



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/20/036

13th March 2020

Dear Mr Horgan Jones

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 minutes of board meetings held during 2019

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

The Management Board is an advisory and decision-making forum that supports the Secretary General in the management of the Department. The Board is chaired by the Secretary General, Niall Burgess and membership comprises the Deputy Secretary General, Assistant Secretaries based in Ireland, one Assistant Secretary currently serving as Ambassador in our Embassy in Mexico and an officer at the Counsellor grade. The Board assists the Secretary General in the formulation and management of policies and programmes as well as in the development and improved performance of the organisation.

The Board also decides on assignments within the Department, at home and abroad, other than at Assistant Secretary and Head of Mission levels.

The Board meets fortnightly. Other Departmental officials attend Management Board meetings periodically to brief and participate in discussions on topical developments in their areas of responsibility.

The Management Board also meets periodically with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department's Ministers of State to consider strategic policy and management direction. Such meetings are in addition to on-going interaction between Ministers, members of the Management Board and other senior officials.

Further to your request, I have identified 25 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant 7 of the records and part-grant 18 of the records.

Where access to a record, or part of a record, has been refused, the records are exempt from release under the following sections of the FOI Act:

Section 29 (1) A head may refuse to grant an FOI request – (a) if the record concerned contains matters relating to the deliberative processes of an FOI body.

In relation to 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. However, given the sources and nature of the records, I am satisfied that on balance the public interest would not be best served by releasing the information.

Section 33 (1) A head may refuse to grant an FOI request in relation to a record if, in the opinion of the head, access to it could reasonably be expected to affect adversely:

- (a) the security of the State,
- (b) the defence of the State,
- (c) matters relating to Northern Ireland, or
- (d) the international relations of the State.

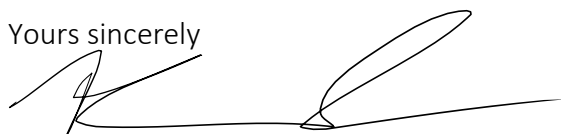
As outlined above, release of the information would have a significant adverse impact on the effective conduct of international relations by this Department. I have considered the right of the public to have access to information and the need for an open and accountable civil service. I am satisfied that the balance favours refusal rather than release.

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



Kevin Byrne
