

## **ESRC Sponsored KTP Award for Best Application of Management of Social Science 2009**

The 2009 Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) awards took place on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009, to celebrate the success of winning partnerships completed in the previous year. Amongst the winners was a KTP completed by the University of Reading and The Riding for the Disabled Association, awarded one of two prizes\* sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), for the Best Application of Management or Social Science and a Best Partnership award for North West England.

Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) is a charity dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities through providing opportunities for horse riding and carriage driving.

The KTP sponsored by the ESRC and the Technology Strategy Board (TSB), involved an overhaul of RDA's IT infrastructure. The project involved the design and introduction of a new national website, along with the development and re-structuring of several internal IT systems to streamline the management of organisational information and improve communication procedures between the charity's HQ and its 500 volunteer groups throughout the UK.

The project has brought significant benefits to all parties involved in the KTP. For RDA, the work has revolutionised how the organisation operates. The KTP has improved communication and business performance, increased the visibility of the charity and resulted in numerous efficiency gains and cost savings. Furthermore, the work has contributed to creating more of a modern image for the organisation, enabling RDA to attract younger volunteers and compete strongly against other major charities for supporters, donations and volunteers.

*"The value of the KTP project to RDA has been immense, allowing us to develop much more sophisticated means of communication and data management. For a charity, the value of the programme also lay in the economy achieved in allowing us to make a real sea change at relatively low cost. We are really pleased and excited that these achievements have been recognised outside the organisation" Ed Bracher, Chief Executive, RDA*

For the KTP Associate Philip Crabtree, the project created an entrepreneurial opportunity for him to run his own consultancy business, providing professional IT input to similar organisations, as well as being employed by RDA on a part-time basis to offer on-going support and IT development.

*"Winning the Award for Best Application of Management or Social Science is a true honour. KTP as a whole has given me a head-start in my career, and the opportunity to apply my knowledge in projects not normally available to graduates. The funding and support network has allowed me to further my professional development and gain valuable new skills"*

The success of the work has been acknowledged beyond the KTP awards. The project was a finalist in the Computing for Excellence Awards, recognising excellence and exceptional performance by a panel of 12 judges at the top of their IT fields, an award nomination which has strengthened the University of Reading's reputation for undertaking applied research and enterprise activity. The British Equestrian Federation has also highlighted RDA's website as an example of excellent communication, to demonstrate the standards to which all equine bodies should be aiming for.

The two KTP awards presented to the partnership recognise the significant achievements of all those involved in the project, which has transformed RDA from a largely manual organisation to a highly efficient, technology enabled enterprise.

\* A project completed by the University of Lincoln and Hill Holt Wood received the second ESRC sponsored award for Best Application of Social or Management Science. Hill Holt Wood manage an ancient woodland and its core operating activity is the delivery of education, training and job skills development services. The KTP completed with the University of Lincoln and supported by TSB, aimed to develop designs for a range of eco-buildings leading to the establishment of an environmental social enterprise construction company. The project outcomes represented a significant expansion of the capacity of the company operations and its competitive position, providing sustainable construction and renewable energy solutions.