

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid has now entered a critical stage.

Extensive consultation had taken place by public opinion surveys of various kinds and with various interested groups, prompting several hundred responses not just from Cheltenham and the County but even further afield. Whereas in previous years I had been critical of the Council for decisions behind closed doors with little or no consultation, this time every opportunity had been taken to sound out public opinion in a very short time frame.

Possibilities for Park improvements included restoration and good management in the east areas of the Park and estate, while greatly extending community facilities on the west. This might include restoration of the bridges over the Upper Lake and a replacement for the destroyed bridge over the Lower Lake, gates and railings and improving management to reveal and enhance traditional features in the east area while, for example, creating new footpaths and providing new amenities on the west, including those attracting younger interests, and relocating some of the existing ones. Detailed decisions and planning will be heavily influenced by the amount to be sought from the Lottery, which could be from £1 million to £5 million. There are no guarantees but now at least the people of Cheltenham and well beyond have been given an opportunity to express their interest in, and support for, Pittville Park.

Friends of Pittville have played an active role on the two working committees and views we have collected over the last twelve months have been included in the consultative process. Proposals are scheduled to be presented to CBC Board of directors and the Project Board before Christmas and referred to the Cabinet for decision in the New Year.