MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD
28TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 10:30M AT ECCI, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

PRESENT:
Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Dr Siobhán Jordan, Professor Donald MacRae, Steven Hutcheon, Jim Watson, Dr Stuart Fancey, Brian Brown, Dr George Baxter.

IN ATTENDANCE:
From Interface: Shelley Breckenridge, Howell Davies, Lorraine Thomson and Laura Goodfellow.

1.   WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board.
She welcomed Steven Hutcheon (SH) to the Board from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), who will be attending in the place of David Howie for the foreseeable future.

2.   APOLOGIES

The Chair noted the following apologies from Board members: Dr Colin Cooper, Yekemi Otaru, Marc Crothall, Liz Connolly, Stuart Bain, Jo Bisset, Johnny Mone and Gary Bannon.

3.   ORAL UPDATES

Professor Andrea Nolan (AN) updated the Board on the recent discussions Universities Scotland had undertaken with Cabinet Secretaries in relation to the spending review and the now delayed Scottish Budget.

Stuart Fancey (SF) noted there was a real interest by Government in hearing case studies that demonstrated the impact of research on enterprise, businesses and policy making. George Baxter (GB) agreed that the current preparation of case studies for REF2021 was providing incredible insight into benefits of research to underpin policy improvements. GB noted his recent meeting with Bob Martin and Dr Ian Brotherston from Innovate UK which provided an opportunity to highlight the work of Interface and engagement with KTP.

ACTION
Arrange to meet with Bob Martin, Regional Manager for Innovate UK to update him on current Interface activity
LG

Dr Siobhan Jordan (SJ) provided updates on the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards (SKEA) which will be held on the 27th February 2020. Minister Ivan McKee will be attending this event and the keynote speaker is Hamish Torrie, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at The Glenmorangie Company. The company had collaborated with a number of academic institutions and spin-out companies from across Scotland.

SJ noted the recent mentions of Interface in Parliamentary debates on innovation (led by Minister Ivan McKee) and the citing of the Sunamp Ltd and University of Edinburgh partnership during the debate on science (led by Minister Richard Lochhead). The logic diagram developed by Scottish Government staff members is supporting the development of an evidence framework for the impact of the Scottish Government's investments in academic research and knowledge exchange. Two company case studies are being developed using the logic diagram pathway to explore the range of investments, outcomes and impacts.

ACTION
Share a copy with the Board of the evidence framework based on a logic model to map the potential routes to impact of SG's key research and KE investments
                                                            SJ

Develop two company case studies supported by Interface utilising the evidence framework

                                        SB/LG/BB

Laura Goodfellow (LG) and Howell Davies (HD) updated the Board on the recent meeting with Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop. The focus of this meeting was on how Interface supported the creative industries and tourism sectors
HD noted that through the advocacy of Marc Crothall (MC), funds may be released by Scottish Government to continue to support innovation in the tourism sector for a short term programme (6-12 months). He also noted that challenges from tourism businesses over the past year had been matched by the Interface team to academics drawn from 17 different disciplines; only 7% of the industry challenges were addressed by academics from tourism and hospitality.

HD also informed the Board that Interface will be presenting to the South of Scotland Economic Partnership Board[1] on the 23rd January 2020 following the submission of a short proposal. SF noted the importance of the Universities and Colleges as anchor institutions and an educational bridge in the South of Scotland. Jim Watson (JW) highlighted the desire by the new South of Scotland Enterprise agency to engage with partners and not to replicate existing services.

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 15th August 2019. They noted progress against the actions as outlined in the table (Appendix 1).

SF noted that the group leading on the Innovation Mission of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board met recently. This objective of this group is to review the value of public sector investment in innovation and Interface featured in the discussions.

The Board noted the update from Lorraine Thomson (LT) following the discussions with HIE at the annual year end presentation on progress against KPIs for the Highlands and Islands region. The number of high value collaborative projects was appreciated in the context of lower than targeted KPIs. As with any contract, alongside year on year monitoring, there would be a review at the end of the delivery period to gauge overall results.

5. Q1 PROGRESS REPORT AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (PAPER 2)

The Board acknowledged the progress by the team in the last three months to deliver against the targets as outlined in Paper 2. The Board clarified achieved targets in Q1 2019/2020 versus that undertaken in Q1 2018/2019 and suggested that an additional column be added to the table for comparison purposes. They queried the 16% of initial enquiries that were not progressing due to a variety of reasons and acknowledged the analysis undertaken by the team as presented in Paper 3.

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[1] https://www.gov.scot/groups/south-of-scotland-economic-partnership/

The Board also noted the success of companies that had been supported by Interface in scaling and levering investment following their initial engagement with Universities to prove early stage concepts.

Action:
Update Table 1 of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to clarify year on year progress
LG

6. LEAD CONVERSION AND SINGLE ENTRY POINT (SEP) (PAPER 3)

The Board noted the progress by the Interface team with the onboarding to the single digital entry point (SEP) and reasons as to why business led enquiries did not progress as outlined in Paper 3.

Key points from the discussion included:
- The considerable resources that had been required within the small Interface team to progress the SEP system often to tight deadlines.
- The significant technical skill sets within Interface working with the Scottish Enterprise development team to support the integration of Interface CRM system with the online system.
- That the first phase would provide a good opportunity to gauge business interest and to test optimal approaches from both Interface and the Universities and Colleges to service demand.
- The strong political drive for the SEP to reduce the perception of confusion among businesses with respect to public sector support.
- No real trends could be identified from extensive analysis of business led enquiries that had not converted to an expertise search.

7. HORIZON SCANNING (PAPER 5)

SJ noted the launch of The Muscatelli Report the previous day at the Royal Society of Edinburgh that had been attended by three Board members (SF, DMacR, SJ). She highlighted the key points made by Professor Muscatelli during the launch

- The 22 recommendations underpinned three shared threads:
    - A shared "national mission" focused on putting Scotland among the most innovative countries in the world.
    - The need to focus and collaborate on areas of strength across sectors and technologies which would fit with a mission-oriented approach to innovation that would in turn lever additional funding from external sources.
    - The requirement to "plot a course" that would be aware of the constraints e.g. skilled immigration, R&D tax incentives.

SF reiterated that the evidence-based report was compiled from analysis of literature, surveys and consultations. He highlighted that out of 22 recommendations, 15 of them mentioned the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Enterprise agencies and there was a clear focus on measurement and assessing value for money.

During the discussion that followed the Board noted:

- The importance of the report in taking an evidence-based approach to reflect the current situation.
- It was important to acknowledge that businesses drive innovation and that much innovation happens within businesses – therefore the voice of business and recommendations for businesses were lacking in the report.

- The opportunity for the Interface team to contribute a thought leadership paper on "*How innovation actually happens*" which could explore actual businesses attitudes and practices in driving and delivering innovation. The many case studies that had been developed by Interface could inform this publication.
- The requirement for further industry engagement to move forward recommendations.
- A number of Board members would like to support and help take forward the recommendations e.g. participate in action plan etc.

The Board welcomed the opportunity to discuss the report and its implications for Interface in more detail with Professor Muscatelli at the meeting on 25th February 2020.

Action:
Support SFC with action plan from recommendations from The Muscatelli Report
GB/JW/AN/DMacR/SJ

8. INTERFACE CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (PAPER 4)

The Board noted the slight adjustments to risks in the last twelve months and the ongoing reviews by the senior management team within Interface. The acknowledged the many factors that were out with the control of Interface including resource constraints within HE and FE.

9. PROGRESS ON BOARD RECCOMENDATIONS (PAPER 6)

The Board noted the progress of the six priority areas as outlined in Paper 6 and supporting their continuation with further updates being brought to the next meeting. Highlights since the last meeting included:

- We have recently refreshed the Interface Operating plan outlining the roles and responsibilities of Interface and the partner Universities, support delivering our strategic priorities of inspiring more businesses to partner with Scotland's Universities. The refreshed plan has been discussed at the recent review meetings the Interface team have held with each partner University to explore additional ways in which the Interface team can add value to partners.
- Stuart Bain will take forward a meeting with a selected senior HEI team to discuss barriers, enablers to explore deeper and wider relationships with Universities.
- The support to College Sector was ongoing but limited due to the constraints on resources – but recognising that more could be achieved.

Action:
Pilot a meeting with senior HEI team members   **SB supported by**
Interface team

10. RESULTS OF BOARD EFFECTIVNESS SURVEY (PAPER 7)

Through the results of the Board effectiveness survey the Board noted:
- The consensus that the meetings were expertly chaired with acknowledgement of the role of the Chair.
- The suggestions for forward agenda items including (i) deep dives to deal with specific topics, (ii) external speakers and (iii) supporting future strategic development.

- The interest in looking at additional funding opportunities for Interface that may be more commercially focused. Members observed that there is a need to balance resources dedicated to delivery against the ambitions targets and those required to develop more commercial offerings. This will be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.

11. AOB

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

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

25th February 2019 - 2:00 - 4:00pm   Conference room (ground floor), Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LZ.