

Data Protection Ireland

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Headlines:

- Hawkes investigates after Eircom customers were sent warning letters in error, p.14
- Commission consults on how to better notify breaches, p.15
- Welfare users to face bank scans?, p.16

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Council under investigation for data mismanagement

The Data Protection Commissioner is investigating personal data handling at an Irish council after it uploaded individuals' personal data onto a planning applications website.

The data, gathered as part of Meath County Council's Rural Housing Policy, included names, addresses, mobile phone numbers, email addresses and bank account numbers. Information from individuals' birth certificates and their motor insurance certificate details were also disclosed.

The incident is not the first occasion that the Council has compromised personal data. In 2008, the authority displayed individuals' bank statements on its website.

At that time, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner said that, whilst it recognised that local authorities are legally obliged to make some documentation publicly available, this did not necessarily mean that it was justifiable to place all the material on the website.

In addition to the online breach, the Council is likely

to have compromised sensitive data, including data on individuals' mental health, contained in paper planning files that are open for general viewing in Council offices.

A spokesperson from the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner told *Data Protection Ireland* "we have received a breach notification from Meath County Council and a complaint from a member of the public affected by the incident. We are investigating."

The Council has declined to comment specifically, but
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Mobile phone companies take urgent measures

In an attempt to avoid a repeat of the UK hacking scandal in Ireland, Data Protection Commissioner, Billy Hawkes, has urged mobile phone operators to end remote access to voicemails.

Diarmuid Hallinan from the Commissioner's Office told *Data Protection Ireland* "we suggested to the relevant companies that they should examine means of limiting the risks

associated with this service and whether members of the public should be allowed to opt in to remote access services."

Mr Hawkes said that eMobile, Meteor, O2, Three and Vodafone have responded "in an exemplary fashion" to his urgent request. The Commissioner has now turned his attention to individuals, who he said should now

follow the advice provided by their respective phone providers.

Meanwhile, the media frenzy in the UK surrounding phone hacking at News International continues, and questions have begun to surface about the ease with which private voicemail and text information has been obtained.

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