

YES, HONESTLY!

(or who's kidding who in the statistics game?)

THOSE concerned with the development of recreation management on sound principles will no doubt be disturbed by some of the statistics being bandied about the country.

ARM News heard recently of a Centre claiming in its local Press, attendances of 30,000 a week from a traditional pool, two-court sports hall, bowls hall and conventional ancillary facilities! Another smaller centre claimed almost 10,000 visitors when the most generous of calculations could not have exceeded 6000 given the available facilities.

Another Centre claimed over 1 1/2 million visitors in just over a year without a pool, rink or ballroom! (Then followed on TV with a claim of 2 million a year). It doesn't take a PhD to work out that even a banquet for 1000 every day of the year and 500 sight-seers daily would not make sense of such a claim. A braver few claim to actually make a profit on the operation of their Centres. Whilst their claims appear in the Press, what little close scrutiny is possible suggests that it is

For too long recreation managers have politely listened and then gone away and muttered in the corner. Recreation management can only place itself, with credibility, alongside the long established public service disciplines if it can cope with its "cowboy" element. MIKE HATHAWAY speaks out on one area of concern in part one of a series of articles.

the old story of statistics telling whatever you wish to tell. What is very disconcerting, however, is that a number of agencies actually take these claims on face value. A very senior officer of no less an organisation than the Sports Council quoted one Centre's profit. One wonders what sort of factual corroboration went on before that pearl swept the country. Let there be no misunderstanding that the usage of identical facilities can vary enormously, depending on catchment area and population, local political

policies, management, opening hours, size of facilities and regional leisure traditions. All of these factors also influence the net cost of the operation to the authority. The local council's philosophy for the Centre can alter such net costs by as much as a six figure sum.

Some very broad guidelines, however, can be devised. The manager should be aware of the total numbers passing through his establishment, the percentage utilisation of dry sports facilities, and the actual numbers attributed to particular areas such as swimming pools or fitness rooms where increased use can particularly benefit net operating costs. To be unaware of these facts is surely to attempt to manage in ignorance of market demand and potential.

Some reliable statistics have been assembled to illustrate how outrageous a few of the claims have been, but also to provide some guidelines for those unfamiliar with statistics related to indoor provision.

(Part 2 of this feature will appear in the next edition—keep counting!)

SQUASH COURTS

A maximum annual figure of 20,440 users per court based on 2 per half hour from 9.00 a.m. - 11.00 p.m., 100% use.

TWO COURT SPORTS HALL

A maximum annual figure of 143,080 users per hall based on basic recreation use of : 4 x 4 badminton + 12 five-a-side per hour, from 9.00 a.m. - 11.00 p.m., 100% use. Most halls would increase this potential number with more badminton, dance, karate, roller skating, five-a-side tournaments, spectator events, etc.,

BOWLS HALL

An annual figure of 7 - 8,000 users per rink would reflect very high percentage use in a region with a bowls tradition and a well organised club operating with as many as 1,000 members. The national average is likely to be well below this figure. This figure takes account of the quiet summer months.

SWIMMING POOLS

Here great variations will be found. Whether the pool is traditional, free form or leisure design will be as relevant as the existence of other pools within the catchment area. Opening hours will also significantly influence attendances.

SPECTATORS

The number of paid spectators is normally easily reckoned but where membership schemes operate it is more difficult. Random sample surveys properly conducted can produce sufficient statistics for a fairly accurate judgement in those cases.

NATIONAL SURVEY

The national survey undertaken by ARM last year in conjunction with the National Poster Advertising scheme produced replies from 219 centres throughout the United Kingdom.

The attendance figures from that survey produced the following national averages: Dry facilities : 191,000
Wet facilities : 184,000

The following statistics have been gathered by ARM News from a number of centres up and down the country.

Swimming pools:

i) 25m pool, learner pool and diving pool	275,000 users	ii) Leisure Pool(max. 120 users/hr restricted opening)	115,000
iv) 25m pool and learner pool	155,000	v) Free form pool with slide, no wave machine	240,000
vi) Leisure pool, learner pool, diving pool and wave machine	341,000 users		

Total Attendances(latest annual figure)

Carlisle Sports Centre(conversion)	84,847	Single court sports hall, multi-purpose hall, wights gym, foldaway squash court, table tennis room, judo room, pool table meeting room,snack bar.
Richard Dunn Sports Centre,Bradford	525,980	Two court Sports Hall, free form pool, range hall, multi-purpose area, activity room, weights area, climbing wall, sauna & solarium, 4 squash courts,function room, bar, cafeteria.
Leatherhead Leisure Centre	672,000	1 1/2 court sports hall, 25m pool, diving pool, learner pool, 6 squash courts, 4 rink bowls hall, multi-purpose hall, sauna & solarium, club rooms, bar, cafeteria.
Crowtree Leisure Centre,Sunderland	1,400,000	Ice Rink, Leisure Pool,learner pool, diving pool, sauna & solarium, two-court sports hall, minor sports hall, 8 squash courts, 8 rink bowls hall, concourse, 6 pool tables, climbing wall, functions suite, two bars, cafeteria.