



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Our Ref: Fol/Req/21/046

Date: 19 March 2021

Dear Mr Carroll,

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:

“- A copy of the report cited by RTE on 28/6/2019.

- Copies of all documented interactions relating to Rockall, including but not exclusively emails, letters and memos, between the Irish government and Irish fishing organisations including but not exclusively the Federation of Irish Fishermen, Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation and Irish Fish Producers' Organisation.”

I note your confirmation of 1 March 2021 that the time period applicable for any such documented interactions shall be from 1 January 2019 to 19 February 2021. I refer also to the acknowledgement of your amended request which was sent to you on 19 February 2021.

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 grant 4 of these records in full. One of the records has been refused.

Where access has been refused, the record is exempt from release under Section 33 – Security, defence and international relations and specifically Section 33(1)(d) the international relations of the state.

Section 33(1)(d) refers to records which, if released, could reasonably be expected to adversely affect the international relations of the State. The Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for managing relations between Ireland and 192 countries in a complex and diverse environment. Successful diplomatic relations depend upon the creation and maintenance of trust and confidence between governments. Based on the Department's direct knowledge and expertise in international relations, its strongly held position is that the mere granting of access to records will adversely affect the State's relations by introducing major doubts with regard to the security and confidentiality of our diplomatic

communications. It is important to maintain that mutuality of trust to protect and promote Ireland's interests internationally.

I have considered the likelihood that the release of the record in this case could result in negative consequences and have taken into account their likely impact. On balance, I am satisfied that the circumstances favour refusal rather than release of the relevant record in this case.

The Government of Ireland's longstanding position on Rockall has been clearly articulated. Ireland has never made any claims to Rockall, which is a small uninhabitable granite rock located approximately 160 nautical miles west of the Scottish islands of St. Kilda and some 230 nautical miles to the north-west of Donegal. Nor has Ireland ever recognised British sovereignty claims over Rockall, and accordingly has not recognised a 12 nautical mile territorial sea around it either.

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, (€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, 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

Ciarán Doyle _____