



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

Press Release

For immediate release

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Councils told to protect people's personal information

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is urging local authorities in Scotland to protect residents from identity theft by restricting the amount of personal information, such as phone numbers and signatures, that is published on their websites.

The ICO has recently upheld a complaint by a member of the public against Perth and Kinross Council, which had published his signature on the Internet. Ken Macdonald, Assistant Commissioner for Scotland at the ICO, has written to all Scottish local authorities to remind them of their obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Ken Macdonald said: "In an age where the threat of identity theft is increasingly real, individuals must be able to trust organisations to look after their personal information. Public authorities have a legal obligation to keep residents' personal information secure. In addition, individuals should be informed which elements of their personal information will be published on the Internet."

Local authorities have an obligation to publish certain information, such as details of planning applications or applications for various trading licences, some of which will include individuals' personal information. However, it is important that they do not publish other personal information unnecessarily as this may breach the Data Protection Act.

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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

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
3. For further advice, local authorities should contact the Information Commissioner's Office in Scotland on 0131 225 6341.
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

