

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD
28TH MAY 2019 AT 2PM AT ECCI, Edinburgh

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

From Interface - Shelley Breckenridge, Jane Findlay, Howell Davies, Valerie McDonald (minutes).

1. APOLOGIES

Dr Colin Cooper, 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.

3. ORAL UPDATES

Professor Nolan updated the Board on the recent research and innovation workshop in Berlin which promoted Scotland's strengths to international partners. There are plans to repeat this workshop format at other investment and innovation hubs including Dublin, Paris, London and Brussels.

Dr Siobhán Jordan updated the Board on the opportunity for Interface to represent all Universities and Colleges in the single digital entry point which is currently being developed as one of the recommendations from the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board. She noted that a data sharing agreement would be put in place with Scottish Enterprise who were leading on the technology development on behalf of the other agencies. JW noted the objective of the single digital entry point was to simplify business customer journeys and to reach businesses who had not previously engaged with public sector support.

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 26th February 2019. They noted progress against the actions as outlined in the table and appendices.

5. QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (PAPER 2)

The Board members noted that the Q3 activity was less than that targeted but were very supportive of the high-quality projects that have been brokered e.g. KTPs. They recognised the current business environment is uncertain, that transactions are taking longer to convert, and other business support organisations are experiencing similar trends with a decline in demand reflected in a decrease in inward investment and international trade. They recognised the efforts that the team make in inspiring businesses to engage with Interface and noted the mitigating actions underway (e.g. the re-engagement with companies, engaging with professional services for advocacy and targeting Business Gateway and other networks).

MC noted the decrease in domestic spend was impacting the tourism sector with customers taking a longer time to commit to purchases. JB summarised that now was the time to be doubling down on

efforts to reach businesses and the Board should have confidence in the ability of the team to deliver due to the Interface reputation, skills and expertise.

6. UPDATE ON SECTOR ENGAGEMENT PILOT IN THREE SME RICH SECTORS

SF confirmed that short proposal submitted to the SFC and other funders for continuity of the sector engagement programme of work could not be taken forward due to funding pressures. DH and JW noted that discretionary expenditure was limited but this should not be viewed as a negative reflection on the achievements of the team during the pilot phase. MC noted the importance of the Interface sector engagement team's support to the food tourism strategy and the need for ongoing support from Interface to leverage academic expertise to support the development of the new tourism strategy that was adopting more collaborative approaches.

The Board noted the importance of communicating to external stakeholders that Interface business engagement support to individual businesses was ongoing, but the sector engagement pilot would cease activity from September 2019. SJ noted that with the prioritisation by the Business engagement team on supporting individual companies to meet the ambitious KPIs set by the funders there was no resources to absorb legacy activities from the sector engagement programme once the four staff had completed their contracts.

Actions:

Investigate options with respect to alternative funding sources for continuing aspects of the sector engagement support to clusters of businesses and academics.

SJ & HD

Review of current sector engagement activity to prioritise potential transition of knowledge and legacy projects.

AN, SJ & HD

7. FOLLOW UP ON IDEAS GENERATED FROM PRIORITY 1 – PROGRESS BY SUB-GROUP

SB presented the outputs from the working group who had been tasked by the Board to assess and prioritise the ideas that had been generated to inspire more businesses to partner with Scottish Universities and Colleges (See presentation).

The Board agreed that the recommended three high impact activities be undertaken utilising existing resources which would be led by the marketing team. They noted the importance of the referral network and the need to understand the motivations of the organisations and individuals who would refer businesses to Interface. Tactical engagement and tailored propositions at a senior and practitioner level were necessary. The Board encouraged the team to develop compelling thought leadership content that would leverage greater lead generation. YO noted the public engagement website "The Conversation"¹ which may provide an exemplar for the thought leadership blogs.

The Board discussed in more detail the three areas that could deliver significant impact for Interface but required further scoping to consider the resources (people and financial) required.

JM and LC noted their support for developing "*a package for University/ College collaboration*" and could draw on current practices of co-working on articulation and City Deals. Skills for growth remained a key priority for Scottish industry and was more likely to provide a route to initially engage with businesses rather than innovation support.

Actions:

¹ <https://theconversation.com/au/topics/public-engagement-2550>

Contact Edinburgh Innovations marketing team for examples of compelling infographics	JF
Prepare a briefing paper for the <i>University/ College collaboration subgroup</i> drawing on previous work that had been undertaken	SJ
Consider other partners who could be supporting the greater engagement at a local level e.g. community groups	LC

8. HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION

SF updated the Board on current progress with the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board. Four initial areas/ missions regarding (i) business models and workplace innovation (ii) skills for the future, (iii) business creation and growth (iv) exports, had led to a series of actions and recommendations in the Strategic plan. Stephen Boyle from Scottish Government was leading a new mission on Innovation Support which was due to report in September.

The Board also noted the current review being undertaken by Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Principal University of Glasgow focused on how Scotland's universities can improve their engagement with industry and boost their contribution to economic growth. The report is due to be finalised by September and would be of interest to Board members.

The Board considered the current Interface support being delivered to businesses in the South of Scotland considering the ongoing developments to establish a new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. Interface can offer stakeholders a compelling evidence base for fostering business led innovation and entrepreneurship in the region. They acknowledged the current hosting arrangements by Scottish Enterprise Dumfries of one team member.

Actions:

Invite Stephen Boyle to a future Interface Strategic Board meeting	SF/SJ
Invite Prof Anton Muscatelli to a future Interface Strategic Board meeting	AN
Brief Michael Cross at SFC on Interface support to businesses in the South of Scotland	SF

9. AOB

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

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 15th August 2019 (3.00 – 5.30pm, followed by networking dinner to 8:00pm) Nelson Room, St Leonard's Hall, Pollock Halls, 18 Holyrood Park Rd, Edinburgh EH16 5AY.

APPENDIX ONE: ACTION TRACKER [as of 9th August 2019]

No.	Date	Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Outcome	Result	Responsible
		MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING	All Board members to suggest further topics for forward agenda	See proposed forward plan – Appendix 2	Ongoing discussion at each Board meeting	Board
1	28 th May 2019	UPDATE ON SECTOR ENGAGEMENT PILOT IN THREE SME RICH SECTORS	To investigate options with respect to alternative funding sources for continuing aspects of the sector engagement support to clusters of businesses and academics.		Discussion with Board on 15 th Aug, 2019	SJ & HD
2	28 th May 2019	UPDATE ON SECTOR ENGAGEMENT PILOT IN THREE SME RICH SECTORS	Review of current sector engagement activity to prioritise potential transition of knowledge and legacy projects		Update to Board on 15 th Aug, 2019	AN, SJ & HD
3	28 th May 2019	FOLLOW UP ON IDEAS GENERATED FROM PRIORITY 1 – PROGRESS BY SUB-GROUP	Contact Edinburgh Innovations marketing team for examples of compelling infographics		COMPLETED	JF
4	28 th May 2019	FOLLOW UP ON IDEAS GENERATED FROM PRIORITY 1 – PROGRESS BY SUB-GROUP	Prepare a briefing paper for the University/ College collaboration subgroup drawing on previous work that had been undertaken	Paper circulated to the subgroup for consideration	COMPLETED	SJ
5	28 th May 2019	FOLLOW UP ON IDEAS GENERATED FROM PRIORITY 1 – PROGRESS BY SUB-GROUP	To look at other partners who could be supporting the greater engagement at a local level e.g. Community groups	Potential to include this in University/ College collaboration	Update Board on 15 th Aug, 2019	LC
6	28 th May 2019	HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION	Invite Stephen Boyle to a future Interface Strategic Board meeting in relation to findings from the Innovation mission of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board		Update Board on 15 th Aug, 2019	SF/SJ
7	28 th May 2019	HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION	Invite Prof Anton Muscatelli to a future Interface Strategic Board meeting to discuss the findings and recommendations from his review	Invited to Board networking dinner as guest on 15 th Aug, 2019		AN
8	28 th May 2019	HORIZON SCANNING DISCUSSION	Brief Michael Cross at SFC on Interface support to businesses in the South of Scotland		Update Board on 15 th Aug, 2019	SF

APPENDIX TWO Forward plan for Interface Strategic Board meetings 2019/ 2020**15th August 2019 (3-5.30pm & networking dinner 6-8pm)****Interface Strategic Board meeting**

- Review of year 1 of MEF - Q4 submission
 - targets and tolerances in practice, has streamlining worked in practice?
- Horizon scanning – Progress on discussions from subgroups
- Blue sky thinking of the world in ten years (guest speaker from Behavioural Insights team)

Networking Dinner

- With Guest Speaker

28th November 2019 (2-4pm)**Interface Strategic Board meeting**

- Monitoring and evaluation report sign off – Q1 submission
- Progress on discussions from subgroups Digital strategy
- Single digital entry point for Scotland
- Review of Interface risk register
- Potential presentation from Mr Stephen Boyle (Innovation Mission from Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board)

Dates for 2020 meetings

- 2-4pm Tuesday - 25th February 2020
- 2-4pm Tuesday - 26th May 2020
- 3-5.30pm, followed by networking dinner - Thursday - 13th August 2020
- 2-4pm Thursday - 26th November 2020