

OIX election 2024 – John Harrison – responses to nomination questions.

1. What are the key opportunities you see for the OIX in 2024?

2024 has to be the year of the wallet/ personal-data-service (or ‘holder’ as DSIT has decreed we shall call them).

Work on the basic trust framework for ‘single use’ identity proofing providers is now almost complete, or at least the remaining challenges are well understood, and progress is being made steadily. But work on ‘repeated use’, which requires holders, is only just beginning, being the subject of a fortnightly working group hosted by DSIT. Progress is slow, but at least now the direction is sensible, and the work is likely to speed up.

Thus the main opportunity for OIX is to contribute to the creation of a suitably ‘open’ holder infrastructure, making suitable provision for holder interoperability (regardless of provider) and holder portability (between providers). Creating this infrastructure is no small task: there is a need for innovation in organisational model, governance model, business model, funding model and route to scale. And whether the result ends us as being a ‘scheme’ within DSIT’s Trust Framework, or eventually subsuming it, remains an open question.

2. How will you demonstrate your commitment to the work of OIX in terms of resources, focus and leadership?

I will limit this response to two of the three points, i.e. focus and leadership; and will cover the resources point in the response to question 4.

I have been working on the creation of ‘holder’ infrastructure for a long time now, starting with the creation of PIB-d Ltd as a joint venture with the education sector in 2011, and following up with the creation of UCDx CIC as a potential public-interest governance body in 2020, both with the aid of grant funding from InnovateUK. Further, I contribute actively to the relevant OIX working groups, i.e. those covering wallets and commercial models. I am **focused** in the right areas.

Further, I like creating things, and often undertake **leadership** roles. As well as the creation of PIB-d Ltd and UCDx CIC in the past, I have recently led a 9-organisation bid to InnovateUK seeking funding to build demos of the infrastructure and five or so key holder apps. While the bid failed, for reasons that are not yet clear, the proposal was structured in a very open and inclusive way: a nucleus of organisations were to have been subsidized by I-UK, others could have joined at the outset but would have paid all their own costs, while a third group – probably the banks – would join later on and pay for the privilege of having avoided the development pain.

3. What would you like to see accomplished, and how do you plan to make these things happen?

Goals for 2024:

- Rough consensus across the public and private sectors on the models required – in terms of business, organisation, governance, funding and route to scale – to create multi-application, decentralised holder infrastructure for the UK
- Launch of an adequately funded project to demonstrate the infrastructure, and its many apps, run pilots, and then – if all is well – roll out to implementation,

I am already doing all that I can to make these things happen, i.e. (i) active participation in appropriate OIX working groups; (ii) lobbying of relevant government departments (principally the Department of Education) and engagement with departmental Chief Scientific Adviser to

ensure that ministers receive reliable advice; and (iii) leadership of efforts to raise necessary development funding, such that the pioneers will be adequately rewarded and the laggards can join at a later date and pay the pioneers for entry rights.

I propose to continue these efforts in 2024, ideally in close collaboration with OIX.

4. What resources will you and your organisation bring to help the chapter attain its goals?

Three main resources:

- PIB-d Ltd as a candidate to be the joint venture development vehicle for a holder infrastructure, to be part funded with public money and part privately. PIB-d is currently a JV part owned by the UK's HE sector (represented by Jisc), and part privately: we plan that the company's private-sector shareholding will be shared between the organisations that pioneer developments.
- UCDx CIC as a candidate to become the public-interest governance body for a holder infrastructure. UCDx was created as community interest company in 2020, and has a strong board of directors, all working pro-bono, with further candidates sought. See ucdx.org.uk.
- A coherent vision as to how a holder infrastructure can be created, covering the necessary innovations in organisation, governance, business and funding model, together with the necessary route to scale.

5. What current or past experiences, skills, or interests will inform your contributions and views?

- I was the individual who proposed to the Cabinet and Home Offices back in 2010 that a managed market of what we then called 'Personal Information Brokers' might be a way forward in the digital identity space. We now call brokers wallets, or personal data services, or holders. The proposal was accepted, but – in the course of implementation - government replaced holders with identity proofing providers in what became gov.uk Verify. And as we all know, Verify failed and was wound up in 2019/2020.
- From 2013 to 2020, and working through LRQA and tScheme, I was the external assessor for all 7 Verify IdPs. In 2022, I co-led market entry for a small certification and assessment body that won custom from a large number of UKDIATF identity service providers. But it was not altogether a happy experience.
- I set up PIB-d Ltd and UCDx CIC.
- My mind set is an amalgam: part engineer and part commercial. I am qualified, and have worked in, both fields. One commercial role was with a bank, which type of entity is well placed – in the long run – to become a holder provider; and I have some understanding of their (very cautious) mindset. The challenges facing OIX in 2024 are mainly business, funding and organisational model for a holder infrastructure: if these are fixed, the technical issues will soon follow. I am well placed to work with both technical and commercial communities.

John Harrison

8 January 2024.
