

## South West Meeting

<b>Present</b>		<b>Absent</b>	
Sam Trebilcock	Bristol	Barry Chandler	Torquay
Ray Barnett	Bristol	Claudia Hildebrandt	Exeter
Rhian Rowson	Bristol	Dave Bolton	Exeter
Jess Marsh	Bristol	Ed Drewitt	Bristol
Tim Ewin	Bristol	Gerado Mazzetta	Truro
Roger Vaughan	Bristol	Sara Chambers	Truro
Helen Fothergill	Plymouth	Nick Goff	Weston super Mare
Jan Freedman	Plymouth		
Dennis Parsons	Taunton		
Jenny Cripps	Dorchester		
Matt Williams	BRLSI		

### **Background**

NatSCA requested a number of regional meetings be arranged to discuss the idea of SSN. This meeting was arranged to coincide with the existing meeting organised for the ex HUBCAP. When the HUBCAP meetings were originally proposed we agreed in the South West that we would invite, as a matter of course, all natural science curators in the regional whether they be in a HUB museum or not. It is this group that discussed the SSN proposals.

### **Main discussion**

We kicked off with a summary of the proposals for those in the meeting that may be unfamiliar with the project. A free flowing discussion ensued with the main points debated/concluded being: -

- We agreed that a SSN, as a national network, should be small enough to be effective, e.g. curators or collections to achieve specific aims and therefore exclude the wider biological community. Lets achieve something for our profession and our collections.
- That regardless of specialist curatorial cover, significant natural science collections should be included/invited to contribute e.g. Gloucester.
- We accept in principal that a SSN would be a good idea, be we are concerned that there may not be enough money to make it work.
- 35k is not enough for the whole country – not enough to achieve anything – we don't want a talking shop, rather a focused effort onto one project.
- How would the SSN priorities mesh with those of the local level organisations priorities?
- There was some confusion about whether it is proposed that the SSN is a 'source of advice' or 'not a source of advice'
- That the SSN should support smaller museums without specialist curators
- National problem, lack of support for natural science collections.

- A big project like FENSCORE needs to be supported with monies after the initial seed funding.

### **Proposed Projects**

- Projects already proposed by the SW Hub and partially underway, that we feel are appropriate for SSN funding consideration are
  - Touring exhibition 'nature collected'
  - Local register of expertise
  - Listing and contacting museums with natural science collections without resident specialist curator
- Other projects we feel appropriate to SSN
  - Pay academic specialists to tour museums and to unlock the information connected with the collections – do these people exist?
  - FENSCORE – a useful tool for our professional research, benefiting us all. Outcomes need to be clear and promoted e.g. biographical information on collectors being of benefit to the wider community, used by family researchers and history of science groups. FENSCORE need popular 'angles', a key outcome should be a popular publication, which celebrates the national dispersed natural science collections. Jazzy website linked with 24 hour museum, NBN, Cornucopia and Wildlife Trusts for example. A website that can be accessed at different levels from kids to anoraks. In doing the regional research about the collections in smaller museums the specialists will be making connections and networking and will tie into advocacy work. Awareness raising and hopefully supporting staff development
  - An over arching web-presence for SSN (either through FENSCORE or directly connected to it) with sub-group pages for each regional SSN to update once templates were created – this would also act as a portal to link to museum home pages (those holding and/or displaying natural science collections).
  - Regional training – e.g. specialist curatorial/conservation topics to be hosted in the region.