

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD
24th MAY AT 2PM, HELD BOTH IN PERSON AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:

In person: Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Laura Goodfellow, Gillian Galloway, Professor Russel Griggs, Dr Stuart Fancey, Dr Eve Bird, Angela Cox and Aileen Appleyard

Online: Jim Watson, Gary Bannon, Brian Brown, Martin Hawley

IN ATTENDANCE:

In person: Howell Davies, Shelley Breckenridge, Nicola Brooks and Lorraine Thomson.

Online: Alistair Warnock and Alan Pratt

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed the Board, in particular Aileen Appleyard from Edinburgh Innovations who was joining in George Baxter's absence.

2. APOLOGIES

The Chair noted apologies from the following: Graham Watson, Louisa Macdonell, Stuart Bain, Marc Crothall, Professor Donald MacRae, Dr Liz Rattray, Dr George Baxter (represented by Aileen Appleyard).

3. ORAL UPDATES

Professor Andrea Nolan (AN) provided an update on the recruitment of the new Director of Interface and thanked those involved in the interview process.

Laura Goodfellow (LG) welcomed the board to the first in person meeting since February 2020. LG highlighted in the last quarter the successful delivery of the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards and the key milestone of 3000 collaborative projects being achieved by Interface. LG also highlighted a dip in KPIs this quarter owing to the period of transition and reduced resource across the 3 different teams in Interface.

LG indicated to the Board that KPIs were expected to stabilise once existing staff returned and new members of staff were recruited and fully trained.

In addition, LG highlighted that Interface was delighted to have been allocated £200,000 from Scottish Enterprise to reopen the Advanced Innovation Voucher scheme. Jim Watson (JW) highlighted that if there was a demand for additional project money then there was the opportunity to discuss further.

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 22nd February 2022. They noted progress against the actions as outlined in the table (Appendix 1) which has been updated to reflect the discussions at the meeting. LG noted that Item 2 on the actions will be completed in August owing to Stuart Bain (SB) noting his apologies for the May Meeting.

5. Q3 PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (PAPER 2)

Lorraine Thomson (LT) outlined the paper and, in response to Item 5 of the actions, provided an example of Interface involvement in follow on projects particularly where additional funding had been levered.

Howell Davies (HD) provided insight on recent projects and trends across sectors since 2018 noting a significant uplift in Computer Sciences partly due to its application across most sectors but also as a result of work with companies emerging from Entrepreneurial Campuses. Aileen Appleyard (AA) noted the energy and engineering, and technology sectors, were small in comparison but seeing a steady increase and questioned whether more focus should be given to

them rather than a continued attempt to cover all sectors equally. Angela Cox (AC) noted that sectors have become very blurred and are no longer as clean cut as they used to be.

Gillian Galloway (GG) questioned the (£) value of Innovation Vouchers and sector breakdown questioning if the £5,000 value created a barrier for industries such as Life Science. AC agreed noting that the small value is also a barrier for some College Engagement. LG responded that there were ongoing discussions around Innovation Vouchers and Shelley Breckenridge (SBr) explained that the financial barrier tends to come from the academic side rather than from a business perspective.

6. NEXT STEPS WITH SFC'S KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE & INNOVATION REVIEW (PAPER 3 AND PRESENTATION)

Gary Bannon (GB) provided an update to the board on the recent Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Review. GB noted 53 responses were received, and there was overwhelming support for the proposed "system approach" outlined in the consultation. GB went on to highlight aspects of various responses, in particular those which would affect and be of most interest to Interface. This was followed by a discussion on:

- The "reverse Interface" concept.
- Impacts and how they are currently measured including the resource behind the Interface Customer Service Journey (CSJ).
- The need to ensure any measurements of success going forward consider all the work undertaken to date rather than simply starting from scratch.
- The importance of alignment and shared goals where the system works together rather than competing.

AN then invited the board to share updates in relation to the Scottish Government's Innovation Strategy. GG summarised the 5 thematic areas that will be explored by working groups to be launched in August as; world class excellence, supporting innovative businesses, adoption and diffusion of technology, using public procurement to drive innovation and infrastructure. GG highlighted that the first of these three were priority areas. LG informed the Board that Interface had held an initial meeting with the team leading the strategy and would provide a response to the call for evidence when launched and contribute as relevant to the working groups. Interface has also agreed to support through the suggestion of companies, partners and key contacts for each working group as they are addressed.

Russel Griggs (RG) noted that the feedback from his team is that the SG still needs to define innovation and look at innovation in a broader sense; wellbeing for example isn't always measured in economic terms and he questioned how something like community innovation could be fully accounted for. AC spoke with Scottish Government and the need to prioritise within the funding envelope was clear and that will have to be aligned to strategy around themes such as low carbon, environment and enterprise. She emphasised the challenge behind inclusive growth where returns are harder to see when limited resources are spread widely. Stuart Fancey (SF) felt that the Scottish Government's tight timeline will be of benefit to the strategy, pulling out the high importance themes rather than trying to please all. RG agreed, noting the difficulty in measuring societal and environmental impacts.

7. INTERFACE FUNDING AUGUST 2022 – JULY 2023 (PAPER 4)

AN introduced the paper and invited the Board to comment. RG informed the board that South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) were happy to discuss ring fenced project funding with Interface.

AN then questioned AA as to whether Edinburgh Innovations were aligned with the University of Edinburgh on the cost-of-living increase proposed. AA confirmed the alignment and also indicated to the Board that the current offer of 3% was anticipated to be rejected.

8. HE & FE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE (PAPER 5)

