

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD  
18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2016 AT 3:00PM AT ST. LEONARD'S HALL, POLLOCK HALLS**

**PRESENT:**

Professor Pete Downes, Dr. Siobhán Jordan, Donna Chisholm, Dr. Stuart Fancey, Jo Bisset, Professor Donald MacRae, Lynn Mann, Professor Andrea Nolan, David Ross, Jim Watson.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

**APOLOGIES:**

Alistair Cameron, Kevin Collins, Hugh Edmiston, Bill McBride, Dr. John Rogers.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board.

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

**2.1 MINUTES**

All Board members agreed the minutes were an accurate record of the last meeting with no changes noted.

**2.2 ACTION TRACKER**

SJ outlined the progress against the actions as per the table included in the minutes.

She noted that she had been invited to the Innovation Centre CEO quarterly meetings commencing from 9<sup>th</sup> September. In addition the renaming of the Board to Interface Strategic Board had been accepted by all stakeholders and was adopted from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016.

**3. ORAL UPDATES – PROFESSOR PETE DOWNES & DR. SIOBHÁN JORDAN**

**3.1 CHAIR**

The Chair thanked David Ross for his pioneering contributions to Interface and acknowledged that this was his final meeting as a Board member. DR noted it had been a privilege and pleasure to support the ongoing developments.

The Chair noted his recent meeting with CBI Scotland, who were being encouraged by Scottish Government to work around the innovation landscape. There was a requirement to enhance visibility of Interface to CBI members but acknowledged this was a never-ending task.

The Chair updated that the NCUB Growing Value Scotland Report had been launched by the Deputy First Minister, the day after last meeting.

He acknowledged that innovation was at the heart of policy and there was ongoing requirement for simplification of the landscape. Interface could act as a positive and necessary contributor and the

Board had a responsibility to communicate this during the period of consultation and decision making.

He noted the ongoing review of the Innovation Centre programme led by Prof Graeme Reid and the recent networking dinner for the Innovation Centre Chairs and host University Principals hosted by BMcB.

### **3.2 DIRECTOR**

SJ noted that Interface had provided oral evidence to the Innovation Centre programme review on 1<sup>st</sup> June which had led to a very interesting discussion on the role of Interface in a busy innovation landscape.

The planning and overall KPIs for AY2016-17 had been undertaken on the past three months involving all staff and led to the delivery plan that would be circulated to all Board members.

She noted the Scottish Knowledge exchange awards would be held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2017 at RBS Gogarburn.

SF provided the Board with a further update on funding and the ongoing discussions with the Managing Authority at Scottish Government regarding accessing European funding. He noted that the outcomes of the Enterprise & Skills review will be important for ongoing discussions but that Interface and the Innovation Centres were extremely valuable in supporting industry led innovation.

## **4. OUTLINE OF INTERFACE DELIVERY PLANS & PRIORITIES FOR AY2016-17**

The presentation attached outlined the priorities for AY2016-17.

The Board noted the 27% increase in enquiries from businesses that had led to a search specification for the HEIs and the 64% increase in follow on outcomes enabling transactional projects to be taken forward as strategic relationships with the HEIs.

The Board noted the 35% reduction in approvals of Innovation Vouchers and requested further information at the next meeting in relation to the underlying trends.

### **ACTION LG**

LM noted the cessation of the Interface Food & Drink programme from November 2016 and whether this would have an impact on the food and drink enquiries. SD highlighted the strategic focus of the new sector team would include supporting multi-party activity for the food and drink sector and the regional business engagement team would lead on individual company led enquires.

SF noted the very valuable contribution that the Interface Food & Drink programme had undertaken in engaging with sector bodies and it would be useful to distil down to the ingredients of success.

### **ACTION Circulate Interface Food & Drink reflections document to Board members.**

In response to questions from the Board, SJ noted the return in investment from independent assessments [eg. Biggar and EKOS] from Interface support to businesses was in the region of £1:8.

DC noted the many City Deals that were underway or in proposal preparation had a strong emphasis on supporting innovation. City Deals were now in place for Highlands Council, Aberdeenshire and Glasgow, with Edinburgh and Ayrshire coming through.

The Board noted the progress with the Pan Scotland food and drink innovation response where partnership working across a number of organisations was seeking to streamline business support. JW noted that this had been very well received by the Scottish Government as a good example of simplifying the innovation landscape. Rationalisation was important but also identifying gaps in current innovation provision.

SJ updated the Board on the range of activities underway to support staff. Examples included enhanced induction, training and development, and probation processes, team day in August, inter-team challenge to virtually walk the coast line of Scotland & islands in 100 days. Looking ahead in the coming months the current paperwork for Performance Development Reviews (PDRs) would be reviewed and benchmarked against other organisations with a view to having a discussion at the Board in early 2017.

In summary AY2015-16 was a successful year and the next twelve months would continue to build on this with the overarching themes of [1] HEI engagement [2] Digital [3] Impacts.

DMcR highlighted the need to uncover further demand and what learning could be taken from an analysis of current levels of demand compared to previous years

#### **ACTION LG**

DC noted that this had been a year of transition and Interface acts as a change agent for SMEs in accelerating business growth. The review of the Enterprise and Skills agencies was underway and the recommendations may have implications for innovation support for SMEs. . DMcR highlighted that Innovation within a business can be stimulated by a range of factors e.g. customer request, change in ownership etc.

PD summarised that the last twelve months had been transitional for the team in terms of growth and trialling new approaches. Based on this success it was important to gear up for the next part of the journey which should be catalytic in broad engagement across a range of SMEs. He offered his congratulations on behalf of the Board to the team for their hard work and achievements.

The Board were joined at this point by

- Mr Melfort Campbell, Co-Chair of the Innovation Scotland Forum
- Mr Geoff Crowley, Managing Director, Highland Colour Coaters
- Mr Andrew Bissell, Chief Executive Officer, Sunamp

Geoff and Andrew outlined their case studies with respect to support they had received from Interface and their experiences of collaborating with Scottish Universities.

Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
15 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	<b>4. STRATEGIC VISION – HOW MIGHT INTERFACE SCALE IMPACT TO BECOME CATALYTIC IN ITS INFLUENCE? (PAPER 2)</b>	The <b>digital strategy</b> 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	In progress	- Siobhán Jordan
24 <sup>th</sup> May 2016	<b>7. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)</b>	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.	Company secretary from ERI has agreed this is correct	Completed	- Siobhán Jordan
24 <sup>th</sup> May 2016	<b>7. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)</b>	The Board noted that a new CEO for ERI Ltd was being recruited and suggested that once in post, representation from ERI be formalised.	We can now confirm that ERI's new CEO, George Baxter, will be starting on Monday 24th October.  George joins ERI from the University of Nottingham where he is currently the Director of Research and Enterprise.	Introductory meeting scheduled for 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2016	- Siobhán Jordan
18 <sup>th</sup> August 2016	<b>4.OUTLINE OF INTERFACE DELIVERY PLANS &amp; PRIORITIES FOR AY2016-17</b>	The Board noted the 35% reduction in approvals of Innovation Vouchers and requested further information at the next meeting in relation to the underlying trends.  What learning could be taken from an analysis of current levels of demand compared to previous years?		Presentation on 1/11/2016	- Laura Goodfellow
18 <sup>th</sup> August 2016	<b>4.OUTLINE OF INTERFACE DELIVERY PLANS &amp; PRIORITIES FOR AY2016-17</b>	Circulate Interface food and drink reflections document to Board members.	Included in November 2016 papers	Completed	- Siobhán Jordan

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