

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **GEORGE OSBORNE COMMITMENT TO OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE WELCOMED**

Graham Taylor, Director of OpenForum Europe (OFE) today welcomed Shadow Chancellor George Osborne's commitment, on behalf of the Conservative Party, to investigating open source software for use within Government. Mr Taylor said: *"The issues that George Osborne highlights such as the increased cost through lack of choice which leaves users locked into expensive proprietary systems, the lack of compatibility between rival systems, and the huge potential that open source software offers for innovative and collaborative working within society, are subjects that we have been trying to discuss with Government for some time and there has been an unwillingness to engage. To see top-level politicians genuinely examining the cost and other benefits of open source in the UK, as we have seen in Europe for some time, is very welcome"*.

At a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts this morning on the social impact of the web, Mr Osborne announced the appointment of Mark Thompson of the Judge Business School at Cambridge University to advise the Conservatives on how Britain can become the open source leader in Europe. Taylor stated: *"This is a great pledge to make. Europe has been welcoming of open source, including sponsoring a portal (the Open Forum) which provides open source services, but in the UK, even the modest commitments of the Office of Government Commerce following their 2004 report have not been met. Instead we have witnessed a complete dependency on proprietary software, and resultant high costs for government projects."*

Mr Osborne's speech focussed on the cost savings of open source, the way it provides innovative collaborative ways of working and the issue of compatibility between systems. He flagged up Bristol City Council's development which took place under the Open Source Academy, an OFE developed product to enable local authorities to switch to open source, and which now provides Certified Open, a product designed and administered by OFE to test software for compatibility with other systems. Taylor said: *"Many of the answers that government is looking for, socially and economically, can be provided by the open source industry and we greatly look forward to helping politicians with*

*vision to achieve them”.*

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**Notes to editors:**

- **\*The most popular free software licence is the GNU General Public License (GNU GPL or simply GPL). Originally written by [Richard Stallman](#) for the [GNU project](#), the latest version of the license, version 2, was released in 1991.**
- **Open Source Academy is a partnership of local authorities and organisations with experience in the open source world, funded under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's e-Innovations programme. Members of the consortium include Birmingham City Council, Cheshire County Council, Bristol City Council, Shepway District Council, University of Kent, OpenForum Europe (OFE), National Computing Centre (NCC), and the Society of IT Management (SOCITM).**
- **Open Forum Europe (OFE) was launched in March 2002 at the Financial Times London to accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of OSS in business and government. OFE pursues the vision of an open, competitive European IT market by 2010 in line with the European Commission i2010 Strategy with the mission of facilitating open competitive choice in the IT Market Place.**
- **OFE is supported by major IT suppliers and works closely with the European Commission and National Governments via its National Associates. It undertakes contracts designed to strengthen the development and use of OSS in Europe and has built a comprehensive portal focused on UK Local Government and SME's in Denmark, Ireland and London.**
- **Open Forum is a project sponsored by the European Commission with participants from the UK, Ireland and Denmark to aid SMEs to find open source solutions. Open Forum consists of one core pan-European portal [www.theopenforumeurope.eu](http://www.theopenforumeurope.eu) and three local portals: Denmark ([OpenBiz.dk](http://www.openbiz.dk)), the United Kingdom (<http://www.openforumeurope.co.uk>) and Ireland (<http://www.openireland.ie>)**

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