

Ms Kitty Holland
The Irish Times
Tara Street
Dublin 2

May 2016

Our Ref: FoI/Req/2016/039

Dear Ms. Holland,

Further to your request for information of 29 March 2016, subsequently amended on 4 May 2016, and made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, in which you requested the following:-

1. Records of expenditure on parties and/or receptions held to mark St. Patrick's Day 2016 in Irish embassies, or hosted by Irish Ambassadors / Consulates / the Irish State, this year (i.e. 2016) in London, UK; Washington DC, New York City, San Francisco in the USA; Ottawa, Canada; Paris, France; Beijing, China; New Delhi, India; and Pretoria, Cape Town, South Africa, in tabular form broken down by expenditure on food, drink, flowers, entertainment and venue hire.
2. Copies of the guestlists for these functions, in London, UK; in Washington DC and New York, USA; in Ottawa, Canada; in Paris, France and in Beijing, China.
3. Records of the travel expenses of any guest(s) whose travel expenses to attend these functions were paid for by the Irish State.

In order to reduce the scope of the second part of your request, you have opted to limit the guest names requested to those guests which could be reasonably considered to be well-known figures in Ireland. In the schedule, I refer to these as "household names".

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 5 April 2016 by Frances Kiernan.

I have made a decision to grant your request, as amended.

The purpose of this letter is to explain that decision. This explanation has the following parts:

1. Overall context of St. Patrick's Day promotional visits abroad;
2. A schedule of all the records covered by your request;
3. Context for those records to which access is granted;
4. A statement of how you can appeal this decision should you wish to do so.

Overall Context

Over the 2016 St Patrick's Day season, the Embassy network, in coordination with the State agencies, undertook an extensive programme of activities in support of trade, tourism, and investment and to enhance Ireland's reputation internationally. The participation of a number of "household names" at Embassy hosted events to mark St. Patrick's Day helped to increase the public profile of Ireland and of our national day in a competitive international media environment. Our national day also provided an excellent opportunity to deepen our bilateral relationship with countries around the global and to strengthen our ties with the Irish diaspora.

Overall, the Embassy network supported the visits of the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, seven Ministers and one Minister of State to six countries to promote Ireland and Irish business. The visits of the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Ministers enabled enhanced levels of political, commercial and media engagement in the markets involved, raising the profile of Ireland as well as facilitating discussions on a range of important bilateral issues.

Schedule

I enclose a schedule setting out the records held by this Department in respect of the first two parts of your request, amended as set out above.

There are no records available in respect of the third part of your request, pertaining to records of travel expenses of any guest(s) whose travel expenses to attend these functions were paid for by the Irish State.

I have identified eight records which fall under the scope of your request. These are listed in the schedule attached as R(1) to R(8). I have made a decision to grant access to all of these records in full.

Records to which access is denied

There are no records to which access is denied.

Records to which access is granted

I have granted access in full to the eight records identified as falling under the scope of this request, as amended.

In respect of R(1), expenditure under specified headings have been provided in respect of each mission for which such records exist. In many cases, where VAT has been paid in respect of certain services or purchases, this will be recouped from the local tax authorities, thereby reducing the ultimate cost of the reception in question.

There are no records in respect of expenditure on receptions in respect of Cape Town, South Africa, and San Francisco, USA. In the case of Cape Town, no St. Patrick's Day receptions were hosted in that city by the Embassy of Ireland in Pretoria. In the case of San Francisco,

the Consulate General co-hosted events with a number of partner organisations, with the costs borne in each case by the partner organisation in question. As such, no reception costs were paid by the Consulate General in San Francisco in respect of St. Patrick's Day parties or receptions.

Records (R(1)) have therefore been made available in respect of expenditure on receptions hosted by the following missions: the Consulate General of Ireland, New York; Embassy of Ireland, Beijing; Embassy of Ireland, London; Embassy of Ireland, New Delhi; Embassy of Ireland Ottawa; Embassy of Ireland, Paris; Embassy of Ireland, Pretoria; Embassy of Ireland, Washington DC; and the Permanent Delegation of Ireland to the OECD and UNESCO, Paris. These records provide the relevant expenditure figures in Euro. Contextual information for this expenditure is provided below, alongside information regarding the guest lists, where deemed additional explanatory information would be found useful.

R1 – New Delhi

Records have been released in respect of the costs of the St. Patrick's Day reception in New Delhi, India. The costs indicated for Venue Hire include the hire of lighting and a sound system.

R1 – Permanent Delegation of Ireland to the OECD and UNESCO

Records have been released in respect of the costs of the St. Patrick's Day reception hosted by the Irish Ambassador to the OECD and UNESCO. The costs indicated for food include the cost of catering staff for the event.

R1, R2 – New York

The Consulate General of Ireland in New York hosted a total of eight events falling under the scope of this request. It was not possible to disaggregate the catering costs for these events into food and non-food (i.e. labour and equipment rental) costs. As such, the food costs indicated for the eight events should be understood to also include catering overheads such as staffing.

The *St. Pat's for All* parade was founded in 1994 by the Irish LGBT organisation, the Lavender & Green Alliance, as an all-inclusive alternative to the New York 5th Avenue St. Patrick's Day parade and is supported by many key individuals within the community, who were present at this reception. This year's Grand Marshals were the philanthropist, Loretta Brennan Glucksman, and the author, Colum McCann.

March was first designated as *Irish American Heritage Month* by the US Congress in 1991 and this tradition has been continued by the President of the United States each year since. This year, the Consulate's launch event for the Irish American Heritage Month recognised the significant contribution of Irish-American New York City teachers to Ireland-New York relations.

The 2016 New York 5th Avenue *St. Patrick's Day* was historic marking the 155th anniversary of the Parade, commemorating the events of 1916 and allowing the Irish LGBT organisation, Lavender & Green Alliance, to march for the first time. This year, Senator George Mitchell was installed as the Grand Marshal, marking the significance of his role in bringing peace to the island of Ireland. The Consulate hosted a reception in his honour.

The *IBO* is one of the oldest and largest Irish business networks within the New York metropolitan area and their participation in the New York 5th Avenue St Patrick's Day Parade 2016 is a key event within the Irish business community. The Consulate's reception to mark the installation of their Grand Marshal, the celebrated fashion designer Don O'Neill, attracted many of the Consulate's key stakeholders.

London Irish was the first Club to play an Aviva Premiership fixture overseas when the Club's Round 16 home match against Saracens was held at the Red Bull Arena in Harrison, New Jersey on Saturday 12th March 2016. This was a key launch event for the St. Patrick's Day season and the Consulate's reception brought many within the Irish and Irish-American communities together to mark the occasion.

The *American Chamber of Commerce Ireland* represents the interests of over 700 US companies with operations in Ireland. For the second year in a row, AmCham commissioned a report into the Irish American Economic Relationship by the highly regarded Wall Street economist, Joseph P. Quinlan, and the Consulate hosted a reception to mark the launch. The reception, which was attended by many of the top C-level members of the Irish and Irish-American business community and key stakeholders, highlighted the depth of the Irish-American trade relationship and the significant potential for further growth.

After New York, *Philadelphia* is home to one of the largest and well-established Irish communities. This year, the Chief Whip and Minister of State at the Department of Defence, Paul Kehoe T.D., represented the Government at the Parade and was the guest of honour at the subsequent community reception, hosted by the Consulate.

R1, R3 – Beijing

Guests invited to Embassy Beijing's Saint Patrick's Day Reception on March 17th consisted overwhelmingly of a targeted Chinese audience from the government, business, food, investment, technology, education, cultural, media and tourism sectors. Over 1,900 key Embassy and State Agency contacts and members of the Irish Community were invited, and it is estimated that approximately 1,200 guests were in attendance. It is the flagship promotional event of the year for the Embassy and the State Agencies in China and the date occupies a central place in the government, business, international and Irish community calendars. Bringing so many key contacts together also provides a focus on the wider St Patrick's Day Festival during which there are 23 events including the Greening of the Great Wall of China. The food selection provides an opportunity to promote imported Irish salmon as well as dairy and other products for which Irish producers are seeking greater market opportunities in China. The evening is an occasion to reach a large and sophisticated audience that is more inclined to purchase imported products. The Reception also provided an excellent opportunity for Team Ireland in China to meet key Chinese interlocutors during which Irish positions on a range of issues were put across to inter alia the host Government, the investment and education authorities, and the Chinese media. Guests are exposed to a showcasing of visual images of Ireland including from its tourism, film and culture industries. Finally, the quality of the event serves for one night to bring together in a single venue the Irish Community which is spread throughout this vast country.

R1, R4 – London

The promotion and strengthening of bilateral relations with the UK in all their dimensions, as an essential basis for promoting Irish interests, is the core objective of the Embassy of Ireland in London. Representational activity plays a vital role in this regard and is important in affording opportunities to put across effectively Ireland's position on a range of issues, in particular on the economy, Northern Ireland and the EU and also in showcasing Irish music and culture (which in turn is important for brand Ireland generally). Representational activity also plays an important role in harnessing the good will of the vast and diverse Irish community in Britain including recognising the valuable contribution of charity and voluntary organisations. Another priority for the Embassy of Ireland, London is assisting in supporting the Irish economy and trade in every possible way. In total there were approximately 150 events hosted at the Embassy of Ireland, London, in 2014, with an additional 170 held in 2015, many of which were hosted in co-operation with the State Agencies, such as Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Bord Bia and Tourism Ireland. Others were hosted in association with third parties or business networks and organisations.

As an important part of this representational activity, Ambassador Mulhall hosts a variety of functions in the St Patrick's Day period, reaching out to business, press, political, law enforcement, diplomatic, community and personal contacts of the Embassy. Of the official functions held around this time, 5 fall within the scope of this FOI request as it pertains to costs, the *Law Enforcement Reception*, the *Press/Political Reception*, the *Irish Community Reception*, the *"Eulogy" Reception*, and the *Diplomatic Corps Reception*.

Due to the scale of representational activity carried out at the Embassy of Ireland, London, the majority of which is catered in house, supplies of food and drink for the various functions held are purchased in bulk, quite often well in advance. In view of the bulk purchases and the large number and extent of the events, it is not possible to ascribe with precision actual costs to each specific function. This also applies to the purchase of flowers which are purchased at market, in general once a fortnight or so, and which costs are spread over a large number of functions.

Accordingly, it is not practical to give the exact food and drink costs per function, and for this reason, a global figure is given under each category. It should be noted that the actual cost of food and drink for the 5 functions would be slightly lower than the figures quoted, as some of the food or beverage items included on the invoices for these 5 receptions would have been used at other official functions which do not fall within the scope of the request.

In respect of the "Eulogy" reception, this was a panel discussion and reception at which **Eulogy PR Group** presented its report entitled *Irish Directors Report 2016 – A Unique Study of Irish Directors in UK Boardrooms*. The event was hosted by Ambassador Mulhall and Minister Fitzgerald was special guest of honour. Eulogy PR Group agreed to contribute towards the cost of this event (£1500) so the event was not wholly funded by the Embassy.

The guest names which have been provided include the names of invitees who indicated their intention to attend the particular function; there is no indication as to whether they actually did attend.

All guests attending the Law Enforcement Reception fall outside the scope of this FOI request. Guests who may be considered “household names” who attended the Irish Community, “Eulogy”, Press/Political, and Diplomatic Corps Receptions have been released in R(4).

R1, R8 - Washington D.C.

The Ambassador of Ireland to the USA traditionally hosts a St. Patrick’s Day reception in Washington DC in honour of the Taoiseach. Generally, over one thousand guests are invited and over 500 attend. The guest lists are drawn primarily from the US Administration, Congress, business community, Irish-America, and other key Embassy contacts. Due to the limited reception areas in the Embassy and Residence, neither has the capacity to accommodate a reception of the size appropriate to St. Patrick’s Day, so a suitable alternative venue is identified.

In 2016, the reception was held at the Willard Hotel (chosen for its proximity to the White House – the Ambassador’s reception took place immediately after President Obama’s reception – and following a competitive tendering process). In line with normal attendance, more than 500 guests were present.

As usual, guests invited included senior figures from the U.S. Administration and Congress. The names of those considered most likely to be well known in Ireland have been released. In addition to US media contacts, a number of members of the Irish media were invited. These were primarily working on the Taoiseach’s visit in Washington DC, and their names have also been released.

With respect to the costs released in respect of the St. Patrick’s Day Reception hosted by the Embassy of Ireland, Washington DC, the venue hire cost was incorporated into the food and beverage costs. For this reason, a common entry has been provided in R(1) in respect of the food, beverage, and venue hire expenditure of Embassy of Ireland, Washington DC.

In addition, costs in the order of \$5,000 (€4,595) will be recouped from State Agencies (IDA Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Marine Institute & Science Foundation Ireland) based on number of invitations issued.

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@dfat.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@dfat.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,

Fiona McCabe
Trade Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade