FIR Steering Group Notes & Actions

Date: **Wednesday 27th of November 2024 9:30am - 11:30am**
Location: **Virtual Teams meeting**

Attendees:

Christina Scant (Core Highways), Peter Ball (VGC Group), Nabeelah Uddin (TfL), Sarina Mitchell (Network Rail), Paul Aldridge (WJ Group), Lorna Brown-Owens (Network Rail), Stephen Cole (CITB).

School Staff: *Ian Heptonstall (IH) – Chair, Sara Gouveia (SG), Saira Khan (SK), Liv Banfield (LB).*

Apologies:

Shelley Caton (BAM), Ella Anderson (Mace Group), Belinda Blake (National Highways), Emer Murnaghan (Graham), Rebecca Young (HS2), Emer Murnaghan (Graham).

ACTIONS:

- ✓ **Action 319**: Paul Aldridge to share contact details for Sarah McCaji (BITC) and Belinda Goodman to inform green skills and AI discussions.
- ✓ **Action 320:** SME Conference Planning: SK to develop an agenda highlighting business drivers for SMEs, including practical resources, such as toolkits and case studies.
- ✓ **Action 321:** SK to finalise and circulate the updated skills matrix and personality test report once all data is received.
- ✓ **Action 322:** FIR Team to communicate the finalised recruitment process and encourage applications across diverse networks.
- ✓ **Action 323:** FIR Team to define a profile of required skills and expertise, including underrepresented groups and lived experiences for the Steering Group recruitment.
- ✓ **Action 324:** FIR Team to convene a panel to review applications and interview shortlisted candidates (Peter Ball & Lorna Brown-Owens have volunteered to help).
- ✓ **Action 325:** Now agreed we will have an annual rolling chair. FIR team to start the process of selecting a chair.
- ✓ **Action 326:** SK to follow up with Steering Group members who have not yet provided feedback on the Inclusive Recruitment for SMEs eLearning module.
- ✓ **Action 327:** FIR team to add social mobility discussion to the agenda for the next meeting.
- ✓ **Action 328:** SG to create a doodle poll to identify alternative dates for future Steering Group meetings based on availability.

1. Welcome

Chair, Ian Heptonstall (IH), welcomed attendees, noted apologies, and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

2. FIR Action Log

Actions marked in green are now completed. Outstanding items (amber) will be addressed with relevant individuals (SG to follow up). Paul Aldridge Comments:

- Recommended Sarah McCaji and BITC as resources for content on "Just Transition" and "Green Skills."
- Highlighted BITC's work on AI, diversity, and inclusion, citing a presentation by Belinda Goodman on responsible AI use.

Action 319: Paul Aldridge to share contact details for Sarah McCaji (BITC) and Belinda Goodman to inform green skills and AI discussions.

FIR Steering Group Notes & Actions

3. FIR Programme Update

The current contract with CITB focuses on reaching more people and companies, particularly SMEs, and delivering diverse training interventions. IH updated the group on targets to date, which are exceeding expectations.

Key Successes:

- The SME Community Hub was launched, including five learning pathways and five information sheets on topics such as neurodiversity, gender identity, and disability inclusion. The hub achieved:
    - ✓ 52 learning pathway completions.
    - ✓ Over 100 participants enrolling into pathways.
    - ✓ 350 users engaging with resource sheets.

Challenges:

- Despite high engagement, attaining 70% SMEs requires additional efforts to permit working towards contract stretched targets. A new marketing hire will focus on creating an SME-specific strategy, using data from the School to target SMEs specifically interested in FIR.

Discussion: SME Engagement & Virtual Conference Planning:

- **Reaching More SMEs:**
    - Use organisations like 'Skyline Skills Task Force' as multipliers to reach broader audiences.
    - Collaborate with trade associations to engage smaller members and provide support.
    - Understand client requirements (e.g. procurement needs) to make the agenda relevant.

- **Virtual SME Conference (2025):**
    - Include relatable case studies from SMEs and feature key client organisations (e.g. HS2, Network Rail) to discuss client expectations.
    - Address sustainability as part of the DE&I agenda and use accessible language to ensure inclusivity and clarity.

- **Understanding SME Needs & Challenges:**
    - Proposals for SME focus groups to explore barriers to engagement and participation.
    - Tailored marketing and content strategies.
    - How to make DE&I resources more actionable and relevant.
    - SMEs face limited time and resources, making it critical to provide easy-to-implement tools.
    - Ensure messaging highlights the commercial value of D&I for SMEs.

Action 320: SME Conference Planning: SK to develop an agenda highlighting business drivers for SMEs, including practical resources, such as toolkits and case studies.

4. 2024 Diversity Survey Update

Liv Banfield (LB) covered the slides that will be presented at the Diversity Data Benchmarking Conference. The FIR team noted that the Conference will be recorded, and a photographer will be present. A published report post-event is expected to be released in February 2025. Overview of discussion after presentation:

- **Conference Structure:**
    - Data will guide panel discussions on leadership diversity, innovative recruitment strategies, and making workplaces inclusive.
    - Panels include representatives from key organisations such as HS2, VGC Group, and Balfour Beatty.

- **Key Challenges Identified:**
  - Lack of progress in ethnic minority representation and retention.
  - SME hesitancy in collecting sensitive data (e.g. religion, sexual orientation).
  - Disconnect between policies and practical implementation in organisations.

- **Actions to Support SMEs:**
  - Develop a repository of template policies (e.g. disability grievance procedure).
  - Provide accessible resources through the SME Community Hub.

- **Leveraging Data:**
  - Core dataset analysis to monitor progress among consistent contributors.
  - Engage organisations like the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) to advocate for national-level strategies.

5. Recruitment Update for FIR team

IH updated the group on a new Digital Marketing Executive joining the team on the 2nd of December. Their role will focus on enhancing marketing, communication, and outreach efforts to help achieve broader engagements. The Head of FIR recruitment is still ongoing with a goal of appointing someone before Christmas. The FIR Project Coordinator recruitment is also underway.

6. Steering Group Recruitment

Proposal to transition to an independent, industry-based chair for improved accountability and separation from the delivery partner. Steering group member recruitment also discussed as there are 3 spots available.

- Agreed on an annual rolling chair model for continuity.
- Skill and representation gaps identified:
  - Operative voice representation.
  - SMEs, housing and facilities management expertise.
  - Diversity in procurement and supply chain change expertise.
  - Lived experience of disabilities (physical and neurodiverse).
  - Emotional intelligence and unconventional ideas identified as key personality gaps.

Action 321: SK to finalise and circulate the updated skills matrix and personality test report once all data is received.

Action 322: FIR Team to communicate the finalised recruitment process and encourage applications across diverse networks.

Action 323: FIR Team to define a profile of required skills and expertise, including underrepresented groups and lived experiences for the Steering Group recruitment.

Action 324: FIR Team to convene a panel to review applications and interview shortlisted candidates (Peter Ball & Lorna Brown-Owens have volunteered to help).

Action 325: Now agreed we will have an annual rolling chair. FIR team to start the process of selecting a chair.

7. Site-Level Training Proposal

Background:
- Existing methods (site inductions, toolbox talks) are insufficient for effective training on FIR.

Key challenges:

- Limited ongoing training, time constraints, subcontracting complexity, and engagement barriers e.g. language and tools.

Proposal Overview:

- Objective to develop a microlearning app for site workers with monthly FIR training modules featuring:
  - 12 modules (5–10 minutes each) with real-life examples and quick tests.
  - Smartphone app with push notifications for easy access.
  - Contractual clauses to embed training at client and contractor levels.

Status Update:

- Passed initial bid stages, pending panel review and follow-up.

8. Construction Inclusion Coalition (CIC) Collaboration

CIC, a group representing construction product manufacturers, have expressed interest in partnering with the FIR programme. They are focused on initiatives like the "Built on Better" pledge and boardroom diversity (e.g. the 30% gender target). Peter Ball and Christina Scant highlighted concerns about duplication of efforts and a lack of unique offering. They emphasised the need for CIC to demonstrate measurable outcomes. IH suggested initial collaboration by allowing CIC access to FIR materials and tracking their engagement with their members over six months.

9. Inclusive Recruitment eLearning Module

The module will be hosted on the SME Community Hub, aiming to expand its reach. Members were reminded to provide feedback on the module.

Action 326: SK to follow up with Steering Group members who have not yet provided feedback on the Inclusive Recruitment for SMEs eLearning module

10. AOB

- **Social Mobility Discussion:** Postpone the discussion to a future meeting to ensure adequate time for engagement.
- **CSCS Test Accessibility Audit:** Stephen Cole announced a neurodiversity audit to improve accessibility for CSCS test booking and completion. Requested connections to focus groups for feedback on reasonable adjustments.
- **BEAP Recruitment:** Lorna Brown-Owens shared opportunity to join the Built Environment Accessibility Panel (BEAP) to provide lived experience insights for station upgrades and rail network accessibility.

Action 327: FIR team to add social mobility discussion to the agenda for the next meeting.

11. Meeting Dates

Next date still TDB because of conflicts noted.

Action 328: SG to create a doodle poll to identify alternative dates for future Steering Group meetings based on availability.