

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD**

**25<sup>TH</sup> May 2021 AT 2PM, HELD ONLINE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

### **PRESENT:**

Professor Andrea Nolan (Chair), Professor Donald MacRae, Dr Siobhán Jordan, Johnny Mone, Dr George Baxter, Gillian Galloway, Professor Russel Griggs, Jim Watson, Yekemi Otaru, Dr Stuart Fancey, Brian Brown, Liz Connolly, and Dr Colin Cooper.

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Shelley Breckenridge, Howell Davies, Heather Rattray, Nicola Brooks, Lorraine Thomson and Laura Goodfellow (Interface). Dr. David Johnson (University of Glasgow) and Ruth Oliver (Interface) joined for item 8.

### **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair opened the meeting and explained the agenda to the Board.

### **2. APOLOGIES**

The Chair noted apologies from the following: Marc Crothall, Stuart Bain and Gary Bannon.

### **3. ORAL UPDATES**

Prof. Andrea Nolan (AN) informed the Board that Dr Siobhán Jordan (SJ) and herself had a meeting with Karen Watt, Chief Executive of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to discuss the role of Interface. She noted that the meeting was timely given the pending publication of the recommendations from the SFC Review of Coherent provision.

AN offered thanks to Jo Bisset who has completed her term of office on the Interface Strategic Board. She noted that Dr. Liz Rattray, Director Research and Innovation Office, University of Aberdeen, will replace Johnny Mone as of August 2021 to represent Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors Group.

SJ provided the Board with various updates and highlights including:

- Thanking the members for completing the continuous improvement survey of the Strategic Board noting the comments were very helpful and will support ongoing development.
- Pending changes in the Interface team would take place in the coming months with recruitment for 3 maternity leave covers and 1 person who is leaving for a career development post in Edinburgh Innovations Ltd.
- The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards in April 2021 were very well received after being held virtually for the first time.
- The breadth and depth of engagement with South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) over the past few months on how Interface can support its strategic priorities through links to academia.

She noted the focus of the meeting on driving Interface's future agenda across the following topics

1. Engagement with Interface's academic partners
2. Supporting companies based outside Scotland who are seeking partnerships with academic teams.

### **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 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021. They noted progress against the actions from previous meetings.

Jim Watson (JM), Professor Russel Griggs (RG) and Stuart Fancey (SF) noted the discussion paper submitted to the [Enterprise and Skills Board](#) ahead of their meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and the continued interest in mapping innovation support mechanisms delivered in Scotland.

**ACTION: Request Paper from Nora Senior on behalf of Interface Board Members**      **AN**

SF noted that the final report of the [review of Coherent Provision](#) would be published by SFC in June 2021 and this would provide the framework for discussions with the Enterprise agencies on funding support to Interface from August 2022 onwards.

## **5. PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING Q3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR FUNDERS (PAPER 2)**

Laura Goodfellow (LG) introduced this paper and invited comments. The Board acknowledged the paper and discussed the following:

- The continued good news that is emerging from tracking financial investment in companies that have been supported by Interface.
- The excellent performance against targets in Q3 with significant numbers of new business leads and the level of projects relevant to net zero themes.
- Longer term funding for Advanced Innovation Vouchers and the current impacts to HEIs and businesses due to the lack of available funding.
- Handling of business enquiries from the website and the persona of customers who use Interface services.

## **6. INTERFACE'S ENGAGEMENT WITH UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES [PAPER 3]**

LG introduced the paper and highlighted the following:

- Sharing of insights from Interface to HEIs have increased due to more regular communications throughout the year including sharing impact data and response rates which have remained very high (91.5% over past 9 months) in line with previous years despite disruption due to COVID-19.
- Interest from Colleges to respond to company led challenges remains low.
- An action plan has been developed based on the suggestions from the "points of contact" survey across the HEI partners.

## **7. INTERFACE AS AN ENABLER OF KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION MISSIONS WITH SCOTLAND'S UNIVERSITIES [PAPER 4]**

Dr David Johnson, Lecturer in Entrepreneurship, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, made a short presentation which was followed by a Roundtable discussion. A copy of the slides will be shared with Board members.

**ACTION: Copy of the presentation to be shared with Board Members**      **NB**

## **8. INTERFACE'S ENGAGEMENT SUPPORTING COMPANIES BASED OUT WITH SCOTLAND [PAPER 5]**

SJ outlined the support offered to companies based outwith Scotland who are seeking to establish partnerships with Scottish Universities for R&D. Many of the global companies are referred to Interface from Scottish Development International and are seeking to establish an office in Scotland in close proximity to an academic institution eg. via incubators, innovation parks.

SJ noted that

- The industry challenges translated by Interface team and shared with academics are of interest for building strategic and long-lasting R&D partnerships rather than licensing IP.
- The Interface support is complementary to SDI (who support the companies in exploring locations and accessing staff) and in line with the Interface mission of impartial brokerage.
- The impartial and agile response of Interface has enabled many companies to establish operations in Scotland that are undertaking R&D leading to the creation of high value jobs.

#### **9. PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN INTERFACE IN A GLOBAL INNOVATION SYSTEM [PAPER 6]**

The Board had no comments on Paper 6.

#### **10. INTERFACE STRATEGIC BOARD – SUMMARY OF SELF EVALUATION SURVEY 2021 [PAPER 7]**

SJ highlighted that feedback will be considered and suggestions for improvements will be shared in the upcoming Board meetings.

#### **11. AOB**

AN thanked Johnny Mone (JM) for his time and commitment to the Board over the years.

#### **11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair closed the meeting after reminding the Board that the date of the next online meeting is **19th August 2021 – 10:30am – 12:30pm.**

This meeting will provide the opportunity to review the year's activities and outline plans for AY2021/2022.