

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD
8th MAY 2018 AT 2:00PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION

PRESENT:

Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Dr Siobhán Jordan, Dr Stuart Fancey, Professor Donald MacRae, Lynn Mann, Donna Chisholm, George Baxter, Jim Watson, Alistair Cameron.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Gary Bannon, SFC, Suzanne Dawson, Interface; Laura Goodfellow, Interface; Laura Hegarty, Interface (minutes).

1. APOLOGIES

Marc Crothall, Dr. John Rogers, Jo Bisset

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

3. ORAL UPDATES

Professor Andrea Nolan noted that 40 applications had been received from the open recruitment for new Interface Strategic Board Members. From these applications we are seeking to fill up to 5-6 positions that are currently vacant or will become vacant in the coming months. She also advised that she would meet the Interface team on 15th May at the Interface offices over an informal lunch.

Dr Siobhán Jordan updated the Board on the following:

- We have a 95% response rate from Universities for all industry led expertise searches we have issued during this academic year which has increased from 92% in the previous 12 months. This was indicative of the quality and relevance of the proposals that the team had translated from businesses.
- The redesigned website was launched on 2nd May. User experience was forefront of mind throughout the design discussions alongside full integration with the CRM system.
- Extensive work is underway by the team to ensure that Interface is compliant with the new GDPR regulations coming into force on 25th May 2018.
- International interest continues, and we hosted David Noble as a visiting fellow from Southern Cross University in April 2018 who was researching collaborative competencies from a sub set of the companies and academics that we have assisted.

Board members commented on the very successful and well run Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards event in February. There was agreement that the awards have gained a lot of prestige and are considered very worthwhile recognition by companies. The new SFC chair Dr. Mike Cantlay was in attendance along with Minister Paul Wheelhouse and a very positive impression was forged.

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

The Board agreed that the minutes (Paper 1) were a true and accurate reflection of the discussions held on 8th February 2018. They noted the progress of the actions on the tracker and that all were now completed.

5. UPDATE ON INTERFACE FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN – FUNDING AND KPIS (PAPER 2)

Siobhan tabled Paper 2 which has been a work in progress with ongoing feedback being received from funders in the days leading up to the Board meeting. A sub group of the Board had met with funders on 14th March 2018 to discuss the optimal KPIs and objectives for delivery of the Interface service.

The Board agreed with the proposed KPIs as outlined in Paper 2 which had considered the desire to balance priority 1 [one off transaction] and priority 2 [sustained and multiple interactions] outcomes and a year on year growth of 2.5% due to efficiency savings albeit with reduced headcount.

The Board noted the following: -

- Funders are very close to finalising funding approval with agreement to be confirmed and funding offers issued by the end of May.
- A degree of flexibility needed to be built into the KPI figures to enable a range of outcomes and to recognise regional differences in line with the place agenda.
- An annual tolerance range for the KPIs [as used in other public-sector programmes] could be adopted by the Board to review the progress and help to explore the elements of variation that will occur in “real life”. This would allow consideration of the highs and lows of different economic situations over the next five years that are out with Interface’s control. The tolerance ranges would be reviewed annually and adjusted by the Board if needed.
- The ultimate desire was that over the next 5 years the number of companies that self-fund collaborations with academia increase and are no longer dependant on public funding to forge academic collaborations.

Action:

Update the proposed KPI table in Appendix 4 of Paper 2 to include definitions of Priority 1 and Priority 2 outcomes
SJ/LG

Liaise with Universities Scotland RCDG with respect to the agreed priorities and KPIs so that there is a common understanding of the role of HEIs in supporting delivery
SJ/AN

Agree with funders the annual KPI tolerance range to account for factors that are out with Interface’s control.
SJ/LG/GB/AN

6. ENHANCING EFFICIENCIES AND EFFECTIVENESS IN INTERFACE (PAPER 3)

Siobhán introduced Paper 3 which outlined the steps being taken to maximise efficiencies across Interface and to enhance back-office processes.

Action:

Table 1 of Paper 3 outlining areas of further efficiencies to be updated with timescales for the next board meeting
SJ/LG/SD

Donna Chisholm and Jim Watson updated the Board on the current business transformation programmes underway in HIE & SE to enhance internal productivity. In particular the programmes had the potential to revolutionise the current significant compliance and audit burden necessary to demonstrate robust decision making.

The Board noted the desire for 24/7 accessibility but that businesses prefer to talk to people. The face to face contact where Interface excels can be supported by a set of tools to support agile decision making.

7. BUSINESS AND ACADEMIC IMPACTS FROM COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS (PAPER 4)

Laura introduced Paper 4, which outlined the range of outcomes and impacts from recent Customer service journey surveys.

The Board acknowledged that if an academic – business collaboration is forged well at the outset better impacts will ensue. They noted the challenge for a business to relate specific impacts to a single product [e.g. Innovation Voucher] when their relationship with an academic partner has been multi-faceted [eg. Innovation voucher, Follow on innovation voucher, work-based learning, KTP etc]

8. FUNDING FOR GROUP COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY (PAPER 5)

Suzanne introduced Paper 5 which had been prepared following discussion at the Interface Strategic Board on 8th February 2018.

GB noted there is a challenge between the limited budget available for Innovation Vouchers and accommodating the many needs of businesses to collaborate with academia and there was a reluctance to create any new ring-fenced fund exclusive for multi-party collaborations. The Board encouraged the team to continue to engage with a wide pool of potential funding organisations including Innovate UK and charities.

9. PROGRESS UPDATE (PAPER 6)

The Board noted the progress update as outlined in Paper 6.

10. AOB

In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked the outgoing member Alistair Cameron for his invaluable contributions and wished him well in taking up an appointment on the South of Scotland Economic Partnership Board.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 19th September 2018 - 2:00-8:00pm including networking dinner.

Nelson Room, St Leonard's Hall, Pollock Halls, 18 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, EH16 5AY

APPENDIX ONE ACTION TRACKER [as of 1st May 2018]

No.	Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
1	8th Feb 2018	MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS	Welcome input from the Interface team in relation to potential companies that could be invited in specific regions including Dingwall, Orkney, Oban, Kilmarnock and Dumfries.	Company lists sent to Lynn	Action closed	Executive
2	8th Feb 2018	PROGRESS ON EKOS AND BIGGAR REVIEWS	Produce an evidence-based paper outlining the current challenges and recommendations for collaborative group funding products	Paper produced	Agenda item for meeting	Executive
3	8th Feb 2018	UPDATE ON INTERFACE FIVE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN	Sub-group formed to determine the optimal KPIs and objectives for delivery of the Interface service in the next five years	Sub group formed and met on 14 th March 2018	Action closed	AN, DMacR, JR and AC
4	8th Feb 2018	UPDATE ON INTERFACE FIVE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN	To consider current cashflow status for Interface in line with decisions being concluded by March 2018 for the longer-term funding	Details agreed with Edinburgh Innovations	Action closed	SJ and Gary B
5	8th Feb 2018	AOB	Submit topics for discussion at future meetings	Ongoing action	Forward plan of topics will be discussed at Sept meeting	Board