

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

SUPERVISORY POWERS OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

ENFORCEMENT NOTICE

To: Vanquis Bank Limited

Of: No. 1 Godwin Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2SU

1. The Information Commissioner ("Commissioner") has decided to issue Vanquis Bank Limited ("VBL") with an enforcement notice under section 40 of the Data Protection Act 1998 ("DPA"). The notice is in relation to a contravention of Regulation 22 of the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 ("PECR") by VBL.
2. This notice explains the Commissioner's decision.

Legal framework

3. VBL whose registered office is given above (Companies House Registration Number: 02558509), is the organisation stated in this notice to have instigated the transmission of unsolicited communications by means of electronic mail to individual subscribers for the purposes of direct marketing contrary to regulation 22 of PECR.
4. Regulation 22 of PECR states:

- “(1) This regulation applies to the transmission of unsolicited communications by means of electronic mail to individual subscribers.
- (2) Except in the circumstances referred to in paragraph (3), a person shall neither transmit, nor instigate the transmission of, unsolicited communications for the purposes of direct marketing by means of electronic mail unless the recipient of the electronic mail has previously notified the sender that he consents for the time being to such communications being sent by, or at the instigation of, the sender.
- (3) A person may send or instigate the sending of electronic mail for the purposes of direct marketing where—
- (a) that person has obtained the contact details of the recipient of that electronic mail in the course of the sale or negotiations for the sale of a product or service to that recipient;
 - (b) the direct marketing is in respect of that person’s similar products and services only; and
 - (c) the recipient has been given a simple means of refusing (free of charge except for the costs of the transmission of the refusal) the use of his contact details for the purposes of such direct marketing, at the time that the details were initially collected, and, where he did not initially refuse the use of the details, at the time of each subsequent communication.
- (4) A subscriber shall not permit his line to be used in contravention of paragraph (2).”

5. Section 11(3) of the DPA defines "direct marketing" as "the communication (by whatever means) of any advertising or marketing material which is directed to particular individuals". This definition also applies for the purposes of PECR (see regulation 2(2)).
6. "Individual" is defined in regulation 2(1) of PECR as "a living individual and includes an unincorporated body of such individuals".
7. "Electronic mail" is defined in regulation 2(1) PECR as "any text, voice, sound or image message sent over a public electronic communications network which can be stored in the network or in the recipient's terminal equipment until it is collected by the recipient and includes messages sent using a short message service".
8. The DPA contains enforcement provisions at Part V which are exercisable by the Commissioner. Those provisions are modified and extended for the purposes of PECR by Schedule 1 PECR.
9. Section 40(1)(a) of the DPA (as extended and modified by PECR) provides that if the Commissioner is satisfied that a person has contravened or is contravening any of the requirements of the Regulations, he may serve him with an Enforcement Notice requiring him to take within such time as may be specified in the Notice, or to refrain from taking after such time as may be so specified, such steps as are so specified.

The contravention

10. Between 9 April 2015 and 16 February 2016, VBL used a public telecommunications service for the purposes of instigating the transmission of 870,849 unsolicited communications by means of

electronic mail (text message) to individual subscribers for the purposes of direct marketing contrary to regulation 22 of PECR. This resulted in 131 complaints being made to the 7726 system.

11. The Commissioner is satisfied that VBL was responsible for this contravention.
12. Furthermore, Between 1 April 2016 and 1 September 2016, VBL used a public telecommunications service for the purposes of instigating the transmission of 620,000 unsolicited communications by means of electronic mail (e-mail) to individual subscribers for the purposes of direct marketing contrary to regulation 22 of PECR. This resulted in 9 complaints being made to the ICO.
13. Whilst VBL did not send the e-mails itself, it contracted with third party affiliates to send the messages on its behalf. The aim of the messages was to promote VBL credit cards. The Commissioner is therefore satisfied that VBL was the instigator of the direct marketing e-mail messages.
14. As the instigator of the direct marketing e-mail messages, it was the responsibility of VBL to ensure that valid consent to send those messages had been acquired.
15. "Consent" within the meaning of regulation 22(2) requires that the recipient of the electronic mail has notified the sender that he consents to messages being sent by, or at the instigation of, that sender. Indirect, or third party, consent can be valid but only if it is clear and specific enough. Informing individuals that their details will be shared with unspecified third parties, is neither freely given nor specific and does not amount to a positive indication of consent.

16. In this case the Commissioner is satisfied that VBL did not have the consent, within the meaning of regulation 22(2), of the 870,849 subscribers to whom it had sent unsolicited direct marketing text messages; moreover, the Commissioner is satisfied that VBL did not have the consent, within the meaning of regulation 22(2), of the 620,000 subscribers to whom its affiliate, [REDACTED], had sent unsolicited direct marketing e-mails.
17. The Commissioner has considered, as she is required to do under section 40(2) of the DPA (as extended and modified by the Regulations) when deciding whether to serve an Enforcement Notice, whether any contravention has caused or is likely to cause any person damage. The Commissioner has decided that it is unlikely that actual damage has been caused in this instance.
18. The Commissioner has considered, as she is required to do under section 40(2) of the DPA (as extended and modified by the Regulations) when deciding whether to serve an Enforcement Notice, whether any contravention has caused or is likely to cause any person damage. The Commissioner has decided that it is unlikely that actual damage has been caused in this instance.
19. **In view of the matters referred to above the Commissioner hereby gives notice that, in exercise of her powers under section 40 of the DPA, she requires that the VBL shall within 35 days of the date of this Notice:**

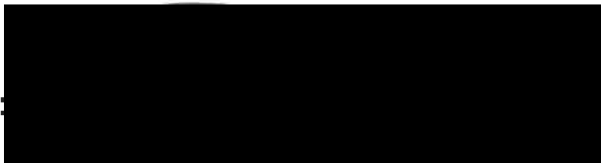
Except in the circumstances referred to in paragraph (3) of Regulation 22 of PECR, neither transmit, nor instigate the transmission of, unsolicited communications for the purposes of direct marketing by means of electronic mail unless the recipient of the electronic mail has

previously notified VBL that he clearly and specially consents for the time being to such communications being sent by, or at the instigation of VBL.

20. There is a right of appeal against this Notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights), part of the General Regulatory Chamber. Information about appeals is set out in the attached Annex 1.
21. Any Notice of Appeal should be sent so that it is received by the Tribunal within 28 days of the date on which this Notice is sent.

Dated the 4th day of October 2017

Signed:

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area.

Stephen Eckersley
Head of Enforcement
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

ANNEX 1

RIGHTS OF APPEAL AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER

1. Section 48 of the Data Protection Act 1998 gives any person upon whom a monetary penalty notice or variation notice has been served a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights) the "Tribunal") against the notice.
2. If you decide to appeal and if the Tribunal considers:-
 - a) that the notice against which the appeal is brought is not in accordance with the law; or
 - b) to the extent that the notice involved an exercise of discretion by the Commissioner, that she ought to have exercised her discretion differently,

the Tribunal will allow the appeal or substitute such other decision as could have been made by the Commissioner. In any other case the Tribunal will dismiss the appeal.
3. You may bring an appeal by serving a notice of appeal on the Tribunal at the following address:

GRC Tribunal
PO Box 9300
Arnhem House
31 Waterloo Way
Leicester
LE1 8DJ

 - a) The notice of appeal should be sent so it is received by the Tribunal within 28 days of the date of the notice.
 - b) If your notice of appeal is late the Tribunal will not admit it unless the Tribunal has extended the time for complying with this rule.
4. The notice of appeal should state:-
 - a) your name and address/name and address of your representative (if any);

- b) an address where documents may be sent or delivered to you;
 - c) the name and address of the Information Commissioner;
 - d) details of the decision to which the proceedings relate;
 - e) the result that you are seeking;
 - f) the grounds on which you rely;
 - g) you must provide with the notice of appeal a copy of the monetary penalty notice or variation notice;
 - h) if you have exceeded the time limit mentioned above the notice of appeal must include a request for an extension of time and the reason why the notice of appeal was not provided in time.
5. Before deciding whether or not to appeal you may wish to consult your solicitor or another adviser. At the hearing of an appeal a party may conduct his case himself or may be represented by any person whom he may appoint for that purpose.
6. The statutory provisions concerning appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) are contained in sections 48 and 49 of, and Schedule 6 to, the Data Protection Act 1998, and Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (General Regulatory Chamber) Rules 2009 (Statutory Instrument 2009 No. 1976 (L.20)).