

## **DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998**

### **SUPERVISORY POWERS OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER**

#### **ENFORCEMENT NOTICE**

To: LTH Holdings Ltd

Of: Unit G4 Capital Business Park, Parkway, Cardiff, United Kingdom  
CF3 2PY

1. The Information Commissioner ("Commissioner") has decided to issue LTH Holdings Ltd ("LTH") with an enforcement notice under section 40 of the Data Protection Act 1998 ("DPA"). The notice is being issued because of a serious contravention of regulation 21 of the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 ("PECR").
2. This notice explains the Commissioner's decision.

#### **Legal framework**

3. LTH, whose registered office is given above (Companies House Registration Number: 09571314) is the organisation stated in this notice to have used a public electronic communications service for the purpose of making unsolicited calls for the purposes of direct marketing contrary to regulation 21 of PECR.
4. Regulation 21 applies to the making of unsolicited calls for direct marketing purposes. It means that if a company wants to make calls

promoting a product or service to an individual who has a telephone number which is registered with the Telephone Preference Service Ltd ("TPS"), then that individual must have given their consent to that company to receive such calls.

5. Regulation 21 paragraph (1) of PECR provides that:

*"(1) A person shall neither use, nor instigate the use of, a public electronic communications service for the purposes of making unsolicited calls for direct marketing purposes where-*

*(a) the called line is that of a subscriber who has previously notified the caller that such calls should not for the time being be made on that line; or*

*(b) the number allocated to a subscriber in respect of the called line is one listed in the register kept under regulation 26."*

6. Regulation 21 paragraphs (2), (3), (4) and (5) provide that:

*"(2) A subscriber shall not permit his line to be used in contravention of paragraph (1).*

*(3) A person shall not be held to have contravened paragraph (1)(b) where the number allocated to the called line has been listed on the register for less than 28 days preceding that on which the call is made.*

*(4) Where a subscriber who has caused a number allocated to a line of his to be listed in the register kept under regulation 26 has notified a caller that he does not, for the time being, object to such calls*

*being made on that line by that caller, such calls may be made by that caller on that line, notwithstanding that the number allocated to that line is listed in the said register.*

*(5) Where a subscriber has given a caller notification pursuant to paragraph (4) in relation to a line of his—*

*(a) the subscriber shall be free to withdraw that notification at any time, and*

*(b) where such notification is withdrawn, the caller shall not make such calls on that line.”*

7. Under regulation 26 of PECR, the Commissioner is required to maintain a register of numbers allocated to subscribers who have notified them that they do not wish, for the time being, to receive unsolicited calls for direct marketing purposes on those lines. The TPS is a limited company which operates the register on the Commissioner's behalf. Businesses who wish to carry out direct marketing by telephone can subscribe to the TPS for a fee and receive from them monthly a list of numbers on that register.
8. Section 122(5) of the Data Protection Act 2018 (“DPA18”) defines direct marketing as *“the communication (by whatever means) of any advertising material which is directed to particular individuals”*. This definition also applies for the purposes of PECR (see regulation 2(2) PECR and paragraphs 430 & 432(6) to Schedule 19 of the DPA18).
9. Consent in PECR is defined, from 29 March 2019, by reference to the concept of consent in Regulation 2016/679 (“the GDPR”): regulation 8(2) of the Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Article 4(11) of the

GDPR sets out the following definition: *“‘consent’ of the data subject means any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes by which he or she, by a statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to him or her”.*

10. Recital 32 of the GDPR materially states that *“When the processing has multiple purposes, consent should be given for all of them”*. Recital 42 materially provides that *“For consent to be informed, the data subject should be aware at least of the identity of the controller”*. Recital 43 materially states that *“Consent is presumed not to be freely given if it does not allow separate consent to be given to different personal data processing operations despite it being appropriate in the individual case”*
11. *“Individual”* is defined in regulation 2(1) of PECR as *“a living individual and includes an unincorporated body of such individuals”*.
12. A *“subscriber”* is defined in regulation 2(1) of PECR as *“a person who is a party to a contract with a provider of public electronic communications services for the supply of such services”*.
13. 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.
14. 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, she 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.

15. PECR were enacted to protect the individual's fundamental right to privacy in the electronic communications sector. PECR were subsequently amended and strengthened. The Commissioner will interpret PECR in a way which is consistent with the Regulations' overall aim of ensuring high levels of protection for individuals' privacy rights.
16. The provisions of the DPA remain in force for the purposes of PECR notwithstanding the introduction of the DPA18: see paragraph 58(1) of Schedule 20 to the DPA18.

### **The contravention**

17. The Commissioner finds that LTH contravened regulation 21 of PECR.
18. The Commissioner finds that the contravention was as follows:
19. Between 1 May 2019 and 12 May 2020, LTH used a public telecommunications service for the purposes of making 1,414,519 unsolicited calls for direct marketing purposes to subscribers where the number allocated to the subscriber in respect of the called line was a number listed on the register of numbers kept by the Commissioner in accordance with regulation 26, contrary to regulation 21(1)(b) of PECR.
20. The Commissioner is also satisfied for the purposes of regulation 21 that these 1,414,519 unsolicited direct marketing calls were made to subscribers who had registered with the TPS at least 28 days prior to receiving the calls, and they had not given their prior consent to LTH to

receive calls. These calls resulted in a total of 41 complaints over the period of contravention.

21. For consent to be valid it is required to be "freely given", by which it follows that if consent to marketing is a condition of subscribing to a service, the organisation will have to demonstrate how the consent can be said to have been given freely. LTH have been unable to do this. For both of LTH's third-party data providers, the data of individuals who purchased a product from one of their sites was passed to LTH for use in further direct marketing campaigns, without those individuals being given a genuine choice about whether to consent to such marketing from LTH.
22. Consent is also required to be "specific" as to the type of marketing communication to be received, and the organisation, or specific type of organisation, that will be sending it. The Commissioner is concerned, particularly in respect of the consents obtained by ■■■■, that individuals were not able to select the method by which they might wish to receive direct marketing, or even from whom they may consent to receive it.
23. Consent will not be "informed" if individuals do not understand what they are consenting to. Organisations should therefore always ensure that the language used is clear, easy to understand, and not hidden away in a privacy policy or small print. Consent will not be valid if individuals are asked to agree to receive marketing from "similar organisations", "partners", "selected third parties" or other similar generic description.
24. LTH did not have valid consent, and nevertheless engaged in direct marketing to individuals who had been registered with the TPS for not less than 28 days.

25. The Commissioner has considered, as she is required to do under section 40(2) of the DPA (as extended and modified by PECR) when deciding whether to serve an Enforcement Notice, whether any contravention has caused or is likely to cause any person damage or distress. The Commissioner has decided that it is likely that damage or distress has been caused in this instance.
26. **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 LTH to take the steps specified in Annex 1 of this Notice.**

**Right of Appeal**

27. 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 2.

Dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of June 2021.

Andy Curry  
Head of Investigations  
Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

## **ANNEX 1**

### **TERMS OF THE ENFORCEMENT NOTICE**

LTH shall within 30 days of the date of this notice:

- Neither use, nor instigate the use of, a public electronic communications service for the purposes of making unsolicited calls for direct marketing purposes where the called line is that of:
  - (a) a subscriber who has previously notified LTH that such calls should not be made on that line; or
  - (b) a subscriber who has registered their number with the TPS at least 28 days previously and who has not notified LTH that they do not object to such calls being made.



## **ANNEX 2**

### **RIGHTS OF APPEAL AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER**

1. Section 48 of the Data Protection Act 1998 gives any person upon whom an enforcement 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:

General Regulatory Chamber  
HM Courts & Tribunals Service  
PO Box 9300  
Leicester  
LE1 8DJ

Telephone: 0300 123 4504  
Email: [grc@justice.gov.uk](mailto:grc@justice.gov.uk)

- The notice of appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 days of the date on which the enforcement notice was sent
4. 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)).