

EIR Request (received 06 January 2022) - Reference: DFI/2022-0007

As a recent letter from the Infrastructure Minister outlines, in this current government cycle the Department for Infrastructure made a costed submission to the Department of Finance to secure the funding required to end the East-West disparity in rail services on the Derry-Belfast rail line.

As per the Minister's letter, the costed outline proposals for enhancements to the service she sought funding for were :

- i. An hourly Derry-Coleraine frequency on a Sunday;
- ii. An additional early morning service from Derry to Belfast connecting with the 08.00hrs Enterprise service to Dublin; and
- iii. An additional later night Saturday service from Belfast arriving in Derry at 0:44 hours.

I would be grateful if you could confirm the following under FOI regarding this matter:-

- 1) When these costed proposals were submitted to the Department of Finance?
- 2) When a formal rejection was received from the Department of Finance?
- 3) Copies of all correspondence between the 2 departments on this matter.
- 4) Confirmation of what the costed sums for each of the 3 above proposals were.

Response (issued 01 February 2022)

Thank you for your email dated 6 January 2022 requesting, under the Freedom of Information Act, information held by this office in relation to bids submitted by the Department in relation to costs for additional train services to the North West, specifically:

- i. An hourly Derry-Coleraine frequency on a Sunday;
- ii. An additional early morning service from Derry to Belfast connecting with the 08.00hrs Enterprise service to Dublin; and
- iii. An additional later night Saturday service from Belfast arriving in Derry at 0:44 hours.

In considering your request on behalf of the Department I have determined that the information requested falls under the aegis of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, as opposed to the FOI Act 2000. Section 39 of the Freedom of Information Act specifically excludes from consideration under that Act requests for what is deemed to be

environmental information. EIR gives rights of public access environmental information held by public authorities.

A guide explaining the Environmental Information Regulations can be found at:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-environmental-information-regulations/what-are-the-eir/>.

For ease of reference, I have answered each of your questions in the order you have asked them, so in response to your request, I can confirm the following:

- 1) The bid was submitted to the Department of Finance on 21st December 2020;
- 2) To date there has been no notification that the bid has not met;
- 3) Copies of all relevant correspondence are attached

You will note that the attached information has been redacted. Some of the redactions are for information that falls outside the scope of your request and which should not, as a result be placed into the public domain.

In addition, some information has been redacted because it constitutes third party personal data within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). A public authority may only release third party personal data if to do so would be fair, lawful and would meet the conditions in Schedule 2, 3 or 4 of the DPA. The Department may not disclose personal information to the public in contravention of any of the data protection principles (Article 5(1) UK General Data Protection Regulation or sections 34(1) and 85(1) DPA) and must consider all consequences of disclosure in each case.

The information provided has therefore been redacted under the exception provided under EIR by Regulation 12(3) & 13: personal information. I am satisfied that the public interest is best served by withholding this information; and

- 4) The costs for each of the 3 proposals, which are net of passenger income, are:
 - i. An hourly Derry-Coleraine frequency on a Sunday - £528,947;
 - ii. An additional early morning service from Derry to Belfast connecting with the 08.00hrs Enterprise service to Dublin - £126,747; and
 - iii. An additional later night Saturday service from Belfast arriving in Derry at 0:44 hours - £42,250.

It should be noted that these costs were based on 20/21 figures and are subject to increase each year due to inflationary pressures.

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