



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

Our Ref: FOI/Req/18/310

24 December 2018

Dear Mr Hutton

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:

*All records related to departmental dinner at Farmleigh on Monday, February 19th.*

Please note that no departmental dinner was held in Farmleigh on the date in question. However, a private dinner was held by the YPO (<https://www.ypo.org/>) in Farmleigh on the date in question, which was attended by the Tánaiste and two officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A response restricted to your request as worded would result in no documents to return. I have therefore, in the interests of transparency and efficiency, conducted my search for records and provided my response on the basis that your request was in relation to the YPO dinner held at Farmleigh on Monday, 19 February 2018.

I have identified 31 documents that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have fully granted 16 of the records, part-granted 13 of the documents, and refused 2 of the records.

In relation to the record exempted under **Section 29** of the Act - *Deliberations of FOI Bodies*, I have considered whether the public interest would be better served by releasing the records in question in terms of the right of the public to have access to information and the need for transparency in decision making process. Given the source and nature of the records I am satisfied that premature release of certain records would negatively impact on the decision-making processes of this Department and other Government Departments. On balance, the public interest would not be best served by releasing this records.

As regards records exempted under **Section 30** of the Act - *Functions and Negotiations of FOI Bodies* as I am satisfied that premature release of certain records would disclose positions taken, or to be taken, or plans, procedures, criteria or instructions used or followed, or to be used or followed, for the purposes of negotiations carried on or being, or to be, carried on by or on behalf of the Government or the Department. I have considered whether the public

interest would be better served by releasing the records in question in terms of the right of the public to have access to information and the need for an open and accountable civil service. However, I am satisfied that on balance the public interest would not be best served by releasing the information.

For records exempted under **Section 33(1)(d) - Security, defence and international relations**, as referenced in the schedule I have considered the possibility and likelihood that the release of the records could result in negative consequences for Ireland's international relations and their likely severity. This Department is responsible for managing relations between Ireland and 178 countries, in a complex and diverse environment. Based on the Department's direct knowledge and expertise in international relations, its strongly held position is that the mere granting of access to scheduled records will adversely affect the State's relations. On balance I am satisfied that the balance favours refusal rather than release.

For records exempted under **Section 37 (1)** I have considered the public interest in the context of the public's right to access personal information. However, I am satisfied that the right to privacy in this case outweighs any perceived broader community interest in releasing personal information. In that light I have refused access to certain such information.

#### 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. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at [foi@dfa.ie](mailto: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 Delargy