



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/20/040

26 June 2020

Dear Mr McDermott,

I refer to the request of February 17 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I am requesting the release of any internal departmental correspondence regarding the issuing of travel guidance as a result of the Covid-19/Coronavirus outbreak, as well as minutes of any meetings or meeting notes regarding the same.

I refer further to our subsequent phone discussions under which we considered a more targeted scope of inquiry as follows:

- 1. Limiting examination of records to those which involve final sign-off on proposed updates to the Travel Advice, rather than prior iterative discussions, discussions of specific details as opposed to broader messaging, administrative issues etc.*
- 2. Limiting examination of records to those involving China, Japan and Italy.*

I have identified 17 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision grant the release of 3 records. I have also made a decision to part-grant the release of 14 records.

In relation to these 14 records, the release of which has been part-granted, personal information has been redacted from 12 records under Section 37(1). 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 transparency and accountability of the Department. In the main, the information redacted relates to personal contact information and does not affect the substance of the record. I have particularly considered whether releasing the personal information would provide any additional benefit in this regard. I have weighed this against the right of individuals to have their personal information remain private and have found that there is a clear prerogative for this information to remain private.

In relation to these 14 records, the release of which has been part-granted, information has also been redacted from 4 records under Section 33(1)(d) as I believe their release could reasonably be expected to affect adversely the international relations of the State. International relations are the cornerstone of the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade. Our ability to conduct business with our international partners in confidence with regard to sensitive matters is fundamental to the conduct of international relations. I believe that the redacted information would adversely affect the international relations of the State and the State's ability to consult with international partners regarding the provision of Travel Advice.

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

Ronan Cunniffe
Consular Directorate