



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

Mr Kieran Dineen

Ref: FOI/REQ/17/002

10 February 2017

Dear Mr Dineen

I refer to your recent request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records as follows:

*Stocks list of alcohol in Iveagh House to include: cost, name, year, and make of each bottle of wine, spirit and other alcohol drinks as well as details of the drinks purchased in 2016.*

*Stock lists of alcohol from Embassies.*

I have identified 2 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule below.

| Record Description                        | Granted/Part-Granted/Refused | Section exempted under:                 |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Stock lists of alcohol in Iveagh House | Refused                      | Section 36 (1) (b)<br>Section 15 (1)(g) |
| 2. Stock lists of alcohol from Embassies  | Refused                      | Section 15 (1)(g)                       |

I have made a decision to refuse access to the first record under *Section 36(1)(b)* - commercially sensitive information- where I am obliged to restrict access to financial, commercial, scientific, technical or other information whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in a material financial loss or gain to the person to whom the information relates, or could prejudice their competitive position, and both records under Section 15(1)(b)-the request is frivolous.

The core functions of this Department are predominately concerned with policy advice – including areas such as international political and security policy, advancing reconciliation and cooperation on the island of Ireland, EU issues and external relations. The promotion of Ireland’s economic and trading interests overseas is also a strategic priority. In carrying out those functions this Department, both in Ireland and through our mission network, frequently hosts events to advance those priorities. I have considered whether there is a serious public interest in the unit cost, name, year of production and make of each bottle of and other alcohol. The fact that there may be public curiosity in relation to the wine and other alcohol stocks of the Department does not mean there is a serious public interest to be served by releasing detailed information on alcohol stocks and unit costs which would place undue emphasis on beverages rather than the core business of the Department and prejudice our competitive position.

However, I have considered the public’s right to information concerning accountability in the use of public funds. Last year wine was purchased at headquarters in Dublin involving costs of €8.13 to €10.20 ex VAT per bottle. Purchases consisted of 480 bottles of white wine and 432 of red wine totalling €9,976 inc VAT. No other alcohol was purchased. The Department holds a stock of 1492 bottles of wine and a very limited stock of other alcoholic beverages for use in relation to State and Official hospitality.

Of our 80 missions abroad 18 Embassies hold a stock of 2,553 bottles of wine, and a limited stock of other alcoholic beverages to include stout, beer and liqueurs. Maintaining wine stocks can facilitate provision of a range of suitable wines for official events at a significant discount from the cost of purchasing them from caterers. In other cases it is more advantageous to purchase supplies as required. Officers at Headquarters and Embassies engaged in purchasing beverages always have regard to value for money considerations when obtaining the most advantageous price available consistent with quality and fitness for purpose. In line with all expenditure practices in the Department, the purchase of new stock is assessed carefully and kept under continuing review to ensure value for money.

In 2016, 77 events were hosted by this Department in Iveagh House. These events supported the work of the Department and Government on priorities such as the advancement of reconciliation and cooperation, the promotion of Ireland’s values and priorities on global themes, the promotion of Ireland’s bilateral relations on political and economic interests, as well as cultural events with an international dimension.

Our Embassies abroad also perform a wide range of functions in pursuit of Ireland’s foreign policy interests including advancing government policies in particular with the EU and the UN; frontline consular services to Irish citizens overseas. Embassies support Irish culture and enhanced visibility for Ireland overseas. Promotional opportunities help to promote our values and extend our influence on matters of interest to us, enhancing our global visibility and outreach. As part of their economic remit our Embassies frequently host events to promote Ireland’s offering in a range of sectors, including agri-food, tourism, education, research and development, and investment. In partnership with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia and other State Agencies our Embassies advance Ireland’s trade, tourism, education and investment objectives. For example, they actively contribute to the organisation and conduct of Enterprise Ireland Ministerial-led Trade missions and the Saint Patrick’s Day programme of promotional visits and events. Promotional opportunities and hospitality are

an important element of these activities and underpin the State's promotional efforts in overseas markets.

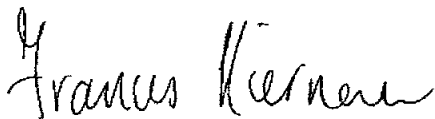
The success of these collaborative promotional activities conducted in priority markets is illustrated by the impressive growth in relevant trade figures over recent years. For example, it is estimated that the Irish food and drink sector grew by 2% in 2016 to reach €11.5bn, representing growth of over 41% since 2010. Total overseas visitor numbers have grown every year since 2010 and last year grew by 10% to a record 9.5 million visitors. Exports by Enterprise Ireland client companies have also shown impressive growth in recent years surpassing the €20bn mark for the first time last year.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Kiernan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frances Kiernan