MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD
1st November 2016 AT 2:00PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION

PRESENT:
Professor Donald MacRae (chair), Dr. Siobhán Jordan, Donna Chisholm, Dr. Stuart Fancey, Alistair Cameron, Lynn Mann, William McBride, Professor Andrea Nolan, Dr John Rogers, Kevin Collins, Andrew Bissell and Marc Crothall

IN ATTENDANCE:
Gary Bannon, Scottish Funding Council; Suzanne Dawson, Interface; Laura Goodfellow, Interface; Karen Cameron, Interface (minutes).

1.   WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board. Professor Donald MacRae also welcomed Andrew Bissell and Marc Crothall who had joined the Interface Strategic Board.

2.   APOLOGIES
Professor Pete Downes, Jo Bisset and Jim Watson.

3.   ORAL UPDATES - **Dr. Siobhán Jordan**

Annual Review of Interface for AY2015/16
The Interface Annual Review 2015-2016 has recently been published and hard copies were made available to all Board members.

In looking ahead, the delivery plan for AY2016-17 is underpinned by three priorities: -
- Enhanced engagement with all of Scotland's Universities and Research Institutes
- Delivering impact to the economy and society
- Digital strategy

Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards
Hosted by Interface on 21st February 2017, the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards will build on previous years. The Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, Paul Wheelhouse MSP, has agreed to participate.   The event will include a showcase from academic institutions to businesses, workshops with businesses who have achieved success through connections made via Interface along with the presentation of the awards in five categories. SJ highlighted that the submitted applications from HEIs may become future REF 2021 impact case studies.

Science and Innovation Audit
Interface participated in the UK Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy sponsored Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Science & Innovation Audit. KC provided background on behalf of University of Edinburgh and intimated that the launch of the report is due to take place on 3rd November 2016 after which the report will be made public. SF highlighted that there are two to three applications for audits currently in preparation led by Scottish Institutions.

Follow up from the August Board Meeting
Interface welcome SFC's confirmation of funding for the next 12 months. SF highlighted that there were ongoing discussions taking place throughout the Spending Review period but SFC are confident that they will continue to be able to support Interface going forward.

Review of Sector Focus

The *Interface Food & Drink* Reflections document was circulated to members with the papers. AC suggested that Interface's new sector focus and the impacts emerging from the continuation of Common Interest Groups was reviewed over a longer period of time. This should include reporting on overall trends in support of the food and drink sector to monitor any potential impacts from the reduction of resources through the completion of the Interface food and drink project.

Action:
Include review of Interface's Sector Engagement impacts at a future Board meeting   **SD**

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

MINUTES

All Board members agreed the minutes were an accurate record of the last meeting with the following changes noted: -

- Page 5, paragraph 2 - City Deal reference is to Highlands Council and not the Highlands and Islands.
- Page 4, paragraph 2 - Networking dinner was for the Innovation Centre Chairs and University Principals.

Action Points of the previous meeting

The Action Points were noted with the following points raised: -

- The development of a digital strategy is a key priority for Interface and SJ has a meeting scheduled with Chris van der Kuyl on the 17th November 2016. Interface's Digital strategy is scheduled for discussion at the next Board meeting on 7th February 2017.
- SJ has a meeting scheduled with the new ERI CEO, Dr George Baxter. KC used the opportunity to reinforce the continuing relationship between the University of Edinburgh and Interface.

5. TRENDS ARISING FROM INTERFACE SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES (presentation)

LG presented the trends arising from Interface support to businesses from AY2015-16. There was a lengthy discussion around the following key points: -

- The Board noted the number of "untouched" companies and asked how many referrals are from new companies per month.

Action: Analyse the data on companies who receive the monthly Interface newsletter but who have had no collaborative project facilitated by Interface   **LG**

- Interface is focused on reaching businesses with no track record or experience of engaging with HEIs and has systems in place to more effectively triage all requests in order that the most appropriate enquiries are sent to universities.

- While the SE Wider Innovation Team is generating referrals to Interface, an underlining concern was expressed around the reduction in the number of referrals from other parts of SE over the previous twelve months.

Action: Respond to the reduced levels of referrals from dedicated innovation teams within SE at the next Board meeting   **JW**

- The Board noted that the many partners delivering innovation on the landscape offered the greatest opportunity for referrals to enable a catalytic response from Interface. HIE account manage many small businesses and accessing academic support via Interface is "hard wired" into their tool kit.
- Interface is particularly keen to stretch the follow-on activity target to 15% from the current 8.2% which would indicate greater transition from transactional small-scale projects to strategic relationships.
- Responding to a query on whether Interface gets recognition for business to business linkages, SJ explained that this is not currently included in KPIs but could be monitored from 1st August 2016.
- From the recent series of HEI engagement meetings, concerns had been raised about the reduction in resources within HEI / RI research and enterprise offices to undertake KE support and prepare Innovation Voucher applications.

Action - Board to receive feedback on the series of HEI engagement meetings currently being held with particular reference to any barriers. **LG**

6. RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM PROFESSOR GRAEME REID'S REVIEW OF THE INNOVATION CENTRE PROGRAMME (Paper 2)

SF updated the Board that the SFC Council recommended at their meeting on 27th October 2016 to respond to all the Reid review recommendations and to take forward a plan in partnership with key stakeholders.

The Board welcomed Paper 2 and it was agreed that any response would be pertinent to the next phase of the Enterprise & Skills Review. Interface has a very important and distinctive neutral role to help businesses navigate through the HEI landscape.

The Board re-emphasised that the relationship between the Innovation Centres and Interface is evolving and should be further developed as both have different remits but work well together.

Action - Compose a response from the Board to the Scottish Government for consideration in the 2nd phase of the Enterprise & Skills Review. This is to reflect the content and Board's discussion of papers 2 & 4. The draft paper should be circulated to Board members for review. **SJ**

7. GOVERNANCE – SELF-EVALUATION OF BOARD (Paper 3)

There was a good response to the self-evaluation questionnaire which was sent to Board members and following discussion of Paper 3 unanimous agreement there were no identified areas of significant concern.

It was agreed that the Board should congratulate Prof Pete Downes on successfully chairing the Interface Board for the last three years and to invite him to continue in the role for a second three-year term.

Action – Contact Prof Pete Downes to inform him of Board discussion **Donald MacRae**

In discussion Board members agreed there was considerable optimism and opportunities for Interface and therefore the team should remain confident in their outlook. However, there was a need to ensure all partner agencies were working in co-operation.

8. REVIEW OF ENTERPRISE & SKILLS AGENCIES (Paper 4)

It was agreed that the Board should address their comments to the next phase of the Enterprise & Skills review in line with the discussion of Item 6. The proposed paper should highlight the amount which needs to be done in some sectors to encourage basic levels of innovation demand and the need for recognition of Interface's role in the innovation landscape.

The Board highlighted the opportunity that the second phase of the review could have in helping to reshape innovation and skills support to businesses.

DC welcomed the consideration of Business Gateway in phase 2 and the recognition of the distinctive nature of the Highlands and Islands region.

9. OPERATIONAL PROGRESS UPDATE (Paper 5)

Paper was noted by Board members.

10. UPDATED INTERFACE RISK REGISTER (Paper 6)

Revised Risk Register was noted by Board Members.

11. AOB

None

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7th February 2017 at 2pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm