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## Mayfest organisers count cost of washout

**By David Walsh**

RAIN didn't stop play for these young visitors to Sheffield's Mayfest.

But they were among only a few hardy souls who braved the bad weather to attend the two-day event at the Don Valley stadium in Attercliffe.

Mayfest organiser Scott Barton said it had been the worst weather ever. And the financial cost had been so high they would have to decide whether to hold the event again.

He added: "Attendance was just a few thousand, some people braved it and I'm proud of everyone involved, it all went ahead except for a few things on health and safety grounds like the army zip wire.

"But we are having to look at whether we can do the event in the future. An event of that scale is getting more and more expensive and it's a massive financial risk. I think we will be eating beans for the next year

"Though it would be a great shame to lose it, we're now thinking long and hard about the future of Mayfest."

Soul diva Beverley Knight, Right Said Fred, pop heart-throb Gareth Gates, the Original Bucks Fizz, iTunes chart topper Ross Copperman and Barnsley pop group Sweet Rebellion were among the stars on the Real Radio Live Music Stage who tried to keep Mayfest visitors singing in the rain.

And for younger visitors to the event, Roger Barton, aged 62, of Shiregreen, brought his llamas along.

He said: "I hear all sorts from children who haven't seen llamas before. They say, 'that sheep has a got a long neck hasn't he daddy?'. I'm also asked if they're giraffes or goats.

"But in fact they're members of the camel family. And unlike sheep they are very calm, aloof but curious. Llamas are also famous for spitting as a sign of aggression. But it's only happened to me once in over two years, when I intervened in a row between two of them. It doesn't taste very nice."

For the more daring, there were fairground rides and a flying trapeze.

The Red Hand Flying Trapeze troupe had spent eight hours rigging a spider's web of ropes, guys, trapezes and the all important net. But it had not been used at all on Sunday because the weather was so bad.

But yesterday the clouds cleared and the sun shone for almost half-an-hour, plenty of time a few brave souls to have a free go. And they had a blast.

Peter Winkler aged 26, said: "I'm terrified of heights. From the ground it doesn't look too bad, but it's a long way up there, my legs were shaking. But you've got to try to get over these things."

Emma Marshall, 18, from Selby, went up for a second time and came flying off as first one hand and then the other opened and she lost her grip but the safety harness and the net below meant she was never in danger.

Some stallholders failed to turn up for the event but the fairground rides still managed to get the punters screaming, especially '2extreme' with its enormous rotating arm.

*Last Updated: 29 May 2007*

**Rain clouds: Some of the visitors who braved the bad weather**  
**Picture: Mike Waistell**

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