



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/20/121

29 July 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:

- ‘1. - A copy of all invoices/receipts associated with St Patrick's Day travel for the department in 2020.
2. - A record of how much was spent by the department.
3. - A record of how much of this money was recouped/could not be recouped.’

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 26 June 2020.

St Patrick's Day celebrations across the globe attract levels of publicity and media attention unmatched by the national day of any other country. Ministerial visits during the St. Patrick's Day period are organised to ensure that we make positive use of this exposure by strengthening links with our diaspora, spreading a positive message about Ireland, and maximising the promotion of Ireland's trade, tourism and investment interests in important overseas markets. Visits are undertaken in the most cost efficient way possible and each Minister and Department is responsible for their own costs.

In March 2020, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that Ministerial travel had to be cancelled shortly ahead of St Patrick's Day. As the Department was able to cancel accommodation costs related to St Patrick's Day travel without charges, the only costs incurred were those associated with flights.

The Department is in the process of recouping the flight expenses. However, due to a severe backlog on flight refunds across the entire travel/aviation sector arising from Covid-19 this process has not been completed.

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 all of these records.

Where access has been refused, the records are exempt from release under section 36(1)(b) relating to commercially sensitive information. In this instance, details of the management fee charged have been redacted, as their disclosure could prejudice the competitive position of the company when their contract is up for renewal and goes out to tender.

I have also redacted bank details, as these are usually not advertised by service providers on their websites, along with the personal information of those involved in booking the flights. The redactions carried out on these invoices have no impact on the substance of the information contained therein.

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. 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,

Ciarán O'Flaherty

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