

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD**  
**7<sup>th</sup> February 2017 AT 2:00PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION**

**PRESENT:**

Professor Pete Downes (Chair), Dr Siobhán Jordan, Dr George Baxter, Andrew Bissell, Alistair Cameron, Donna Chisholm and Lynn Mann

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Gary Bannon, Suzanne Dawson, Laura Goodfellow, Karen Cameron (minutes).

**APOLOGIES**

Professor Donald MacRae, Dr Stuart Fancey, Jo Bisset, William McBride, Marc Crothall, Professor Andrea Nolan, Dr John Rogers and Jim Watson.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair opened the meeting and outlined the agenda to the Board. He also welcomed Dr George Baxter, CEO Edinburgh Research and Innovation, who has joined the Interface Strategic Board.

**2. ORAL UPDATES**

Professor Pete Downes provided the following update:

- The *NCUB: Growing Value Scotland (GVS) Legacy Programme* is being scoped out with PD and David Brown, a partner at PwC as co-chairs. An advisory group is being established to take forward key themes that had emerged from the publication of the GVS report in 2016. Areas of particular interest were stimulating company demand for innovation and supporting the next generation of intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial graduates.
- LM noted that Women's Enterprise Scotland was focusing on real models as opposed to role models to provide greater clarity on the key characteristics of success.

**ACTION Board members were asked to forward any suggestions for the Legacy Programme to PD (All)**

**ACTION Share information links regarding Women's Enterprise Scotland (LM)**

Dr Siobhán Jordan updated the Board on the following:

- The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards will be hosted by Interface on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017. Mr. Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, is no longer able to attend but Prof Downes has agreed to present the awards. The day will include a showcase from academic institutions for businesses, workshops with businesses that have collaborated with academia along with the presentation of the awards in five categories.
- The current performance development review (PDR) paperwork which was based on that of ERI Ltd has been revised to better suit the requirements for Interface staff and this will be open for all team consultation during the next few weeks. The agreed paperwork will be implemented by July / August in line with annual performance reviews.
- The Board noted the update on performance against the 2016/17 Delivery Plan.

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

The Board considered the minute of the previous meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 and agreed it was an accurate record with no changes noted.

Progress against the action points was noted.

### **4. INTERFACE DIGITAL STRATEGY (PAPER 2)**

The Board noted the Paper which provides an outline of Interface's Digital Strategy. The strategy focuses on two main strands of activity:-

- Utilising digital media and data tools to reach out to more businesses to stimulate company demand in a cost effective manner
- Utilising digital and data tools to support the interface team to undertake their role more efficiently and effectively

The discussion focused on how we can engage business through both strands of the digital strategy while maintaining the personal service Interface currently delivers.

Ideas which were shared by the Board included:-

- Digital diagnostics may support a 24/7 service which stimulate interest from businesses that are notoriously hard to reach, particularly in the more rural and fragile economies
- Personalised and out-of-office hours digital dialogue eg. via Facebook or Twitter can move more quickly to action
- Utilising video channels such as YouTube to encourage company speakers to promote Interface
- Developing a number of personae around our target audience/ customers is likely to gain traction
- The current e-newsletter was welcomed and good to share across personal networks

In summary the Chair sought assurance that any digital activity would complement and enhance personal interaction and that we need to understand where greater business demand might cause other process / resource bottlenecks. The Board recommended that all digital activity was benchmarked with clear strategies for evaluating impacts and outcomes.

**ACTION          Develop a monitoring framework to measure impacts and outcomes emerging from digital activities [SJ]**

### **5. KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM ENGAGEMENT WITH UNIVERSITIES/RESEARCH INSTITUTION PARTNERS (PAPER 3)**

The Board noted paper 3 which provided an update on the findings and emerging themes from the eighteen Higher Education Institution (HEI) meetings Interface held during November and December 2016.

Common themes highlighted in many of the meetings were:-

- the current or recent restructures within HE enterprise and business development offices
- the desire to track and share impacts emerging from academic – business collaborative projects
- limited people resources to escalate an initial collaborative project to a longer term strategic relationship

The Board noted the work undertaken and the actions emerging.

AB suggested that Interface could provide a greater advocacy role to foster collaborations beyond the one-off initial engagement. Options to resource this could include seeking payment from companies either as a fee or percentage of product royalties. GB highlighted the successful Innovation Voucher programme that was delivered to companies in the northwest of England and offered to share his experiences on supporting pooled innovation vouchers.

**ACTION            Share experiences of pooled innovation vouchers (SD/GB)**

**ACTION            Work with each of the HEIs on the individual actions which emerged from the meetings (LG)**

## **6. ENTERPRISE AND SKILLS REVIEW PROGRESS (PAPER 4)**

The Board noted paper 4 which provided a summary of the key developments with respect to the Enterprise and Skills Review since November 2016.

SJ highlighted the current role of the *Innovation Scotland Forum Implementation Group* and the recent publication of the *Scotland Can Do: An Innovation Action Plan for Scotland* which encompasses a set of actions to improve Scotland's innovation performance. She emphasised the desire during Phase 2 of the Enterprise and skills review to ensure that the “no wrong door” approach by Interface within the innovation landscape is understood.

AB highlighted that Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, Paul Wheelhouse (MSP) will visit Sunamp in the coming weeks and will use this as an opportunity to promote Interface. Ambassadorial support of this nature from Board members is welcomed.

## **8. CITY DEALS AND INNOVATION – IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERFACE (PAPER 5)**

The Board noted the background on the further development of the City Region Deals in Scotland and the possible opportunities for Interface and the Universities to engage.

DC summarised her involvement with the *Inverness and Highland City Region Deal* which provided a good opportunity to accelerate business growth and innovation in this area of Scotland. A detailed business case has been prepared. While there is potentially a large role for Interface in the future, mechanisms for actual delivery were still being worked up.

It was agreed by the Board that where possible, Interface should be included at an early stage in all Scottish City Regional Deal operational processes to accelerate productive business links to academia and demonstrate impact of the knowledge exchange support available through the Universities.

**ACTION**        Ensure that Interface is included in the early stages of defining City Deal operational processes (All)

**ACTION**        Forward details of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal to PD (DC)

**ACTION**        Send details of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal to PD when it becomes available in March 2017 (GB)

## **9. PROGRESS UPDATE (Paper 6)**

The Board noted the paper outlining operational progress from Nov 2016-Feb 2017.

## **10. AOB**

The Board noted the following developments:-

- The first industry sectorial call for KTP projects has been announced for food and drink businesses
- Prof Sir Mark Walport has been selected as Chief Executive Designate of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI is the single strategic body which brings together the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

23rd May 2017 at 2pm

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm