MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD OF INTERFACE
15TH FEBRUARY 2016 AT 2:30PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION

PRESENT:
Professor Pete Downes, , Professor Donald MacRae, Professor Andrea Nolan, Dr. Siobhán Jordan, Dr. Stuart Fancey, David Ross, Dr. John Rogers, Jo Bisset, Bill McBride Hugh Edmiston, Kevin Collins, Donna Chisholm (*via telephone*)

IN ATTENDANCE:
Gary Bannon, Scottish Funding Council; Suzanne Dawson, Interface; Laura Goodfellow, Interface; Heather Alexander, Interface; Cherry Clark, Minutes.

APOLOGIES:
Alistair Cameron, Lynn Mann, Jim Watson.

1.   WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. All Members introduced themselves.

1.1   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 20th October 2015.

SJ noted the current status of actions arising as outlined in the table on page 8 of the papers.

2.   ORAL UPDATES
2.1   CHAIR
The Chair noted considerable engagement with Scottish Government over the past few months. This included discussions on the 2016/17 impending budget and its implications for Higher Education and the developments around the innovation landscape. The Chair noted the totality of the Scottish budget to support innovation and the interest of the Deputy First Minister on how this substantial investment is contributing to economic growth. Interface is actively engaged through its primary remit of support for SME engagement. With appropriate scale and ambition and delivering impact in a catalytic way, the longer term future of Interface as a highly valued integral component of Scotland's innovation strategy should be secure.

DR noted the scope for a coordinated approach of interested parties, building on the current strengths in Scotland to reduce the current clutter in the landscape. The Chair suggested the next steps would happen post-election and were then likely to move quickly.

The Board noted the importance of the Scotland Can Do and Innovation Scotland Fora in supporting discussions about how the innovation ecosystem might be simplified.

HE queried what was meant by innovation in the context of Interface and noted that through a landscape analysis of current players, key strengths in Scotland could be identified.

The Board agreed that a review of the definition of innovation and role of Interface would be helpful to frame future discussions. **ACTION SJ**

JB noted that the Interface approach offers simplicity from a small company point of view. The Board concluded the priority to increase the number of companies being supported through the Interface service.

2.2   DIRECTOR

The Director reported it had been a busy period since the last meeting. Key highlights included:

- Significant interest in the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards to be held on 25th February 2016 at RBS Conference Centre with over 300 registered
- Business engagement KPIs are on track
- 1000th innovation voucher has been awarded with work underway to establish consolidated data on impacts and outcomes from all the businesses supported through the programme.

She noted that SFC were still awaiting feedback on the confirmation of the European Structural Funds since the proposals were submitted in November 2015. This is a challenge for all strategic partners including SFC, SE, HIE and Visit Scotland.

SF requested that the Interface team update SFC about the impact of the continued delay on business planning. **ACTION SJ**

3.   DEMONSTRATION OF NEW PROMOTIONAL FACILITIES PLATFORM FOR SMEs

SJ noted the support from Interface for the Innovation Scotland Forum action plan. The new Specialist Facilities platform for SMEs which Heather Alexander would demonstrate to Board member was a key deliverable. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

The Board noted the following in relation to the Specialist Facilities platform:

- Use of more open language within the content on how Interface is simplifying the process. E.g. contracts, insurance, health & safety, introductions are directly negotiated between company and HEI
- That the platform outlined an exciting and ambitious promotional tool to engage with new businesses
- Important to ensure that the facilities and expertise were appropriate to the business requirements
- Marketing initiatives to ensure traffic is being targeted and driven to the website and optimising the website for search terms to ensure companies are finding the new resource

- Feedback on quality of leads / issues / problems / insight and input to the website, enquiry process and business relationship with the HEIs. This ongoing monitoring will be shared via the Universities Scotland working group
- Testing time for the site (suggest February to April 2016)
- 'Related page' be clearer in demonstrating these are case studies from companies that have used specialist facilities?
- Support for internal communications within the universities to spread the word and make academics aware that Interface is promoting these facilities
- Ensure this enhances the Innovation Centre activities.

4. STRATEGIC VISION – HOW MIGHT INTERFACE SCALE IMPACT TO BECOME CATALYTIC IN ITS INFLUENCE? (PAPER 2)

SJ introduced Paper 2 which outlined the areas where the impact of Interface needs to be catalytic rather than incremental by way of follow up from the discussions at the last Board meeting.

The Board noted:
- The need to focus on what is possible and eliminate activities that may not lead to significant impacts
- The focus on trialling new opportunities
- The emphasis that Interface is a core part of the overall innovation landscape
- Similar to other organisations, its reach is limited by staffing and resources
- The multiplier effect to reach more businesses can only materialise in alignment with others
- That the skills and talent base is a critical contribution by the HEIs
- Interface had proven core strengths in its cross sectoral approaches, a broad view of innovation, its reputation for diplomacy and integrity and its strong connections
- Any new activities should align with core strengths e.g. development of promotional Specialist Facilities platform
- The different strategies and approaches of Interface were important in the evolution and growth of the core model but it did not need to initiate a raft of new activities
- The digital strategy of Interface should be considered to review how this could accelerate the impact of Interface.   **ACTION SJ**

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. **ACTION SJ/LG/SD**

5. DEVELOPMENT OF SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS TEAM (PAPER 3)

SD introduced paper 3 by way of follow up from last Board meeting. She noted the catalytic element of the proposed sector relationship activity.

The Board were supportive of the proposed developments as outlined in the paper.

6.   ENGAGEMENT WITH INNOVATION CENTRES (PAPER 4)

SD introduced paper 4 which outlined the measurement framework for Interface engagement with Innovation Centres.

BMcB noted that he would highlight the measurement framework at the forthcoming Innovation Chairs meeting. He emphasised the need for mutual working and co-operation between the Innovation Centres and Interface to maximise impacts and outcomes.   **ACTION BMcB**

7.   GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)

SJ introduced paper 5 outlining progress with respect to the governance of Interface.

The Board discussed:
- From the proposal, Interface governance would be in line with that of the Innovation Centres and this was a logical step in the evolution of Interface
- The Board would engage to support success and strategic vision within the organisation rather than limiting input to helpful advice
- That the Board was not pursuing a separate legal status but in moving to a more independent role. Unintended consequences should be reviewed
- That the title of 'Governing Board' should be reviewed in light of the above considerations
- Further consideration was required as to whether the funders continued to be full members as key stakeholders rather than having observer position which would be required if the desire was for a formal governing Board. Their position as full members will ensure an active role in the future of Interface
- Desire to ensure continuity from University of Edinburgh /ERI Limited with regards to representation on the Board.

The Board concluded that the final recommendations with respect to roles and title of the Board would be signed off at the next meeting.   **ACTION SJ/PD**

8.   INTERFACE RISK REGISTER (PAPER 6)

SD introduced paper 6 which outlined the list of identified corporate risks. The Board agreed that this was a good start and should be reviewed annually. They suggested rescoring the change in risk levels as a consequence of the mitigating actions.   **ACTION SD/SJ**

9.   PROGRESS UPDATE (PAPER 7)

SJ noted that NCUB was developing an online platform called Konfer and this will be launched in the coming months.

10.   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further points were raised and the meeting closed at 4:30pm.

Interface Advisory Board - Action Tracker

Actions from Previous Meetings

Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
15th 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.	Paper 2 and discussion at meeting led by Roddy McDonald from Scottish Government	underway	- Siobhán Jordan
15th February 2016	2. ORAL UPDATES 2.2 DIRECTOR	SF requested that the Interface team update SFC as to the impacts of the continued delay on business planning.	Letter sent to SFC in March 2016	Completed	- Siobhán Jordan
15th 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.	Consultation in place across the Interface team and a paper will be included in future Board meeting	underway	- Siobhán Jordan
15th 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.	All of the actions reviewed with the Interface managers and will be prioritised in conjunction with the delivery plan for AY2016-17. Delivery plan will be completed by end of June 2016.	underway	- Siobhán Jordan - Laura Goodfellow - Suzanne Dawson
15th 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.	Update required from BmcB		- Bill McBride
15th February 2016	7. GOVERNANCE OF INTERFACE (PAPER 5)	The Board concluded that the final recommendations with respect to roles and title of the Board would be signed off at the next meeting.	See paper 5	underway	- Siobhán Jordan - Pete Downes
15th February 2016	8. INTERFACE RISK REGISTER (PAPER 6)	Rescore the change in risk levels as a consequence of the mitigating actions.	See paper 8	completed	- Suzanne Dawson - Siobhán Jordan
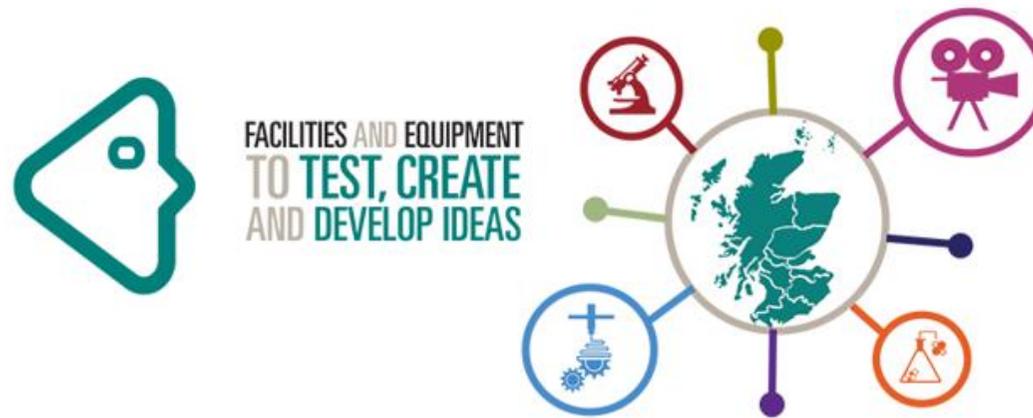
Background

- **RCDG working group**
- **Interface chosen to host the online platform**
- **Use of university facilities comes as a service package**
- **Unique Selling Point – academic and technical expertise**

- **Not an exhaustive list of all university facilities**
- **Interface to lead by example**
- **Agreement of terminology, breakdown and design**
- **Business & stakeholder feedback**

University Facilities Showcase

http://www.interface-online.org.uk/how-we-can-help/university-assets/specialist-facilities

Marketing Plan

- HEI Quarterly update w/c 15th Feb – launch details

- Launch at Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards, February 25th
    - Scotsman article February 26th
    - Interface newsletter February 26th
    - Promotion through social media

- Secondary launch w/c April 11th
    - Video launch
    - Partner (HEI's) & Stakeholders (SE, HIE, Business Gateway etc.) announcement in quarterly emails
    - Press Release
    - Social media & blog

- On-going marketing communications through monthly newsletters, social media, blogs, case studies, events, stakeholder and HEI partners

- ULab