



Our Ref: FOI/Req/2020/187

30th October 2020

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 list of hardship postings and the allowances paid in each case. I'm also seeking a total cost for how much was paid in 'hardship' payments in 2019 and 2020, an anonymised list of beneficiaries and how much each were paid, and the location in which they are based.

- Copies of any reviews, submissions, memoranda and so on relating to the possible reform of the 'hardship' posting system in the period 1 Jan 2019 to date of receipt of the request.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request, which was sent to you on 9th October 2020.

Attached are two lists of hardship locations and the total hardship allowances paid to posted officers in each mission in 2019 and up to September 2020. There are currently 141 hardship posts across the DFA mission network. These posts vary from Clerical Officer to Head of Mission, and include posts held by officers seconded to the Department of Foreign Affairs from other Government Departments.

Hardship allowance is paid at certain missions to compensate officers for the level of hardship at a post. The amount payable depends on the level of hardship. Hardship



allowances are designed to take into account a number of factors at designated locations including climate; health; air pollution, language and culture; goods and services; isolation; social network and leisure; housing, utilities and education; personal security and political tension. They are calculated based on independently sourced data and are subject to annual review. This means that hardship allowances payable can increase or decrease as each location can move to a different hardship category or out of the hardship category altogether. Category A lists the highest ranked hardship posts with Category E the lowest.

There has been no other reviews, submissions or memoranda in relation to hardship postings since 1 January 2019.

I am refusing your request for an anonymized list of beneficiaries and how much each were paid and the location in which they are based under Section 37 (1) - *i.e. "a head shall refuse to grant an FOI request, if in the opinion of the head, access to the record concerned would involve the disclosure of personal information*".

In view of the small number of Irish posted officers serving in each hardship location and as officers' family circumstances are, amongst other factors, taken into consideration in the calculation of allowances, I deem that the release of such material would include personal information and could jeopardise the right to privacy.

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,

Amanda Killeen