



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs**

Our Ref: Fol/Req/21/097

Date: 18th April 2021

Dear Mr. McQuinn

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:

*‘Copies of all correspondence relating to the decision to fly the Irish flag at half-mast to mark the death of the UK's Prince Philip. The correspondence should include all items to/from officials and politicians as well as all communications on the matter to/from members of the public. The records should include copies of any documents attached or enclosed with the correspondence’.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

I have identified 7 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant 1 and part-grant 6 of the records.

Where access has been part-granted, the records have been redacted and are exempt from release under Section 37(1) (access would involve the disclosure of personal information). While Section 37(1) Personal Information is a mandatory exemption, I am still obliged to consider whether the public interest would be best served by releasing the records in full. I have taken into account the benefit to the public to be given access to correspondence in a manner which demonstrates the transparency and accountability of the Department. The information redacted relates to personal contact information such as direct line mobile numbers and does not affect the substance of the record.

The information redacted in record 4 relates to items outside of the scope of the request.

As you may appreciate, the decision to fly the National Flag at half-mast on the occasion of the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh is not a decision for this Department. The Department of the Taoiseach has responsibility around the policy regarding the National Flag and issues instructions to all Government Departments to fly the National Flag at half-mast. This instruction may be issued in the event of the death of a Head of State, a prominent national or international figure or when a tragic incident occurs. Protocol Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs receives the instruction to fly the flag at half mast from the Department of the

Taoiseach. Protocol then conveys the message to the relevant members of the Department for necessary arrangements to be made and also to relevant Irish Embassies and Consulates in the diplomatic network.

### **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, (€10 for medical card holders). A copy of the medical card should be provided to avail of the reduced fee. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie), or 01-4082618.

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

Claire Thompson