

Castle and RISC OS Open Announce a Shared Source Initiative for RISC OS

RISC OS shared source initiative underpins future growth for the proven software technology

Cambridge, 29 September 2006 Castle Technology (Castle) and RISC OS Open Ltd (ROOL) are pleased to announce plans for the opening-up of RISC OS source code. This step is a further major landmark in the development of the highly respected software platform. A primary objective is to bring RISC OS software to a wider community and to encourage growth in both the RISC OS user base and the developer community. This will be augmented by more rapid development of the software base and removal of critical barriers to use, normally associated with proprietary platforms.

RISC OS was designed in Cambridge by Acorn for their 32-bit ARM based Archimedes computer and was first released in 1987. RISC OS was specifically developed for the ARM core and its origins can be traced back to the original team that developed ARM. (a major advantage for RISC OS). In 1999 the rights to RISC OS were acquired by Pace and then, in 2003, by the present owner Castle.

The RISC OS platform has been deployed in over a million Consumer Electronics products. Product solutions based on RISC OS are sophisticated, proven, reliable, and mature having had over 600 man years of development to date. RISC OS products are universally recognised as faster, more reliable and more efficient than many comparable competitive products. However one consistent objection to the use of RISC OS has been the fact that it is proprietary. With today's announcement, the parties believe that such an issue will no longer be a hindrance to its use.

Licensing Mechanisms: RISC OS software will be made available to third parties via a dual licensing mechanism. The first will be a free of charge (FOC) Source Code License which will give an individual/company the right to download, modify and publish RISC OS source code providing that the code is not used for any commercial purpose. The second Product Code Licence will give the right (for a small fee) for an individual/company to distribute product code to third parties for commercial use. Full details of both licences will be available soon from the ROOL website.

Structure of release: ROOL will manage access to 'the official' RISC OS shared source repository at Castle via the www.riscosopen.org web site. Official releases will be available, maintained and licensed from the ROOL site.

Administration by ROOL will be performed on a not-for-profit basis and will therefore be dependent upon contributions from the community to help support the operating costs. Users will be given the opportunity to contribute via a donation mechanism. Developers will be encouraged to feed back modified code to the source repository where it can be merged back into the source tree and released to all.

Steve Revill, Director of ROOL, commented "This move by Castle is great news for the RISC OS community. It's the first time that the public have been able to access these components at a source level. We believe that it's an exciting opportunity for developers to submit their improvements for all to use. They can also release software based upon these components free of charge or commercially (subject to a small royalty payment)." Steve added "At ROOL, we are very pleased to be a part of the process of opening-up access to the sources for many key RISC OS components. With the help and support of the RISC OS community, I am sure that there will be even more to follow. It is our sincere hope that this will stimulate the growth of our community and introduce a new era of development."

Speaking today Jack Lillingston, Managing Director of Castle, said; "In today's era of fast moving technological developments, both users and developers should have worldwide and easy access to an operating system. For too long RISC OS has been regarded as a closed proprietary OS and this has hampered wide scale take-up." Jack added, "We are delighted to be supporting the creation of an international RISC OS community with the team at ROOL. Their activities will further the use of RISC OS in a structured way, promoting the take-up of RISC OS."

About RISC OS Open (ROOL)

In addition to managing the source opening activity, ROOL will provide services for customers wishing to deploy RISC OS commercially. ROOL will deliver value to its clients by being an expert in the design, development and integration of products built around ARM compatible processors. The core team of ROOL's engineers originally formed the nucleus of Pace's

Cambridge Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) development team and previously worked for Acorn Computers. The experienced team is able to help partners and customers to quickly integrate, optimise and deploy efficient RISC OS based solutions in order to take advantage of the market leading MIPS per watt performance from the ARM architecture. ROOL are able to author software for an existing hardware design or develop a complete hardware and software solution. The engineering team has already developed and deployed RISC OS based products including IP set-top boxes and desktop computers, such as the IYONIX PC.

About Castle

More about Castle Technology Ltd: Based near Ipswich in the United Kingdom, Castle has been involved with RISC OS products since the early 1990's. From humble beginnings, producing SCSI Cards for Acorn computers, Castle soon became a major dealer of Acorn products and by 1999 Acorn's only distributor. By the year 2000 Castle had taken over the manufacture of the Acorn RISC PC and A7000 computers, before producing their own RISC OS computer, the 'IYONIX PC', in 2002. In 2003 Castle acquired RISC OS and has since produced a wide range of tailor made IPTV products for a number of international customers.