

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD OF INTERFACE
24TH MAY 2016 AT 2:00PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION**

PRESENT:

Professor Pete Downes, Dr. Siobhán Jordan, Donna Chisholm, Dr. Stuart Fancey, Jo Bisset, Professor Donald MacRae, Bill McBride, David Ross, Jim Watson.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr. Roddy Macdonald; Scottish Government, Gary Bannon, Scottish Funding Council; Suzanne Dawson, Interface; Laura Goodfellow, Interface; Cherry Clark, Minutes.

APOLOGIES:

Alistair Cameron, Kevin Collins, Hugh Edmiston, Lynn Mann, Professor Andrea Nolan, Dr. John Rogers.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair opened the meeting and introduced Roddy Macdonald from Scottish Government.

2. THE ROLE OF INTERFACE IN THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM IN SCOTLAND IN LIGHT OF POTENTIAL INNOVATION REFORM (PAPER 2)

Roddy noted that:

- Innovation was central to the Scottish Government's economic strategy and builds on sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- The new Cabinet that had been announced earlier in the month reflected this importance
- The Can Do Framework provided an action plan to facilitate a range of activities that underpin entrepreneurship and innovation and for Scotland to become more innovative country
- A wide definition of innovation has been adopted that is beyond technology and pervades all sectors and all businesses including SMEs
- Interface is seen as an essential part of the innovation landscape and delivering on the ground
- A wide range partners are involved; SE, SFC, HIE, Visit Scotland etc.
- A range of pilot activities [as outlined in Paper 2] are being developed as part of the Can Do Framework.
- Other ideas being explored include; using procurement to drive innovation, rural innovation and simplification / focus on financing for businesses.
- Communicating clear messages to businesses regarding innovation through case studies is important.

Roddy concluded that Scottish Government is keen to enhance business – university links in practical ways and welcomed any further ideas and suggestions around this topic from the Board.

A wide ranging discussion was held by the Board summarised as follows:

- The Board at Interface was keen to participate in the ongoing discussions around supporting business-led innovation
- Innovation is key to developing tangible results and outcomes for businesses. Ultimately the measure of success for a business is being able to invoice for new sales that have resulted from innovation.
- The cumulative effect of joining up various initiatives across Scotland is critical to success

- Innovation provides a huge opportunity for Scottish SMEs but BERD is not necessarily the optimal measure for demonstrating success. Measuring innovation activities that generate sales and enhanced productivity will demonstrate real impacts
- It is very hard to predict what companies are going to be winners but more businesses engaging with Interface should in turn lead to greater impacts
- Businesses, particularly those in £2-3m turnover range, find it challenging to ring fence investment for innovation
- Education and skills around design technology and coding are key to underpinning innovation in the future
- An ideal scenario would be an innovation champion in every business.
- Interface plays a key role in stimulating “hard to reach businesses” to consider how to innovate
- Challenges remain: including volume [reaching more businesses], wider and deeper engagements
- In parallel, Innovation leading to enhanced productivity of essential government services is important for the overall growth of the economy.

The Chair thanked Roddy and the Board members for the stimulating discussion. There was no single solution with two underpinning components were essential; cultural change and access to support structures / enablers.

The Board were invited to bring forward other suggestions and ideas in relation to the role of Interface in the Innovation ecosystem in Scotland. Following this a paper would be submitted to Roddy summarising the discussions. **ACTION ALL**

3. MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING (PAPER 1)

It was agreed that the minutes (Paper 1) were a true and accurate reflection of the discussions held on 15th February 2016.

SJ noted the current status of actions arising as outlined in the table on page 7 of the papers. Updates included:-

- The development of a digital strategy for Interface with inputs from all team members. This strategy would help to reach more businesses whilst managing limited resources.
- BMcB noted that the Chairs of the Innovation Centres would meet in June and Interface had been added as an item on the agenda for discussion. A further update would be given at the next Board meeting. **ACTION BMcB**

SF noted that SFC was in dialogue with both the Chair and executive at Interface in relation to the timescales on funding and contingency planning. There was a desire to ensure that as Interface was seen as national infrastructure to support innovation in Scotland, longer term funding was assured.

4. ORAL UPDATES – PROFESSOR PETER DOWNES & DR. SIOBHÁN JORDAN

4.1 CHAIR

The Chair noted that the National Council for Universities and Business [NCUB], Growing Value Scotland Task force final report launches tomorrow in Edinburgh¹. There are 9 conclusions in total

¹ A copy of the final report can be found here: <http://www.ncub.co.uk/reports/growing-value-scotland-final-report.html>

focusing on enhanced connectivity between innovation support organisations and the skills required to support innovation leadership, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

4.2 DIRECTOR

The Director noted it was a busy period since the last meeting as outlined in Paper 7. Key highlights included:

- Successful Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards delivered on 25th February 2016 at RBS Conference Centre with over 300 attending and formed a key event for the 2016 Year of innovation, architecture and design. Considerable sponsorship from RBS was key to the successful delivery of the event.
- The Specialist facilities platform was launched which provides an opportunity to engage with Universities, Colleges and Innovation Centres. A short video has been developed in conjunction with the launch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2imRVSPHudw>
- Looking ahead, planning is underway across the team for academic year AY2016-17 building on our current strong position where the Business engagement team remain well on course to exceed their KPIs.
- We are developing a series of case studies to focus on business impacts including productivity and company growth that have arisen from academic collaborations brokered 5-8 years ago.

She noted the Independent Review of Innovation Centres Programme had commenced led by Professor Graeme Reid. The output of the review will be a report from Professor Reid to SFC's Board in September 2016. The Board noted that the review was quite early in the development of the Innovation Centres but that it was critical that optimal connectivity was in place between Interface and each Centre. There was a need by the Innovation Centres to balance longer term ambitions whilst showing success in the short term.

5. INTERFACE AND NCUB KONFER PLATFORM (PAPER 3)

The Board considered Paper 3 which provided an update on the online brokerage website that has been developed by the National Council for Universities and Business [NCUB].

The Board noted

- That online/ digital mechanisms do provide the capability to reach more businesses
- Although Interface has been very successful in facilitating company-led innovation, the team are only touching a small number compared to the overall potential.
- Konfer may be part of the digital solution to have a catalytic effect and reach more businesses
- Interface and Konfer were distinct offerings and there was a risk of creating more clutter on the business support landscape
- The skill set and translation by the Interface team of the business –led challenge into an opportunity that can be addressed by a HEI is a unique selling point. The process to translate what is require is iterative between the business and the honest broker to ensure an optimal solution is identified.

The Board concluded that although the Konfer platform is still at embryonic stage and it is too early to establish the feedback from end-user businesses, the Interface team should co-operate with its development with a view to understanding the merit and efficacy of digital solutions.

6. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)

The Board reviewed the recommendations in Paper 5 in relation to governance which had emerged from previous meetings in October 2015 and February 2016.

The Board agreed to the recommendation that it was renamed Interface strategic Board and that this should be communicated in writing by the Chair to the main funders Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise alongside Universities Scotland.

ACTION PD/SJ

The Board recommended that discussion be held with ERI Ltd to agree the final wording on the financial commitments made by Interface over £100k in capital value and over £100k non-budgeted revenue value.

ACTION SJ

The Board noted that a new CEO for ERI Ltd was being recruited and suggested that once in post, representation from ERI be formalised.

ACTION SJ

7. RESULTS OF SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE (PAPER 4)

The Board deferred the discussion of the self-evaluation survey to a future meeting.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS TEAM (PAPER 6)

The Board welcomed the paper outlining the important development of the sector relationship team. The role of Interface to support each sector through bespoke approaches was important. JW thanked Interface for the considerable contributions by Howell Davies in supporting the development of the pan Scotland Food and drink Innovation Response through his secondment.

9. PROGRESS UPDATE (PAPER 7)

The Board noted this paper for information.

10. UPDATED INTERFACE RISK REGISTER (PAPER 8)

The Board noted this paper for information.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board noted the dates for the next meetings:

- Workshop & networking dinner – Thursday 18th August 3.00-8.30pm
- Board meeting – Tuesday 1st November 2-4pm.

The meeting closed at 4:04pm

Interface Advisory Board - Action Tracker

Actions from Previous Meetings

Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
15 th February 2016	2. ORAL UPDATES 2.1 CHAIR	The Board agreed that a review of the definition of innovation and role of Interface would be helpful to frame discussions on the landscape.	Discussed under item 4 of the agenda	underway	- Siobhán Jordan
15 th February 2016	4. STRATEGIC VISION – HOW MIGHT INTERFACE SCALE IMPACT TO BECOME CATALYTIC IN ITS INFLUENCE? (PAPER 2)	The digital strategy of Interface should be considered to review how this could accelerate the proposed catalytic effect.	Underway with intelligence gathered from across the Interface team to help inform – will be shared at meeting in August / October	underway	- Siobhán Jordan
15 th February 2016	4. STRATEGIC VISION – HOW MIGHT INTERFACE SCALE IMPACT TO BECOME CATALYTIC IN ITS INFLUENCE? (PAPER 2)	The Board concluded that the table in paper 2 should be reviewed with respect to capacity and potential impact to identify in a practical way which actions should be prioritised.	Underway	underway	- Siobhán Jordan - Laura Goodfellow - Suzanne Dawson
15 th February 2016	6. ENGAGEMENT WITH INNOVATION CENTRES (PAPER 4)	BMcB noted that he would highlight the measurement framework at the forthcoming Innovation Centre Chairs meeting.	Verbal update to be provided at meeting		- Bill McBride
24 th May 2016	1. THE ROLE OF INTERFACE IN THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM IN SCOTLAND IN LIGHT OF POTENTIAL INNOVATION REFORM (PAPER 2)	The Board were invited to bring forward other suggestions and ideas in relation to the role of Interface in the Innovation ecosystem in Scotland.	Board invited to provide comments by Friday 24th June	underway	- ALL
24 th May 2016	7. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)	The renaming to Interface strategic Board should be communicated in writing by the Chair to the main funders Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise alongside Universities Scotland		underway	- Siobhán Jordan - Pete Downes

Interface Advisory Board - Action Tracker

Actions from Previous Meetings

24 th May 2016	7. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)	The Board recommended that discussion be held with ERI Ltd to agree the final wording on the financial commitments made by Interface over £100k in capital value and over £100k non-budgeted revenue value.		underway	- Siobhán Jordan
24 th May 2016	7. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)	The Board noted that a new CEO for ERI Ltd was being recruited and suggested that once in post, representation from ERI be formalised.	CEO currently being recruited and proposed timescales are Jan 2017.		- Siobhán Jordan

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