

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD  
26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2019 AT 2:30PM AT ECCI**

**PRESENT:**

Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Dr Siobhán Jordan, Dr Colin Cooper (by phone), Professor Donald MacRae, David Howie, Johnny Mone, Stuart Bain, Yekemi Otaru, Marc Crothall.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

David McLay, Scottish Enterprise; Lorraine Thomson, Interface; Heather Rattray, Interface; Howell Davies, Interface; Valerie McDonald, Interface (minutes).

**1 APOLOGIES**

Dr George Baxter, Liz Connolly, Jim Watson, Gary Bannon, Jo Bisset, Dr Stuart Fancey, Brian Brown.

**2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board. She noted the apologies as outlined above. The Chair also welcomed Valerie McDonald the new Executive Administrator at Interface and David McLay from Scottish Enterprise who was deputising for Jim Watson at this meeting.

**3. ORAL UPDATES**

Professor Nolan updated the Board on the successful Scottish Knowledge Exchange awards held on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019. The Board noted the efficient format of the event and the positive feedback regarding the Interface service from those attending. They suggested that for future events the team should consider inviting greater number of businesses and representation from the investment community.

Dr Siobhán Jordan updated the Board on the following:

- Meetings have been held with Ivan McKee, Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation, Nora Senior, Chair of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board and Jackson Carlaw MSP, acting head of the Conservative Party in Scotland – all at their request. The discussions were wide ranging on many facets of University research, engagement by businesses, intellectual property and what more could be achieved by Interface.
- Referrals from external organisations in Q1 and Q2 were similar to previous years with the Business Gateway accounting for 14% of referrals.
- Brexit uncertainty continues to erode confidence in small businesses who are taking longer to make decisions.
- A soft launch of a new innovation voucher to support workforce innovation had taken place yesterday. This will hopefully enable greater take up of the scheme by further education colleges. JM welcomed the new development as a means to support SMEs to develop new skills and may lead to greater collaborations between further and higher education institutions.

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

The Board agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate reflection of the discussions held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018. They noted progress against the actions as outlined in the table.

The Board discussed a comparison of collaborative projects facilitated by Interface with Innovation Voucher awards and the Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey data. They noted it was very difficult to correlate the data with economic growth.

## **5. QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (PAPER 2)**

LT introduced Paper 2 which outlined the progress in the last quarter (November 2018-January 2019) for consideration by the Board. As outlined in the paper, it has been a busy quarter with much engagement across the 4 strategic priority areas. Highlights across business engagement team included: -

- Part or complete funding by industry was forthcoming for 63% of the 70 collaborative projects that were facilitated in Q2 including 3 Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.
- Renewable Parts in Argyll was a good example of a project that had grown into significant scale. From an initial matching by Interface with University of Strathclyde, the project to determine which wind turbine parts could feasibly be repaired/remanufactured the company secured funding from the Energy Technology Partnership, the Scottish Institute for Remanufacture and recently funding from Zero Waste Scotland. This allowed a new remanufacturing base to be established in Lochgilphead, a fragile rural location.
- There is a strong pipeline of potential projects in place for the next quarter. 62% of projects were from companies new to Interface and 38% were repeat business.

The Board acknowledged the significant progress on meeting the KPIs for the quarter. They noted the total cash value of the collaborative projects in Q2 and that this had also levered significant in-kind contributions from the industry partners. They queried the outcomes from the business led enquiries that had not progressed to an expertise search in Q1 and Q2 requesting further detail on the nature of these enquiries and why projects had not proceeded past the discussion stage.

**Action: Interface to provide further breakdown of the enquiries received from businesses that were not progressing further at this stage (30% of 528 enquires at end of Q2)** **LT**

## **6. OUTCOMES FROM REVIEW OF SECTOR ENGAGEMENT (Paper 3a)**

HD presented progress on the pilot Interface Sector Engagement activity since August 2016 (see powerpoint presentation). Based on the conclusions and lessons learned from the review of Interface Sector delivery pilot by partners (Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Government) the Board discussed the next steps. The Board commended the sector engagement team on the outputs from facilitating companies to collectively take forward collaborations with academia. Although the monetary value of the projects may not be considered transformational the underpinning activities were delivering significant impacts for SMEs.

The following points were noted in relation to the activities undertaken during the pilot programme:

- For the SME rich sectors of Tourism, Creative Industries and Food and drink it takes “a leap of faith” for companies to embrace innovation. Collaborating with academic partners helps de-risk innovation for individual and groups of companies.
- For example, in tourism, the collaborative ways of working that have been established by the Interface sector engagement team have been game changing in supporting a more open culture by businesses that are embracing innovation. Outputs from the multi-party

collaborative projects are essential to support the “story telling” narratives that influence companies to consider innovation.

- If the pilot project comes to an end momentum would be lost – in particular when the tourism industry needs to be more productive with potential loss of workforce due to Brexit. In addition, there was a need for the tourism sector to diversify their offering through innovation to attract more international tourists. This is a key priority area for the entire industry.
- The Interface sector engagement team are key to mobilising academics to support and shape the new tourism strategy that is being currently developed (beyond 2020) and to support the actions that have emerged from the recently launched Food tourism strategy.

SJ tabled *Paper 3b – options appraisal* for next phase of delivery to facilitate discussion by the Board on the future options. The Board noted the following:

- The existing business engagement team cannot absorb additional responsibilities as they are already delivering stretching targets established in the funded business plan AY2018-2023.
- Therefore, any further support with respect to follow on activity from the pilot would require additional Interface resources.
- A short summary could be submitted to the partners (Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Government) for consideration building on the lessons learned and where maximum impact could be delivered based on the current ecosystem.
- Feedback on the proposed activities could in turn be developed into a fully costed proposal.

In looking to the future, the Board had a wide-ranging discussion on future activities and considered the opportunities where Interface was ideally positioned.

## **7. HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION - NEW WAYS OF REACHING BUSINESSES (PAPER 4)**

HR introduced Paper 4 which provided an update on the 41 ideas generated by the Board in November 2018 in relation to new ways of inspiring businesses to engage with Interface. The Board acknowledged the significant work to summarise and prioritise the many ideas from the brain storming session. They agreed that a small sub group from the Board would undertake further prioritisation.

**Action: Subgroup to further review Paper 4 and provide recommendations to the board at the next meeting.**  
SB, SJ, HR, YO

## **8. FORWARD PLANNING - HOW THE ENTERPRISE AND SKILLS STRATEGIC BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACTS ON INTERFACE?**

The discussion was postponed until the next meeting on 28th May 2019. DH noted the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board were planning a fifth mission focused on innovation. The initial consultation would begin in July and he would ensure Interface were engaged in the process.

**Action: DH to ensure Interface engagement with the innovation mission of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board.**  
DH

**Action: Presentation on the actions relevant to Interface of the Enterprise and Skills Board Strategic plan at May 2019 meeting.**  
JW, DH, SF

## **9. AOB**

As there were no further items to discuss the Chair thanked everyone for attending.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 - 2:00 - 4:00pm

Assembly Room, Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LZ

**APPENDIX ONE ACTION TRACKER [as of 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019]**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action Agreed</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
1	19th Sept 2018	<b>MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING</b>	All Board members to suggest further topics for forward agendas	See proposed forward plan – Appendix 2	Ongoing discussion at each Board meeting	Board
2	13th November 2018	<b>RISK REGISTER, GDPR PROGRESS</b>	Review of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan		Discussion postponed until May 28 <sup>th</sup> 2019	JW, DH, SF
3	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	<b>QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING MONITORING &amp; EVALUATION FRAMEWORK</b>	To provide further breakdown of the enquiries received from businesses that were not progressing further at this stage (at end of Q2 30% of 528 enquiries).		Discussion with Board on May 28 <sup>th</sup> 2019	LH/SB
4	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	<b>HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION - NEW WAYS OF REACHING BUSINESSES</b>	Subgroup to further review Paper 4 and provide recommendations to the board at the next meeting	Subgroup to meet in next few weeks	Discussion with Board on May 28 <sup>th</sup> 2019	SB, SJ, HR, YO
5	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	<b>FORWARD PLANNING</b>	DH to ensure Interface engagement with the innovation mission of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board.		Update - May 28 <sup>th</sup> 2019	DH