

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD**  
**15<sup>TH</sup> August 2019 AT 3:00PM AT ST LEONARD'S HALL, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH**

**PRESENT:**

Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Dr Siobhán Jordan, Professor Donald MacRae, Dr Colin Cooper, Johnny Mone, Stuart Bain, Yekemi Otaru, Marc Crothall, Liz Connolly, Jim Watson, Jo Bisset, Dr Stuart Fancey, Brian Brown.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Nida Broughton, Behavioural Insights (Guest speaker).

From Interface: Shelley Breckenridge, Howell Davies, Jane Findlay, Lorraine Thomson and Laura Goodfellow.

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board. She noted the apologies.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Dr George Baxter, David Howie, Gary Bannon

**3. ORAL UPDATES**

Professor Andrea Nolan outlined that this meeting was an ideal opportunity for the Board to review the performance over the past year and reflect on what worked well and what could be improved. She noted that the annual survey of effectiveness of the Board would be issued in the next few weeks and encouraged Board members to complete the review.

Dr Siobhán Jordan welcomed the opportunity to have an open discussion with the Board on the target driven approach of the last twelve months. She highlighted the current degree of uncertainty in the business base and that the Interface team were constantly seeking additional efficiencies and effectiveness.

She noted the ongoing review of costs across the organisation and highlighted the savings that had been identified through shared occupancy of the Potterrow office with a not for profit organisation The Soil Association. The organisation was funded by Scottish Government. Through co-location additional opportunities will be explored including joint responses to tenders and supporting the aim of the Soil Association to access greater research from academic institutions across Scotland. The Board agreed with this approach and welcomed the opportunity to enhance efficiencies and minimise disruption to the team.

**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 28th May 2019. They noted progress against the actions as outlined in the table (Appendix 1).

The Board noted the wide range of reviews and reports that were currently underway and the opportunity to hear the recommendations of relevance to Interface at future Board meetings. The reviews included: -

- Prof Sir Anton Muscatelli's review of the impact Universities in Scotland create through working with business
- Audrey Cumberford and Paul Little's review of the impact Colleges in Scotland create through working with business
- The Innovation mission review by Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (led by Stephen Boyle)

JW highlighted the importance of demonstrating impacts against key Government priorities including climate change through widely sharing the relevant case studies from businesses supported by Interface.

**Actions:**

**Prof Sir Anton Muscatelli to be invited to November 2019 Board meeting**

**AN/SJ**

**Stephen Boyle to be invited to the February 2020 Board meeting**

**SJ/ SF**

## **5. END OF YEAR SUMMARY PRESENTATION & Q4 REPORT (PAPER 2)**

The Board acknowledged significant progress in the last twelve months as outlined in Paper 2 and the tabled end of year monitoring and evaluation report.

During the presentation of the year end results the Board noted: -

- The good progress against the AY2018/19 targets and the 100% satisfaction rating by client companies which would be the envy of other organisations.
- The complexity and the sophistication of projects coming through, particularly in the Highlands and Islands region.
- The level of impacts recorded by businesses following the completion of collaborative projects which demonstrated high return on investment from Interface. Safeguarding of jobs in turn leads to income generation and further commercial impacts.
- The many forms of company, societal and economic impacts that have arisen from the collaborative projects. For example,
  - a KTP generates £8 return for every £1 invested,
  - the significant impacts for businesses from student work-based learning which can lead to deeper engagement as evidenced by the Elite Bedding Co. case study where a University of Strathclyde DMEM (Design, Manufacturing and Engineering Management) student project has led to a successful KTP application. The company will continue to invest in R&D to develop new products.
- What further impacts could be delivered by multiplying Interface service by a factor of 10?

The Board acknowledged their strong support for the team. The advocated the progress made during AY2018/19 against the ambitious targets, the effective and efficient delivery to gain maximum impacts and the excellent reputation of the team across Scotland. The key highlights presented by the team will form the basis of the Annual review which is currently being compiled ready for publication in October 2019.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN AY2019/20 (PAPER 3)**

The Board noted the plans for AY2019/2020 as outlined in Paper 3 against the 4 priority areas. They agreed that a further discussion should be held with Highlands and Islands Enterprise with respect to the proposed AY2019/2020 targets and whether they were achievable in light of the challenges in the region's business base.

### **Action:**

**Further discussion with Highlands and Islands Enterprise on AY2019/2020 targets**

**LT/SJ/DH**

## **7. PROGRESS ON BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS TO INSPIRE MORE BUSINESSES (PAPER 4)**

The Board noted the progress of the six priority areas as outlined in Paper 4 and supported the continuation with further updates being brought to the next meeting.

JM and LC noted the desire to further engage with industry partners to help inform how best Interface could enable greater University / College collaboration. The emerging regional skills plans may help to inform optimal approaches.

YO noted the balance between deeper engagement with businesses (delivering a niche service) versus wider engagement approaches that many end up catering for everyone but satisfying no one.

AN emphasised the importance to identify and reduce hurdles in the way of successful academic to business collaborations.

The Board noted the exploration of greater collaboration with KTN and agreed that this would be progressed when the new CEO was in place.

SB introduced the update on deeper and wider relationships with Universities and Colleges which provided an exemplar example of the Interface support to University of Edinburgh. It was agreed that this paper was very useful in enabling wider learnings to be shared with Universities Scotland Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

**Action:**

**Continue to progress recommendations to inspire more businesses ahead of the next meeting - ALL**

An update was provided on the progress and engagement with the proposed Scotland wide single digital entry point. This project was established following the Enterprise and Skills Review which highlighted the opportunity to declutter the public sector landscape and provide a clearer route for businesses across Scotland to access support. Business Gateway, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland have together developed an early prototype of one, single digital entry point.

**8. AOB**

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

**9. GUEST SPEAKER – NIDA BROUGHTON, BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM**

The Chair welcomed the guest speaker Nida Broughton from the Behavioural Insights team and a copy of the presentation will be made available to Board members.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

28<sup>th</sup> November 2019 - 2:00 - 4:00pm Conference room (ground floor), Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LZ.