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

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	Our Ref. Information Com Promoting public access and protecting your
	Lord Currie of Marleybone (Chairman) OFCOM Riverside House 2a Southwark Bridge Road London SE1 9HA
	10 th May 2006
~	What price privacy? The unlawful trade in confidential personal information Please find enclosed a copy of this report which we have laid before Parliament today.
	Our report brings to light a flourishing and unlawful trade in confidential information about individuals which can be too easily obtained – without authority – from a wide range of organisations. Typically, information is obtained by making payments to employees who have access to the information or by impersonating the targeted individual or an official elsewhere in the organisation.
	These activities already constitute offences under Section 55 of the Data

deterrent.

The offences under section 55 of the Act are occasionally committed by or impact upon those in the field that OFCOM regulates as evidenced in section 5.6 - 5.11. It is my firm view that increasing the penalties for Section 55 should not in any way fetter the press and other media in the lawful pursuit of its stories.

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At section 7.29 of the report I call on all relevant regulatory and professional bodies to take a strong line to tackle any involvement in the illegal trade in personal information. As indicated in section 7.31 I am now writing to ask you:

- What steps will you take to publicise this report among your members or those you regulate?
- Are you willing to condemn unequivocally the commission of offences under section 55 of the Data Protection Act, and if so how will you do this?
- In six month's time, will you let the Information Commissioner have details of any changes made or in prospect to the relevant disciplinary rules, codes of practice or other instruments (statutory or selfregulatory), with the aim of improving your control or influence over the illegal buying and selling of personal information?

I hope that you will be able to let me have OFCOM's response to the questions above in good time so that we can fully document progress made by all those to whom recommendations have been addressed.

If you would like to discuss any aspect with my staff, please contact Lee Taylor in the first instance.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely Richard Thomas

Information Commissioner