



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/18/006

Date 02/02/2018

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 2017'.

'A breakdown in the costs of the refurbishment works at the top eight embassies where the capital/refurbishment costs were highest in 2017'.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on the 17th of January 2018.

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 six out of top eight embassies where capital/refurbishment costs were highest in 2017. These records are extracts from the Department's accounts, which were drawn down on the 11th of January 2018.

Access has not been granted to two of the top eight embassies where capital/refurbishment costs were highest in 2017. It 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 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. One project is expected to be completed at the end of quarter 2 2018, the second project is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

Total expenditure on refurbishment works on our Embassy network in 2017 amounted to €741,747 throughout our network of Embassies.

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 in expenditure amounts 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.

The records released include works in Embassy of Ireland to the United Arab Emirates relate to the enlargement of the mission. This is to support the expansion of Ireland's footprint in the United Arab Emirates.

In the Embassy of Ireland to the Hellenic Republic, the official promotional activity space and accommodation is owned by the State. Refurbishment works were carried out to the plumbing and sewerage systems to maintain the value of the premise.

In the Embassy of Ireland to the Netherlands, the Chancery and the official promotional activity and accommodation spaces were repainted.

In the Embassy of Ireland to Great Britain, the works are ongoing refurbishment which are required under the terms of the lease.

In the Embassy of Ireland to the United States of America the works refer to the provision of air conditioning, the installation of fire alarms and interior painting.

The Embassy of Ireland to France is owned by the State. The works were required under health and safety to remove hazardous materials and small refurbishment works to the reception area of the Embassy.

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.

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


Robert Higgins