



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Our Ref: Fol/Req/21/129

Date: 13 July 2021

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:

- *a record/spreadsheet/table indicating all costs incurred by the Department with regard to the visit of Minister Coveney and his delegation to China late last month.*
- *a copy of the itinerary for the trip.*
- *a list of those who travelled.*
- *copies of all invoices/receipts received by the department with regard to the trip.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 2 July 2021.

I have identified 2 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant access to two documents and part-grant access to one.

Where access has been part-granted in this case, the information is exempt from release under section Section 33(1)(d), which stipulates that 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 adversely affect international relations of the State. In reviewing the record in question I have attempted to release as much information as possible, exempting only those specific sections which if released could prejudice the ability of this Department to effectively discharge its functions. I am satisfied that the exemption has been applied correctly in this case.

The Chinese authorities specified COVID-19 quarantine hotel accommodation for this high level visit, which was arranged by the Chinese authorities themselves, in which the delegation were required to stay. As a result of the public health COVID-19 measures in China and restrictions on travel into Beijing, the members of the embassy team were required to quarantine in the hotel until 4 June.

In relation to costs, the local Chinese Foreign Affairs Office covered the accommodation cost for five of the six delegation members. The Irish Embassy in Beijing paid for the hotel costs of one member of the visiting delegation and the three Embassy staff, in total 51,000RMB, which includes the mandatory quarantine period.

At time of this response not all invoices or costs relating to the visit have been received.

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

Cian Grogan

Desk Officer, Asia Pacific Unit