



Privacy & Data Protection

Volume 9, Issue 7

July / August 2009

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Thomas : Graham will be 'strong' and 'determined' leader

Richard Thomas has praised the appointment of his successor, new Information Commissioner Christopher Graham, at the launch of the ICO's Annual Report for 2008/09.

Privacy & Data Protection attended the launch, at which both the current and previous Information Commissioner were present, together with Deputy Commissioners David Smith and Graham Smith.

Speaking briefly, Christopher Graham, who took office on 29th June, expressed his enthusiasm for talking

with staff before "putting himself about." Mr Thomas, whose last day was 17th June, said that he was attending the event as a guest, and spoke of his "pride over the ICO's achievements" in the past year.

The foreword to the Annual Report, written by Richard Thomas, identifies four key themes of the past year: transparency; accountability; the relationship between state and citizen; and [the ICO's] new-found "centre stage" role.

On transparency, Mr Thomas revealed that the ICO's Information

Sharing Code "will soon be transformed into a statutory code." He spoke of how he welcomed the requirement for every government department to identify a Senior Information Risk Owner.

Mr Thomas identified data quality and data cleansing as the likely candidates for "ones to watch" over the coming year — i.e. ensuring the right information relates to the right person, that it is accurate and that it is kept up to date.

On the ICO's new found 'centre stage' status, Mr Thomas noted the impact
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BT's Phorm plans fail to take shape

BT has suspended it plans to implement Webwise, the controversial behavioural advert-serving technology produced by Phorm.

In a recently issued statement, BT revealed that the suspension was due to resourcing priorities. The statement said "We continue to believe the interest-based advertising category offers major benefits for consumers and publishers alike. However, given our public commitment to developing next-generation broadband and television services in the UK, we have decided to weigh up

the balance of resources devoted to other opportunities. Given these resource commitments, we don't have immediate plans to deploy Webwise today."

However, according to Ben Winslade, Associate at Bristows, "while 'resourcing priorities' may be the official justification, the privacy controversy surrounding Phorm will have undoubtedly played a role in BT's decision."

Phorm relies on 'deep packet inspection', the

process whereby data packets are examined and used to develop profiles of users' web-surfing habits, which is then used to serve targeted advertisements. BT conducted three trials of the technology without the consent of its broadband customers during 2006, 2007 and 2008. This attracted wide-scale criticism from customers, peers and privacy campaigners that the process was illegal. Both the UK government the Information Commissioner's Office investigated and
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