



PRESS RELEASE – INNOVATION EXCHANGE

Innovation Exchange Director Appointed

John Craig has been appointed as Director of the Innovation Exchange, the innovation programme for the third sector. He will take up the post on January 1st. John Craig commented: “I am delighted to be leading the Innovation Exchange and relish the chance to help the collective wisdom of the third sector to tackle social injustice in England. Between us I believe we can make a real difference for excluded young people and for those struggling to live independent lives – charities and social enterprises have the insight and the commitment to help make radical improvements in the services they receive.”

The Innovation Exchange will find new ways to connect innovators in the third sector with public service commissioners and other investors and help them to work together to develop their work. The Exchange is funded by the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) in the Cabinet Office and being led by The Innovation Unit, acevo and Headshift.

It will begin by focusing on the issues of excluded young people and independent living and in addition to the Innovation Exchange’s £1.2m budget, NESTA, the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts, will provide an additional £200,000 in 2008-9 to support some of the very best projects identified by the Exchange.

The Chair of the Innovation Exchange, Baroness Thornton, said that John Craig’s appointment was “excellent news. John’s blend of skills will ensure that the Innovation Exchange gets the best possible start.”

Valerie Hannon, Director of Strategy at The Innovation Unit, said the role was a challenging one. She went on to say: “The Exchange is in uncharted territory. It is seeking to create new forms of collaboration across the sector. John Craig is returning to his roots in the third sector, but his experience in policy and government will be invaluable in ensuring that the lessons from the Exchange reach the widest possible audience.”

The Innovation Exchange was part of the Government’s *Partnership in Public Services* action plan, which aims to remove barriers to greater third sector involvement in public services. The Exchange will offer innovators online resources including information, contact with other innovators and access to appropriate sources of investment.

Over the next three years of this pilot, the Innovation Exchange will establish and support Innovation Networks – large social networks of innovators, commissioners and others focused on tackling specific social problems – and develop Next Practice Programmes, providing support for a small number of innovative projects emerging from these Networks. Each Next Practice Programme will offer participants developmental support, access to expert consultancy and facilitation, and access to the right social investors and commissioners.

Notes to Editors

1. John joined the Office of the Third Sector in 2006 as its Head of Innovation. During his time at OTS, he coordinated the production of *Partnership in Public Services: An action plan for third sector involvement*, developed policy in relation to the Innovation Exchange and worked on OTS strategy. Prior to his departure he also worked briefly at the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, looking at citizen engagement. John joined OTS from the think-tank Demos, where he worked on policy related to both communities and public services. He is the author of *Schools Out*, which examines extended schools, *Start with People*, which looks at the role of community organisations and *Production Values: Futures for professionalism*.

John has an MA in Education Policy from the Institute of Education. He has previously worked as a researcher at both the Home Office and the Department for Education and Employment. John is a former resident and trustee of Toynbee Hall, a settlement in East London, and a former vice-president of Oxford University Student Union.

2. The not-for-profit sector now employs the full-time equivalent of 1.5m staff, with a collective annual turnover of £46bn.

3. *Partnerships in Public Services* brings together opportunities for the third sector to play an enhanced role in public services. Actions include a national programme to train 2,000 of those who commission public services on how to involve the third sector in services and £30 million funding for community groups to work with Local Authorities to take over management or ownership of local assets. Further information is available from:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/psd_action_plan.pdf

4. The Innovation Unit promotes innovation to improve education and other related services, drawing on talent from both the public and private sectors. One of The Unit's central roles is to combine the expertise of teachers and school leaders with the ideas and ambition of policy makers. The Unit runs a range of projects. Currently the largest of these is the "Next Practice" education programme in which The Unit supports schools and local authorities as they take forward their own cutting-edge ideas to improve education. www.innovation-unit.co.uk

5. Headshift is a professional social software consulting and development company, which has rapidly emerged as the UK market leader in this specialist sector. It works with a range of knowledge-based organisations in both the corporate and government sectors to create online communication projects that exploit the power of social networking. Headshift has been building award-winning online communities, knowledge sharing applications and websites for 11 years. www.headshift.com

6. Acevo stands for The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations. Acevo is the professional body representing charity and not-for-profit sector chief executives in the UK. It has over 2000 members and is committed to improving third sector leadership skills worldwide. www.acevo.org.uk

7. For more information about the Innovation Exchange visit www.innovation-exchange.org