified 2 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are not being made available to you at this time. The records are being refused under section 36 (1) (b) - Commercially Sensitive Information and Section 32 (1) (a) (ix) - the security of a building or other structure.

Section 36 (1) (b) of the FOI Act allows for the refusal of commercially sensitive information where disclosure "could reasonably be expected to result in a material financial loss" or "could prejudice the competitive position" of a person. The records concerned relate to an ongoing project and contain future budgetary projections and other sensitive information, the release of which could undermine future tendering processes.

The records are also being refused under Section 32 (1) (a) (ix) as they contain details and plans of the structure of the proposed building.

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, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Carr". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kevin Carr