



**Information Commissioner's Office**  
Promoting public access to official information  
and protecting your personal information

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

Date: Tuesday 13 March 2007

#### **Banks in unacceptable data protection breach**

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has found 11 banks and other financial institutions in breach of the Data Protection Act after investigating complaints concerning the disposal of customer information.

HBOS, Alliance & Leicester, Royal Bank of Scotland, Scarborough Building Society, Clydesdale Bank, Natwest, United National Bank, Barclays Bank, Co-operative Bank, HFC Bank, Nationwide Building Society and The Post Office were all found to have discarded personal information in waste bins /receptacles outside their premises.

The Immigration Advisory Service was also found to have disposed of personal information in similar circumstances.

The ICO has now required these organisations to sign a formal undertaking to comply with the Principles of the Data Protection Act. Failure to meet the conditions of the undertaking is likely to lead to further enforcement action by the ICO and could result in prosecution by the Office.

David Smith, Deputy Commissioner, said: "It is unacceptable for banks and other organisations to carelessly discard their customers' information. It is vital that banks and other organisations take security seriously. If they do not, they not only risk further action from the Information Commissioner but also risk losing the trust of their customers. Individuals must feel confident that banks and other organisations are safeguarding their personal information."

The ICO believes that organisations in breach of the Data Protection Act security requirements should face a detailed inspection of their security procedures.

Copies of the signed undertakings are available on the ICO website at [http://www.ico.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_cover/data\\_protection/enforcement.aspx](http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/data_protection/enforcement.aspx)

## **ENDS**

If you need more information, please contact the Information Commissioner's press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Information Commissioner promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)
3. The ICO's investigation into banks' disposal of customer information follows evidence supplied by BBC Watchdog, Sunday Mail and consumer group, ScamsDirect
4. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:
  - Fairly and lawfully processed
  - Processed for limited purposes
  - Adequate, relevant and not excessive
  - Accurate and up to date
  - Not kept for longer than is necessary
  - Processed in line with your rights
  - Secure
  - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection

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