

SEMINAR 3

DATE Friday 23 January 1981

VENUE Mitchell Library Theatre, Glasgow

THEME Cost

CHAIRMAN P HEATLY: CHAIRMAN, THE SCOTTISH SPORTS COUNCIL

PROGRAMME

9.30 - 10.00 am : Registration and Coffee

10.00 - 12.30 pm : Morning Session

1 Introduction
M R HORNBY : THE SCOTTISH SPORTS COUNCIL

2 Expenditure on leisure and recreation
A SCOTTISH OFFICE SPOKESMAN

3 Expenditure on leisure and recreation
B D MACKIE : CHAIRMAN, ARTS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE
CONVENTION OF SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Discussion

12.30 - 2.00 pm : Lunch

2.00 - 4.15 pm : Afternoon Session

4 Alternative financing arrangements:
General view
M RYAN/M JACQUES : LSD, LEISURE AND RECREATION CONSULTANTS

5 Alternative financing arrangements:
Case studies
R. TIBBOTT : WARRINGTON NEW TOWN

SEMINAR 4

DATE Friday 20 February 1981

VENUE Grosvenor Centre Hotel, Edinburgh

THEME Management

CHAIRMAN J K HUTCHISON: CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE SCOTTISH SPORTS COUNCIL

PROGRAMME

9.30 - 10.00 am : Registration and Coffee

10.00 - 12.30 pm : Morning Session

1 Catering and licensing operation by a local authority
G CARVER : CROWTREE LEISURE CENTRE, SUNDERLAND

2 Catering and licensing operation: an alternative management system
M FULFORD : CONCORDIA LEISURE CENTRE, CRAMLINGTON
P L HARDY : MIDLAND CATERING LTD

3 Licensing law in Scotland
A SNEDDON : KIRKCALDY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Discussion

12.30 - 2.00 pm : Lunch

2.00 - 4.15 pm : Afternoon Session

4 Alternatives in programming, pricing and promotion
J S PENMAN : FIFE INSTITUTE OF PHYSICAL AND RECREATION EDUCATION

5 Alternatives in programming, pricing and promotion
W GILLESPIE : ELDON SQUARE RECREATION CENTRE

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The Scottish Sports Council

CATERING AND LICENSED OPERATION BY A LOCAL AUTHORITY

CATERING FOR THE CUSTOMER - THE CROWTREE EXPERIENCE

G. CARVER, DEPUTY MANAGER, CROWTREE LEISURE CENTRE

The Scottish Sports Council has invited me to consider the advantages and disadvantages in the operation of catering and licensed facilities by a local authority in relation to the overall management of a Centre. Those involved in recreation management will readily agree that the policies and management practices applied in any particular authority or to specific facilities will directly reflect local characteristics and exigencies. For this reason my purpose this morning is to outline how the catering and licensed facilities at Crowtree have been managed by Sunderland Council as part of the overall management of extensive leisure facilities. This therefore represents a case study not a recommended blue print for other authorities or centres. However, notwithstanding my comments about local circumstances, there are some fundamental principles which will emerge and may be of assistance to those having to make decisions in this field.

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Sunderland

Before local government re-organisation the Borough had a population of 210,000. The extension of the boundaries, taking in the two urban district councils and the new town of Washington, has created the biggest metropolitan district in the County of Tyne and Wear. The current population is 301,000. The town has suffered from a decline in the traditional heavy industries of shipbuilding and mining. Unemployment currently stands at 17.3%. Invariably when Sunderland is mentioned attention is drawn to the worst features and some people undoubtedly imagine little more than depression, dole queues and pit heaps. Crowtree Leisure Centre is not only playing an important role for the whole community but is attracting some favourable publicity for the town.

1.2 Crowtree Leisure Centre

As part of a phased opening programme the ice rink became operational in November, 1977 followed by the bowls hall, sports hall and squash courts. The leisure pool, sauna and solarium, functions suite, cafeteria and bars completed the facilities by the end of February, 1978. The Centre was officially opened by Prince Charles on 31st May, 1978. The royal ceremony marked the fulfilment of a project started eight years previously by Sunderland Borough Council. By this Autumn 5 million visitors will have passed through Crowtree's doors. This enormous public response has fully justified the Council's faith in the Centre.

The design concept was for a relaxing holiday atmosphere superimposed upon a blend of exciting sporting, recreational and social facilities. This successful combination affords genuine opportunity for the whole community with an underlying theme of "fun and sport for all the family".

Crowtree Leisure Centre is one of the largest indoor sports and recreation centres in Europe and provides not only extensive sporting facilities but family leisure opportunity. The range of facilities available makes for a bright and lively environment which is attractive to all.

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1.3 Feasibility Study

In 1970 the Borough Council commissioned a feasibility study to establish an overall leisure plan for the town. The study looked in detail at existing recreation facilities, habits and needs of the people, spending power, population size, transport, topography and weather.

Published in August, 1971, the report contained much interesting information including the following percentages:-

	<u>Sunderland County Borough</u>	<u>England & Wales</u>
Prof. workers, managers & Non-manual	23	31
Foremen & Skilled Manual	46	39
Unskilled	12.5	8
Car Owners	29	46
Under 15 male	28.7	25
Under 15 female	25.4	22
Most requested leisure activity	Swimming	Swimming

The report also confirmed that as a coastal resort Sunderland has a history of attracting day visitors rather than residential holidaymakers. Sunday resort attendances of between 10,000 and 20,000 people have been recorded with 50% coming from Sunderland and 43% from Tyneside.

The report recommended a multi-purpose recreation centre but cautioned against the inclusion of an ice rink. It was considered a high risk enterprise with subsequent difficulties in providing alternative use.

1.4 Concept

The Borough Council decided to proceed with a Recreation Centre and incorporate an Ice Rink and Crowtree was designed taking into account 'leisure thinking' at that time including:-

- a) Social and circulation areas offering views of the facilities.
- b) Provision for all members of the family.
- c) The idea of sport as a social as much as a competitive activity.
- d) Joint provision of social facilities.
- e) Design flexibility in case the leisure scene changes.
- f) The absence of permanent spectator seating which is not used and occupies valuable space when events are not taking place.

1.5 Recreation Facilities and Programme

It is essential, when considering the catering and bars operation at Crowtree, to have an appreciation of the recreation facilities and how they are utilised. A very large proportion of the customers who use the catering and bar facilities (with the exception of the function trade) do so in conjunction with use of recreation facilities. There is, therefore, a direct and vital link between recreation attendances and the real and potential trade, sales mix and product range within the bar and catering outlets.

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(a) Bowls Hall

The Outdoor Bowling Clubs formed the Sunderland Indoor Bowling Club when the hall became available. The Club now has over 1,000 members and organises an extensive league programme. Sessions run from 10.30 a.m. - 10.30 p.m. daily. The league programme together with casual use provides almost 100% use from September to April. Weekly attendances during this period average 1,900.

(b) Ice Rink

The rink is free-shaped in keeping with the design concept. The small rink offers a sheltered area ideal for small children, beginners and lessons. The rink is in use continuously from 6.30 a.m. until midnight on many occasions. Attendances are highest on Wednesday and Friday evenings with up to a thousand skaters in attendance. Developments of the ice rink programme have included the introduction of 'Sounds Nice' on a Wednesday evening with a disco roadshow and effect lighting and more recently 'heavier' music on Monday with 'Rock in the Rink'. In addition to public sessions there is a full ice hockey and ice skating programme. The following represents a typical day:-

6.30 a.m. - 9.30 a.m.	: Figure & Free Skating Practice (Sunderland Ice Skating Club)
10.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon	: Public Session
12.15 p.m. - 1.45 p.m.	: Figure & Free Skating Practice
2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	: Public Session
4.15 p.m. - 6.45 p.m.	: Figure & Free Skating Practice and Lessons
7.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m.	: Public Session
10.30 p.m. - 12.30 p.m.	: Ice Hockey Practice

(c) Leisure Pool and Sauna/Solarium

The free shaped leisure pool with wave machine has proved especially popular with family groups. A learner pool and recreational diving pool are also provided. The dry beach enables mums, dads and grandparents to sit and watch in a pleasant atmosphere. The pool is open from 9.00 a.m. - 10.00 p.m. and a colour band call-out system operates with customers guaranteed one hour's swim. Up to 350 swimmers can be accommodated at any one time. The pool programme includes beach parties on a number of Friday and Saturday evenings and Friday evening "Splash Ins" - pool discos with effect lighting. Parallel sides provide 25 metre lanes and each morning at 7.00 a.m. the pool is used by Sunderland's leading competitive swimmers. The pool is used annually for a weekend marathon charity swim and was the setting for Miss Tyne-Tees Television 1978.

(d) Sports Halls and Squash Courts

The traditional 2 court sports hall layout is supplemented by the following features:-

- Common floor area between Main Hall and Multi-purpose Hall for flexibility.
- Spectator accommodation up to 1,500.
- First class Climbing Wall incorporating natural rock and hand holds and climbs of varying degrees of difficulty.

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- Electronic scoreboard designed particularly for the Centre's major spectator event, basketball.

At least 50% of peak use of the Halls is allocated for public booking and peak use of the squash courts is exclusively public. The Multi-purpose Hall is used extensively for trampolining, gymnastics, judo and table tennis. The hall is adjacent to a glass-back squash court and accommodates seating for 190 on the occasion of spectator squash events, which have included an exhibition match featuring Jonah Barrington. The squash viewing gallery is adjacent to the Main Concourse. The eight Crowtree courts have been named after leading players in the squash world.

Major spectator events form an important part of the Crowtree programme and events staged or planned include:-

- Great Britain v Sweden - Kings Cup Tennis
- England v Australia Netball
- England v Scotland Badminton
- British Women's Gymnastic Championships
- Commonwealth Basketball Championships
- Sunderland National League Basketball
- England v Taiwan Badminton
- England v China Badminton
- Chinese Sports Acrobatics Display Team

As a result of the emphasis on public use and the proximity of the Empire Theatre special events within the Hall have been mainly of a sporting nature. However, other events staged include the Tyne and Wear Folk Moot, Marks and Spencer Fashion Extravanzas, Scouts Association Fayre, Aquarists Festival and Exhibition, the Philips Electronics Exhibition, Wrestling and an Ideal Home Exhibition.

(e) Main Concourse

The Architect envisaged that this would be an exhibition area. The high attendances have meant it is a vital circulation space and it provides an excellent view of both the sports halls and leisure pool. A balance has been attempted between providing a reasonably quiet sitting area and entertainment with a revenue-earning capacity. The Concourse has now been fully curtained as its use for a variety of social and catering events is increasing. It also offers excellent display opportunities to event sponsors and on a number of occasions cars have been exhibited in conjunction with sponsorship. Entertainment machines within the building are contracted with a commercial company.

(f) Basement

The basement area (712 sq. m.) is as yet undeveloped.

1.6 Membership Scheme

Since the Centre opened a membership scheme has operated, and a photographic pass is issued to members. Membership offers traditional advantages including preferential booking opportunities and entry to the building. The Crowtree memberships are especially attractive to Borough residents who are offered reduced membership rates. Current membership rates are given in Appendix 'A'. Access to the Centre purely to use bar and catering facilities on a casual basis is subject therefore to the

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membership scheme or payment of the non-member entry fee. It is very difficult to gauge the impact of this arrangement upon trade although it does greatly contribute to a high standard of behaviour in the bars.

1.7 Admission Charges

The Council's policy has been to ensure that admission charges enable all members of the public to use the Centre. The current admission charges are given in Appendix A.

1.8 Attendances

The recorded attendances for the period April 1978 - September 1980 are shown in Appendix B. During peak periods adults (over 18) represent approximately 15% of the attendances but of course this reflects the large numbers of young people attending the ice rink and leisure pool which can jointly cope with 2,000 people in a 3 hour session. No figures are available regarding the age of the juniors, but it would appear that the majority are between 13 and 18 years with a fairly even split between male and female. Certainly the average age of the juniors attending the rink is higher than the leisure pool where juniors represent more than 80% of the peak period attendances.

Within a 22 mile radius of Sunderland there are 3 full-size ice rinks. Two of the rinks are privately owned and the third is run by the same private company on behalf of a Trust receiving Local Authority support. It is over 40 years since there was a roller-skating rink in Sunderland but prior to opening a number of people had obviously visited the other ice rinks in the region. No attendance figures are available from the other rinks, but the effect of the Leisure Centre on local swimming attendances is known.

The nearest bath, some two miles away suffered a drop in attendances when the Leisure Centre first opened. Since then the attendances have gone back to the original level. Overall the three established baths in the Borough report an increase in attendance compared with 1977. Over and above this increase is the performance of the Leisure Centre, thus the effect of the Centre has been to almost double the total swimming attendances in the Borough.

Whilst both the ice rink and the leisure pool have proved to be very attractive the ice rink with its informal clothing, pop music and "in crowd" of young people is certainly "the place to be" particularly on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. It is a common practice in commercial rinks to exclude or restrict non-participants by charging the skating price as the minimum entry. Because of the high attendances and the limited circulation space it has been Centre policy not to admit junior spectators to the Ice Rink, which in itself is an indication of the popularity of the facility.

1.9 Expenditure

Income and Expenditure as detailed in 1980/81 estimates are shown in Appendix C.

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1.10 Establishment

The Leisure Centre is controlled by the Council's Leisure Centre Working Group which is a sub-committee of the Council's Management Committee. The Centre is not presently part of the Recreation Department. Appendix D shows the current establishment.

Staff wages and salaries are the biggest single item in the expenditure and as a rough yardstick one can say that the income generated by the Centre, tends to equate with staffing costs. Initially the agreed establishment, including catering and bars, was the equivalent of 120 full-time staff, but because of the pattern of attendances which emerged when the Centre opened more members of staff were needed. Evenings and weekends were even busier than expected and term-time midweek use greatly exceeded expectations. It had been estimated that approximately 1 million attendances would be recorded during the first full year. The actual recorded attendance was almost 1.4 million and because of this increase it was necessary to provide the equivalent of 25 additional staff.

The staff have done an excellent job, but praise should be given to the Management Committee of the Leisure Centre who had the foresight to provide appropriate staffing levels.

1.11 Catering/Bars - Design Provision

Within the architect's original concepts the social/catering/bar provision was seen as spatially most significant. It would be true to say that the spatial reality of design and construction did not fully match the original concept and the recreation facilities pre-dominated. Nonetheless the catering and bars provision was still substantial:-

Crowtree Bar	-	main public licensed facility
Alpine Bar	-	small public bar overlooking ice rink
Restaurant (Now Function Suite)	-	370 sq. metres plus kitchen for 400 covers.
Cafeteria	-	and Ice Rink Servery with common kitchen/preparation area.

1.12 Catering and Licensed Facilities

a) Catering

Cafeteria

The Cafeteria is situated on the first floor concourse overlooking the Leisure Pool and seats 134 people. It opens from 10.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. daily. A special luncheon is offered from 11.00 a.m. A spiral staircase leads from the Cafeteria to the Leisure Pool beach area.

Ice Rink Servery

The servery opens daily from 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon, 2.00 - 4.00 p.m., (2.30 - 5.00 p.m. weekends) and 7.00 - 10.00 p.m.

Concourse Kiosk

Open at weekends from 11.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. When a Sunderland basketball match is being held in the Sports Hall the Kiosk opens from 11.00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. During school holidays the kiosk opens each day from 11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

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Crowtree Bar

Toasted sandwiches are available in the Main bar from 11.30 a.m. and basket meals from 12.00 noon to 2.00 p.m., Monday to Saturday. A salad buffet is available from 12.00 noon to 2.00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

No buffet or basket meals are served in the evening but toasted sandwiches are available from 5.30 p.m. On Sundays toasted sandwiches are available from 12.00 noon and 7.00 p.m. in the evening.

Alpine Bar

Toasted sandwiches, pies, pasties and sausage rolls are served on Ice Hockey match evenings.

'Chesters Nest'

The Function Suite opens as a lunchtime licensed restaurant from Monday to Friday during school holidays. Opening hours are 11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.

On the occasion of special events, for example Annual Skating Championships and Exhibitions, and subject to the Function Suite being available, 'Chesters Nest' is operated on Saturdays and Sundays.

b) Licensed Facilities

Three separate full on-licences are held by the Centre in respect of the Crowtree Bar, Alpine Bar and the Function Suite. A 'free house' is in operation with the three local breweries involved. Each of the three areas are treated as completely separate bar operations for both accounting and licensing purposes.

The Crowtree Bar is designed to accommodate 120 people. The Alpine Bar opens each evening, has a juke box and table videos, and affords an excellent view during Ice Hockey matches.

Crowtree Bar Hours

Weekdays (not Christmas Day : from 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.
or Good Friday) : and 5.30 p.m. - 10.30 p.m.

Alpine Bar Hours

Weekdays (not Christmas Day : from 7.00 p.m. - 10.30 p.m.
or Good Friday)

Function Suite

The Suite has a full-on licence with a special hours certificate for Friday and Saturday nights, excluding Good Friday. The permitted hours relating to a Special Hours Certificate in the Borough of Sunderland are:-

from 12.30 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.
and 6.30 p.m. to 2.00 a.m.

on the days on which the Special Hours Certificate applies. In our case the on-licence provides for the normal permitted hours and is in operation on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. The Suite accommodates 140 for a dinner dance, 180 for a formal dinner and 200 for a disco.

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2. CATERING & BARS OPERATION - THE DECISIONS

2.1 The Decision to Manage the Catering and Bars

The fundamental decisions on the management of the catering and bar facilities were taken during the early part of 1977. In the preceding 18 months concession catering within the leisure industry had increased three or fourfold. The Council's Leisure Centre Working Group had in 1976, prior to the appointment of Centre staff, visited many sports and leisure centres up and down the country. They saw both local authority and concession catering and spoke to managers about these arrangements. Upon appointment the Leisure Centre Manager, who had previous experience of both in-house and concession catering, appraised the scene at that time and such statistics as were available. The Manager presented a report to Committee outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the three main types of catering and bar arrangement present in recreation centres throughout the country (concession, management service and local authority control). Consideration was given to the projected attendances, the potential catering and bars turnover and the various relevant percentages.

The Committee finally decided to adopt a policy of controlling all aspects of the Centre's operation and therefore retained control of the catering and licensed facilities. Subsequently contractual arrangements were made for drink and snack vending.

It should be noted that with the exception of two single-bar community halls and catering and bars in association with certain outdoor events the catering and bars operation is the only one undertaken by the Borough Council - the Civic Centre Restaurant is operated by Bateman Catering and such foreshore amenities as exist are rented to commercial operators.

2.2 Changes and Additions to Facilities Prior to and Since Opening

The most significant change in the catering and bars operation took place several months prior to the Centre becoming fully operational. In view of the potential of the function trade within the Borough and the known difficulties of operating a restaurant as well as a cafeteria within a leisure centre the restaurant was redesignated a function suite. The Architect was therefore asked to install a large permanent dance floor to produce a multi-purpose social facility. The architects idea for partial separation of main bar and intended restaurant would have enabled drinks service from one bar. The requirements of fire and building control officers meant full separation so at the outset the function suite was reliant on a temporary bar. The volume of trade confirmed the need for a permanent installation and with the insistence of Public Health officials this was carried out in 1980. Some 12 months after opening, and in the light of peak period attendances a large kiosk was installed on the main concourse to cope with demand for light refreshments, particularly ice cream and drinks.

2.3 Granting of the Licence

When application was made to the Licensing Magistrates it was stressed that visits to the bar would arise from use of recreation facilities, however opposition was mounted by local residents. There was an understandable lack of knowledge of what the leisure facilities would be like. Specifically the town centre residents feared another large public house spilling more troublesome people into the town centre. 100 yards away from Crowtree a public house above the shopping centre had led to unsocial behaviour including the pouring of drinks onto shoppers. Expressing their

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concern the licensing magistrates imposed a condition of no 'off-sales' and granted separate full on-licences in respect of each of the three bars. In the case of each bar no alcohol is allowed to be taken off the licensed premise, the demarcation line in each case being the bar's surrounding walls. This means that no liquor may be taken out of a licensed bar or transferred from one bar to another. The Centre Manager also indicated that he would operate a house rule excluding under 18's from the bars except for wedding receptions.

The residents most active at the time of the objections have since indicated that their fears had proved to be unfounded.

3. MANAGEMENT OF THE CATERING AND BARS OPERATION

3.1 Staffing

The present establishment is given in Appendix 'D'. Additional staff are employed for holiday periods for the operation of 'Chester's Nest' and Concourse Kiosk. It is said that the problem of local authority catering and bars is the level of wages paid according to the 'Green Book'. This has led to the belief amongst some that it is simply a matter of basic rates. This is generally not the case.

What really increases our wage bill is the scheme of enhanced payments attracted by shifts, weekends, Bank holidays and hours worked after 8.00 p.m. during the week. Civic Restaurant rates apply to Catering and Bars at Crowtree, the basic hourly rate being £1.32. Under the Wages Council Act (Licensed Residential and Licensed Restaurant Order) a local hotel pays, for example, £1.46 per hour for a part timer working more than 12 hours/week. Under the Licensed Non-Residential Order numerous local pubs pay £1.42/hour for similar part-timers. In neither case are any additional payments made for evenings and weekends. Most of our local catering competitors pay less than Civic Restaurant rate.

Enhancements account for roughly 10% of Crowtree's annual wage bill for catering and bars but the effect is much greater on the bars because of opening hours. Very few of our competitors pay more for Saturday and Sunday work and they do not incur costs in respect of hours worked after 8.00 p.m. or lieu time accruing from Bank holidays. Separate weekend and weekday staff have been recruited as far as possible to reduce the impact of enhancements.

To date it has been the policy for the cafeteria to trade from 10.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. This has reflected attempts to offer a service to match facility hours. In the light of current public expenditure reductions, a change in this policy is being considered. Closing the cafeteria at or before 8.00 p.m. would favourably affect the trading position. I shall come later to this 'question of balance'.

Leisure Centres require much greater flexibility with regard to staffing levels than say, a pub operation. Fluctuations of recreation trade reflecting seasonal variations in facility use and the impact of the centre programme are much greater than fluctuations in pubs. Judo, karate, five-a-side and major spectator events for example, all demand increased staffing but attendances and trade have to be projected in advance. There is no guarantee that perfect staff levels will be achieved on these occasions.

The Civic Catering Association suggests that usually 30-32% of turnover should go on staffing. This is more difficult to achieve at Crowtree in the catering outlets than the bars.

3.2 Establishing Controls

It is clearly essential that adequate controls are applied throughout the trading process. This process starts with the origination of the programme, the staff arrangements and the ordering of goods and services and include receipt of goods, storage, issue to outlets, portion control, sale, receipt of cash and analysis of income. The flow chart is completed by the stock check which provides the base for the compilation of trading accounts and their presentation to Committee.

All control systems have been designed in conjunction with the Borough Treasurer's department to meet both Centre and Audit requirements. The receipt of goods, storage and issue to the various outlets requires particular attention. In the case of Crowtree it has been difficult to get all suppliers to obtain a valid signature of receipt acknowledging correct delivery since the large Service Yard beneath the Centre is some distance from the Catering Office and outlets. Suppliers are used to delivering where signatures are not required and checking is less stringent. The bar cellar is to be found in the Service Yard so security of bar stock is essential when issue could be to all of five outlets and such a tour of deliveries could involve a total travel distance of 600 yards between and across 3 floor levels. Since each of the bars is treated as a separate operation with its own trading statement it is essential that the stock issued to each outlet is carefully controlled and that transfers do not take place without a record being made. Centre staff make a weekly stock check in the bars in respect of beers, wines and spirits and fortnightly in the case of soft drinks. In the case of bars and catering a Kalamazoo stock control system is operated by the Centre's Administration Office and each outlet submits requisitions on printed order forms.

Portion control is clearly vital in relation to costings. Use of the correct sized scoops, containers and cups in serving facilitate control. In the bars the legal requirements make control easier, however sporting customers consume large volumes of soft drinks and therefore cordial and postmix syrup measures are tightly controlled. This is achieved by measured shots and pouring is not permitted. It is equally important that in food preparation all wastage and, in the case of the bars, ullage is recorded in appropriate ledgers. An allowance is also made for beer line cleaning which is particularly important at Crowtree where the beer lines measure 600 ft.

The receipt of cash and its onward passage to be recorded as income and banked is again subject to comprehensive local authority procedures. The Catering Supervisor has responsibility for reconciliation at each of the catering and bar cash points. The Supervisor is then responsible for seeing that the cash is placed in the night security safe by the Senior Cashier. The Administration Officer is responsible for overseeing these procedures and has a Senior Clerk with specific responsibility for the Finance Office. The Finance Office is responsible for all Centre cash consolidation prior to security collection the following day. The Finance Office is also responsible for all ledger records. The analysis of catering and bars income is carried out by the Assistant Manager (Catering and Entertainments).

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A statement of staffing costs is prepared daily showing normal hours worked by each person and any variation to those hours is recorded. This enables immediate comparison to be made between extra staffing costs incurred and income derived. The operation is geared to providing a weekly trading statement for catering and a monthly statement for bars. Trading accounts in respect of catering are prepared weekly by Centre staff. The consumption figure is obtained from the internal stock sheets and the income from the "bars and cafe" ledger held by the Finance Office. Whilst the trading accounts show the position regarding the total catering operation, functions are individually monitored and a profit and loss account presented on each event. In the licensed areas a monthly stock take is made by an external stocktaker.

It is commonly quoted that commercial caterers, particularly where they are part of a large combine, have considerably more purchasing power than most local authorities. Whilst this may be disputed by some there can be no doubt that national and multi-national companies have a considerable advantage. Since Sunderland is a large Metropolitan Authority with a Central Purchasing Department favourable discounts can be obtained on basic commodities. However, there is not a similar advantage when it comes to more specialist purchases.

The framework for pricing is provided by the gross profit target. Initially price increases were referred to the Leisure Centre Working Group but the Manager was then given approval to increase prices in line with increases made by suppliers. As a guideline the original pricing policy for the bars was to set prices between club and pub levels. Bar prices are set slightly higher in the Function Suite. Well known products such as wrapped ice cream lines are normally sold at makers recommended price, whilst home made products tend to be sold at a price the market will bear, taking account of gross profit targets.

3.4 Responding to Centre Programme

The normal catering operation has to complement the routine leisure facility attendances. Thus a product range has been developed which appeals to the majority of regular visitors and at the same time contribution towards achieving the required gross profit. A large number of the cafeteria products sold are made on the premises. This policy has been pursued since opening and has been favourably received by customers. Some of the most popular home made products are quiche slices and almond and pink slices - products which can't normally be purchased in such portions elsewhere. This originality has proved to be of commercial benefit.

Undoubtedly the catering provision is seen as contributing to the overall experience of a visit to Crowtree Leisure Centre. For this and trading motives appropriate arrangements are made for major spectator and participatory events. In the case of Sunderland National League Basketball fixtures a sales kiosk is placed in the Sports Hall to supplement the Concourse Kiosk. Recently discos have been introduced in the Alpine Bar on Saturday evenings following Ice Hockey matches. Visiting as well as home players and spectators are able to purchase tickets. Several ice skating competitions are organised during the year and since these start at 7.00 a.m. arrangements are made to open the ice rink servery to serve soup, bacon sandwiches and coffee.

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As previously mentioned a lunchtime licenced restaurant service is provided in the Function Suite during school holidays and this has been well received especially by family groups. The stimulus to provide this service arose from the experience of the first summer period when pressure on the Cafeteria was such that it could not adequately cope. The Function Suite is also very useful when catering for school and youth groups. On many occasions schools have opted for a day visit to the Centre, including a meal, instead of a visit to a Safari Park or the Roman Wall or a school-based Christmas party. Prior to each Christmas holiday a local school arranges for two groups each with 250 pupils to spend a day at the Centre. The record however goes to a school from Chester-le-Street which brought over 400 in one day and the distance record goes not to the school in Carlisle or Youth Group in Yorkshire but to the school in Bolton who travelled for a day visit.

3.5 Specialised Trade

The specialised catering and bars trade represents a significant part of the operation. The pure function trade has developed rapidly over the first three years. This is a reflection on the limited number of facilities in Sunderland able to cope with numbers in excess of 80. We would also like to think that it is a reflection of the increasing number of satisfied customers. The level of catering and standard of service has been geared to what perhaps one could describe as medium to high-class catering. At present our cheapest buffet is priced £1.60 whereas buffets can be obtained at some local establishments for 90p. Evening bookings in the Function Suite comprise presentation evenings, birthday and silver wedding parties, wedding receptions and celebrations, formal dinners, social and fund raising discos and Christmas festivities. A pleasing level of daytime trade has been generated. Quite a number of business luncheons, trade promotions and seminars have been hosted. A working relationship with the local newspaper which promotes a Women's Circle has led to highly successful coffee mornings, cookery demonstrations and travel presentations. The suite is also used for Civic Receptions in connection with Centre and Borough events. Other evening events arranged have included film and fashion shows, Chris Bonington and Doug Scott lectures, a Brian Clough evening and a New Year's Eve party for members and friends.

It is the Council's policy to encourage the staging of major spectator events at Crowtree. This combined with the attractive facilities has led to the range of major events previously described. In many cases the facilities for the spectator event were of prime importance and the availability of pleasant and extensive social facilities for after-event refreshments and hospitality was a bonus. However in some cases the catering and licensed facilities and service contributed greatly to the decision to choose Sunderland. The same principles can be said to apply to events of a lower key. The ability to provide a licenced area with catering has opened up many possibilities - sports competitions followed by a disco, exhibitions and seminars which include hospitality for customers or sponsored sports events where firms can invite customers and staff to watch the event and be entertained to a meal and drink afterwards.

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3.6 Trading Statements

The operation is geared to preparing a weekly trading statement for catering and a monthly statement and realisation account for bars. Quarterly and annual trading statements are prepared by the Borough Treasurer's Department in respect of the catering and bars operations, and a quarterly bars realisation account, all of which are presented to the Leisure Centre Working Group. The trading statement details sales, cost of goods consumed, direct wages attributable and the resultant gross profit. The percentage gross profit on sales and on goods consumed is also shown. The gross turnover of the catering and bars operation together with the contracted vending for 1979/80 was £339,383.

3.7 Vending

As previously mentioned the drink and snack vending is contracted with a local company. The company operates drinks and snack machines at three sites - adjacent to Reception, on the Leisure Pool dry beach, and in the Ice Rink. In addition drinks machines are operated in the Bowls Hall and staff room. In view of the level of vending trade the company employs staff to maintain a permanent presence during opening hours.

3.8 Marketing

Hopefully what I have said up until now has shown that the approach to catering and bars management, as with the operation of other facilities at Crowtree, has been to seek to satisfy customers effectively and efficiently.

At the first Seminar in Glasgow Professor Baker drew our attention to the marketing mix. He identified among other important mix variables, marketing research, product development, pricing, presentation, advertising and sales promotion and selling. An indication has been given that some attention is paid to product development, pricing and presentation. Certainly the market assessment which does take place is inconsistent and subjective, however the financial and human resources do not presently exist for this work.

Professor Baker highlighted that centre managers see marketing largely in terms of advertising and sales promotion and selling. Whilst attempts have been made to adopt a wider outlook Crowtree still places most emphasis on these variables. Promotion and publicity resources are mainly directed to developing rink, pool and sports trade but catering and bars are promoted in the following ways:-

- i) given equal billing to the leisure facilities in the publicity for holiday and visitor trade, including fairly extensive newspaper advertising.
- ii) inclusion in Centre advertisements which are used on Radio Metro.
- iii) development of 'Chester' mascot characters in catering and bars situations as well as recreation poses.
- iv) advertisements placed in programmes sold at special events in the Centre which draw attention to the full range of bar and catering facilities open to spectators and participants.
- v) newspaper advertising of specific events such as New Year's Eve Dance or pre-Christmas lunches.

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The specialised trade is almost exclusively generated by the general promotion of the Centre and the word of satisfied customers. It has not been necessary so far to advertise the functions service. We have then, been selling 'The Crowtree Experience' - a package within which the bars and catering are essential components.

3.9 A Question of Balance

The Scottish Sports Council's Report 'A Question of Balance' has initiated these seminars. You will be familiar with the Report's thesis that the management of sports centres essentially entails achieving a balance between a number of conflicting issues.

During the first three years of operation the aim of Crowtree has been to serve the whole community. The range of facilities have greatly assisted towards this end. However the attempt to be 'all things to all people' has been very much a question of achieving such a balance.

The same principles apply to the management of the catering and bars operation. A balance is required to the extent that the hours of opening, product range, sales mix, service, and exposure to a 'fulfilling leisure experience' all have to be weighed with strict trading considerations. The balance which has been achieved during the Centre's first three years has greatly contributed to the overall success of the Centre. It follows therefore that policy decisions on catering and bars have been closely related to meeting the Council's initial aims for the Centre.