

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD**  
**13<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2018 AT 2:00PM AT EDINBURGH CENTRE FOR CARBON INNOVATION**

**PRESENT:** Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Dr Siobhán Jordan, Brian Brown, Dr Colin Cooper, Professor Donald MacRae, David Howie, Johnny Mone, Liz Connolly, Stuart Bain, Yekemi Otaru, Dr Stuart Fancey, Jim Watson.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Suzanne Dawson, Interface; Shelley Breckenridge, Interface; Laura Hegarty, Interface (minutes); Lindsay Millar, Interface (minutes), Dr Joe Marshall, NCUB.

**1 APOLOGIES** - Dr George Baxter, Marc Crothall, Jo Bisset, Gary Bannon.

**2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board. She noted the apologies as outlined above. She welcomed Dr Joe Marshall, CEO of National Council for Universities and businesses who would provide a brief presentation to the Board.

**3. ORAL UPDATES**

Professor Andrea Nolan updated the Board on the following:

- The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced the £5m investment over the next 5 years from SFC, SE and HIE at the travelling Cabinet meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018.
- The Interface Annual Review had been published in early November and provided an excellent demonstration of the work undertaken during AY2017-18.

Dr Siobhán Jordan updated the Board on the following:

- She had presented evidence on engagement with Business Gateway to the Scottish Parliament Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee on 13th November. 14% of all referrals to Interface come from Business Gateway teams across Scotland and the opportunity to provide evidence allowed the Interface team to reflect on what worked well and what could be improved.
- The team have not observed any notable reduction in engagement with businesses due to uncertainty around Brexit. However, we share the concerns of all Universities around the uncertainties with respect to key academics and accessible skills.
- The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards will be held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019. The deadline for applications is the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and planning is going very well.

**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 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018. They noted the progress of the actions on the tracker and that all were now completed.

**5. PRESENTATION BY DR. JOE MARSHALL – National Centre for Universities and Businesses (NCUB)**

Joe provided a presentation on the trends in University - Business Engagement to stimulate discussion. Key points included: -

- Universities can play a pivotal role in supporting the innovation agenda but also need to understand business drivers.

- There is a desire by stakeholders to move to multifaceted strategic partnerships with industry. Corporate businesses have significant experience in this area, but it may not be the starting point for an SME.
- The online brokerage tool Konfer has adopted a data driven approach to harvest information from every University in the UK. However, it is only as good as the data that is openly available online. This tool complements the work that Interface undertakes. It is well recognised that the Interface team are skilled in refining the questions that businesses ask of Universities so that a “Google like search” through Konfer can be vastly refined to an “Amazon like search” by the skills of the Interface team.

The Board noted the following:

- 75% of Research & Development within the UK is undertaken by approximately 400 companies. What is the best way to reach the other 5 million SMEs in the UK?
- The recent Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) report<sup>1</sup> highlighted the opportunities for innovation within all sectors including the services sector
- Nurturing innovation within clusters of companies, regionally or sectorally, can yield a step change in innovation but this approach takes time
- Profiling the “perfect SME candidate” can help to understand target markets e.g. *Where do they hang-out, What motivates them?*

## **6. HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION - NEW WAYS OF REACHING BUSINESSES (PAPER 2)**

The Board split into two groups to consider the questions outlined in Paper 2 “To inspire more businesses to partner with Scotland’s Universities”

## **7. SUPPORTING COLLEGE LED INNOVATION (PAPER 3)**

Siobhán introduced Paper 3 updating the Board on the last 12 months working with Further Education colleges across Scotland.

The Board noted the opportunities to expand the scope and impact of the Innovation Voucher programme by a broader interpretation of innovation support beyond the current anticipated product/process/service outputs. Supporting workforce or workplace innovation would realise greater engagement between colleges and businesses. The Board welcomed the range of opportunities outlined in the paper to build on the current support to Colleges and noted the limitations within the current AY2018-2023 Interface funding envelope.

## **8. ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE PARTNER HEIs (PAPER 4)**

Shelley introduced Paper 4 which had been prepared in response to discussions at the September Board meeting.

The Board noted the following:

- The Interface impartial service is highly valued by all HEIs and the conversion from leads to discussions is very encouraging
- Incorporating industry led projects into undergraduate and post graduate course curricula across the universities is helping to deepen relationships with businesses and support transferable skills for graduates.

The Board were keen to understand if the trends on facilitated collaborations were similar to those of Innovation Voucher submissions from each of the HEIs. They suggested that the Interface data be

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/innovation-report-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

benchmarked the against national University returns of The Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI)<sup>2</sup> survey data of engagement with SMEs.

**Action: Undertake comparison of collaborative projects facilitated by Interface with Innovation Voucher and Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey data SB/ SJ**

#### **8. UPDATE ON EVALUATION OF SECTORS (ORAL)**

Dr Stuart Fancey provided an update on the evaluation of the Sector Pilot Programme which will review progress against the original objectives as set out in the approval paper. A panel which will include representatives from SFC, SE, HIE and Scottish Government will undertake the review and present conclusions to the Interface Strategic Board’s February 2019 meeting.

#### **9. QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (PAPER 5)**

Siobhan introduced Paper 5 for consideration by the Board which included the Q1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework report. The Board noted the phenomenal amount of work undertaken by the team during the quarter which was reflected in the number of leads generated and conversion to successful outcomes. They commended the team on the strong start made to the yearly targets.

#### **10. RISK REGISTER, GDPR PROGRESS (PAPER 6)**

Suzanne introduced Paper 6 which outlined the corporate risk register. The Board noted the slight adjustments to risks in the last twelve months and the ongoing reviews by the senior team within Interface. It was suggested that the ongoing relevance of the Interface value proposition be considered for inclusion. It was agreed that the corporate risk register continue to be reviewed internally by the Interface senior team on a six-monthly basis. The Board noted the practices in place to ensure ongoing compliance with GDPR legislation.

**Action: Add “Consideration of Value Proposition” to risk register for review by Interface Management and include six-monthly review of the corporate risk register in Interface Managers’ meeting forward plan**  
**SD**

#### **11. AOB**

David Howie suggested a joint presentation from SE, HIE and SFC on the key recommendations emerging from the recently published Enterprise and Skills Board Strategic plan that were relevant for Interface at the next meeting. As there were no further items to discuss, the Chair thanked all for attending.

**Action: Presentation on the actions relevant to Interface of the recently published Enterprise and Skills Board Strategic plan at February 2019 meeting**  
**JW, DH, SF**

#### **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019 - 2:00-4:00pm Assembly Room, Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LZ.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/providers/business-community>

**APPENDIX ONE ACTION TRACKER [as of December 2018]**

No.	Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
1	19th Sept 2018	<b>MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING</b>	All Board members to suggest further topics for forward agendas	See proposed forward plan – Appendix 2	Ongoing discussion at each Board meeting	Board
2	13th November 2018	<b>ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE PARTNER HEIs</b>	Undertake comparison of collaborative projects facilitated by Interface with Innovation Voucher and Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey data	Comparison details to be provided at next Board meeting		SB/ SJ
3	13th November 2018	<b>RISK REGISTER, GDPR PROGRESS</b>	Presentation on the actions relevant to Interface of the recently published Enterprise and Skills Board Strategic plan at February 2019 meeting	Proposed agenda item		JW, DH, SF
4	13th November 2018	<b>RISK REGISTER, GDPR PROGRESS</b>	Add “Consideration of Value Proposition” to risk register for review by Interface Management every 6 months	Completed	Reviewed every 6 months	SD