



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

Our ref: FOI/Req/19/178

26/06/2019

Dear Ms. Ní Aodha,

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 correspondence (internal and letters to the Department) in relation to the cancellation of Africa Day at Farmleigh Estate.***
- ***All applications from local authorities for supports for Africa Day on 25 May 2019.***

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 6 June 2019.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has coordinated and supported a wide ranging programme of events to celebrate Africa Day for over a decade. These events have highlighted the many elements of Ireland's engagement with Africa, as well as serving to increase public awareness of Irish Aid's development programme throughout the continent.

As part of this programme of events, the Department has supported communities across Ireland in organising their own Africa Day celebrations and events in collaboration with Local Authorities. The Department remains committed to supporting these events and confirmed in early 2019 that a fresh and collaborative approach was being adopted for this year's celebrations. Through increased financial and practical assistance, more Local Authorities than ever before were supported in leading their own events and engaging local communities in the celebrations.

While we appreciate that this year marks a change in how Africa Day is celebrated, we continue to recognise the importance of our relations with countries across the continent of Africa and the significant contribution of the African-Irish community here in Ireland. Our relations with Africa continue to grow strongly and by partnering with a record number of local authorities to celebrate Africa Day we intend to build on these successes in the future.

I have identified 74 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made the decision to grant 27, part-grant 37 and refuse 10 of the records.

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. I have particularly considered whether releasing the personal information, which includes names, addresses, email addresses etc., would provide any additional benefit in this regard. I have weighed this against the right of individuals

to have their personal information remain private. The personal information which I have redacted does not have any bearing on the substance or detail of the records, and does not diminish or alter the views expressed, and as such, I am satisfied that on balance the decision to partially redact the records and remove identifiable information is correct.

Section 33(2)(b)(ii)

I have considered section 33(2)(b)(ii) of the Act in making my decision not to release certain documents. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade operates in a complex and diverse international environment. A mutuality of confidence exists in the communication between this Department and our interlocutors. This is particularly the case in respect of diplomatic communications. While the record itself is not a diplomatic communication, I have redacted a section that references comments that were made in the context of diplomatic discussions. I have considered the possibility and likelihood that the release of these records could result in negative consequences, and prejudice the ability of this Department to effectively discharge its functions. To do otherwise would risk compromising the State's capacity to engage with international partners through diplomatic and other channels.

Section 35

With regard to information refused under Section 35 of the Act, Information received in confidence, this relates to information given in confidence on the understanding that it would be treated as confidential. This is also a mandatory exemption. I have considered your right to access information however I am satisfied that releasing the information would impairing future sources of such information and impair the workings of this Department and in particular our relationships with external partners without any countervailing benefit to the broader public interest.

While it is not possible for me to release the individual applications received from Local Authorities, please find in the attached annex the list of Local Authorities that were supported by the Department to hold Africa Day celebrations, as well as the amounts awarded in each case. You can also find further details of the events held in each locality at this link: www.africaday.ie

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,



Karen Gillanders

Communications Officer

Communications Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade