VASTox plc
("VASTox" or "the Company")

Initiation of a new proprietary programme

Oxford, UK: 21 July 2005 – **VASTox plc** (AIM: VOX), the drug discovery and services business, is pleased to announce today that it has initiated a new drug discovery programme focused on the treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a genetic neuromuscular disease. This is VASTox's third proprietary programme alongside Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and Tuberculosis.

SMA affects 50,000 people worldwide and is a degenerative disease causing loss of motor neurons in the spinal cord resulting in muscle atrophy. There are various forms of the disease with onset from infancy to adulthood. SMA is the most severe genetic disease in children under the age of two and there is currently no cure or adequate treatment for the condition.

VASTox has unique and unparalleled expertise in this disease area through its scientific founders and scientific advisory board. Professor Kay Davies CBE, FRS, and Dr Marcel van den Heuvel are both leading authorities on neuromuscular diseases working out of the Medical Research Council Functional Genetics Unit, University of Oxford.

Professor Kay Davies is a scientific founder of VASTox, and Dr van den Heuvel joined the company's scientific advisory board in March 2005. Dr van den Heuvel is recognised as an expert on SMA having dedicated his research to the area for the last four years.

Utilising its in-house synergy between chemistry and biology the company is developing a chemical genomic screen using Drosophila flies based on Dr van den Heuvel's research. This screen will be used to identify promising compounds from VASTox's proprietary neuromuscular chemical library and advance these into novel drugs to treat SMA.

Dr Steven Lee, CEO of VASTox, said:

"Initiation of this programme marks an exciting milestone for VASTox because the scientific rationale predominantly comes not from one of the original founding scientists but from a scientific advisor who was recruited post-IPO. VASTox is building on our expertise in Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, confirming our commitment to finding cures for neuromuscular diseases. By leveraging our genomics platform, our world-leading academic advisors, and our chemistry skills, we have an opportunity to make significant progress in treating this disease – for the benefit of patients."

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Notes To Editors

About VASTox plc

VASTox is a chemical genomics technology company that provides services to the pharmaceutical industry and discovers and develops proprietary novel drugs. The company's technology platform aims to use high volume, high content screening using zebrafish and fruitflies to provide a high level of predictability of the efficacy and toxicity of potential drug compounds in humans which has the potential to dramatically decrease the time and cost of drug discovery and development. VASTox was formed in January 2003, from the University of Oxford, by some of the UK's foremost scientists who have taken a highly creative approach to the problems involved in drug discovery and who have a proven record in delivering technological excellence. The company listed on the London Stock Exchange AIM in October 2004.

About Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA)

Spinal Muscular Atrophy affects 50,000 people worldwide and is a degenerative disease causing loss of motor neurons in the spinal cord resulting in muscle atrophy. Patients progressively lose the ability to walk, sit and, eventually, move. The most severe form, known as type I, reduces life expectancy to less than two years. SMA is a genetic disease caused by a defect in a single gene (SMN1). SMN protein is critical to the survival and health of motor neurons. Without this protein, nerve cells atrophy, shrink and eventually die, resulting in the observed muscle weakness.

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