



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

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

Date: 23 April 2009

### **Common sense on Street View must prevail, says the ICO**

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published new advice on Google Street View in response to a complaint from Privacy International.

David Evans, Senior Data Protection Practice Manager said: "As a regulator we take a pragmatic and common sense approach. Any images of people's faces or number plates should be blurred. We emphasised the importance of blurring these images to protect people's privacy and limit privacy intrusion. Google must respond quickly to deletion requests and complaints as it is doing at the moment. We will be watching closely to make sure this continues to be achieved in practice.

"However, it is important to highlight that putting images of people on Google Street View is very unlikely to formally breach the Data Protection Act. Watch the TV news any day this week and you will see people walking past reporters in the street. Some football fans' faces will be captured on Match of the Day and local news programmes this weekend – without their consent, but perfectly legally. In the same way there is no law against anyone taking pictures of people in the street as long as the person using the camera is not harassing people. Google Street View does not contravene the Data Protection Act and, in any case, it is not in the public interest to turn the digital clock back. In a world where many people tweet, facebook and blog it is important to take a common sense approach towards Street View and the relatively limited privacy intrusion it may cause."

In July 2008 the ICO met with Google to discuss how Street View would be implemented. The ICO stressed the importance of including a facility for individuals to report images they were unhappy with and was satisfied that Google was putting in place adequate safeguards to avoid unwarranted intrusions on people's privacy.

The ICO has received a number of complaints and enquiries about Google Street View. These include those from people who are unhappy that their image is on Street View, those who are unhappy at the prospect of their/anyone else's image potentially appearing, as well as those who are positive about the idea. The ICO receives over 100,000 telephone calls a year, including 25,000 data protection related complaints.

The ICO has confirmed to Privacy International that the removal of an entire service of this type would be disproportionate to the relatively small risk of privacy detriment. The ICO will keep the operation of Street View under review and take steps to address issues raised by individuals who feel that Google has not removed problematic images.

## **ENDS**

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

### **Notes to Editors**

1. Data protection is about people's personal information; so an image of a house held on Street View is not a data protection matter.
2. The Information Commissioner's Office promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is the UK's independent influential and practical authority on information rights and responsibilities, making a difference to people.
3. The ICO has 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.
4. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)
5. 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