

## **The South West England Regional Network Ltd. (SWERN)**

### **Introduction**

The South West England Regional Network connects the Universities of Plymouth, Exeter, Bristol, Bath, Gloucestershire and the West of England and provides connections for other South West HEIs and some 40+ FE Colleges. SWERN is expected to serve approximately 450,000 users.

### **Background to the creation of SWERN**

- The national academic network (JANET) has undergone a major upgrade as part of the roll out of SuperJANET 4.
- In the South West, networking facilities for the HE and FE communities were originally provided by two Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs), namely:
  - South West Area Network (SWAN)
  - Bristol and West of England MAN (BWEMAN)
- In order to provide services most efficiently and economically across the whole of the South West, SWAN and BWEMAN have merged to form the South West England Regional Network (SWERN), a company limited by guarantee. SWERN has formed a contractual relationship with UKERNA to operate the regional network that connects sites to the SuperJANET backbone.

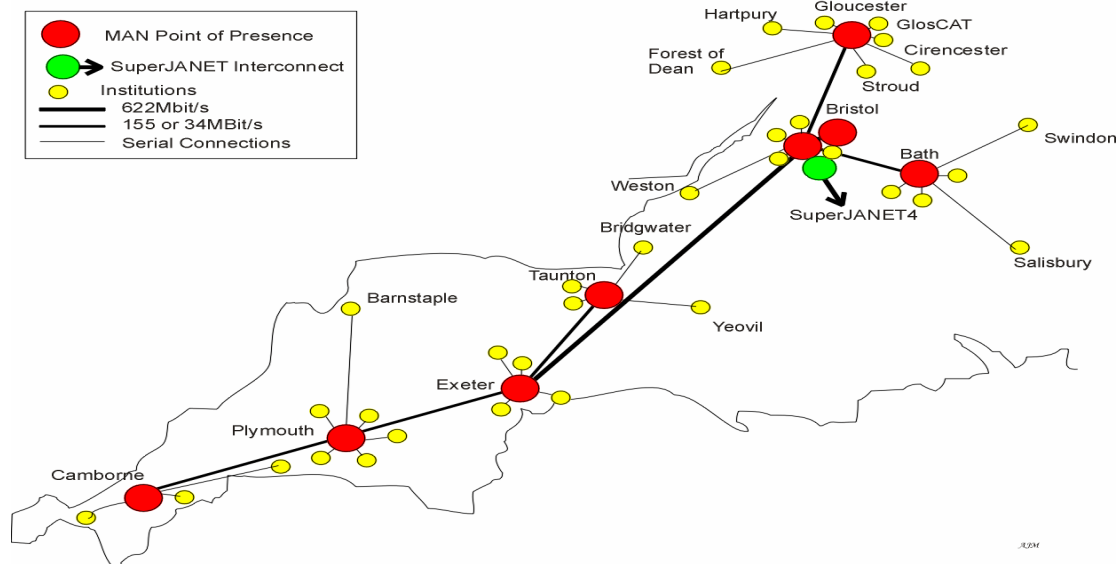
### **Key objectives of SWERN**

- The development of the South West region, in the broadest sense will rely heavily on the quality of the communications infrastructure. At the lowest level this provides access for individuals; at the highest level the sharing of expertise, applications and resources.
- SWERN will become a major regional network not only for Higher and Further Education, but for other public bodies such as schools, libraries and museums as well as other complementary organisations and sites involved with learning, teaching, research and consultancy.
- UKERNA will provide funds to meet the costs of the telecommunications circuits and equipment and some funds to meet the costs of the technical and operational staff needed to run the service. The annual turnover of the SWERN will be approximately £1.25M, of which £1.1M will be met by UKERNA and the remainder will be funded by subscriptions from sites using the SWERN services. The capital invested in SWERN is approximately £800K.
- The five founding members of the SWERN have each appointed one director to the SWERN board of directors. A policy and planning committee advises the board; membership includes the founder members (5), HEIs (2), FEIs (3), RDA (1), User Group (1). A SWERN User

Group is open to all user organisations throughout the region.

- The merger has enabled the provision of a coherent network strategy for the whole of the South West region and offered opportunities for economies of scale and increased returns on investment of overall running costs.
- Improved links between all consortium members will lead to greater collaboration in a number of teaching and research activities.
- Improved support for technology based teaching and learning and support for all forms of distance learning will result.
- Real opportunities now exist for the pooling of expertise across the region with staff working with colleagues at other institutions.
- Strategically, SWERN is of vital importance for the provision of networking to HE, FE and other public sector organisations in the South West Region; the generation of profit is not a primary aim of the SWERN.
- The South West Regional Development Agency (RDA) and the Regional Support Centre for FE in the South West (SW FE RSC) both have strong interests which the SWERN can help to deliver.
- It is expected that the SWERN will be in a strong position to bid for funds from the RDA, EU and other funding sources in order to develop further the network and act as a lever for inward investment into the region.

**South West England Regional Network**



**Further information/Contacts:**

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