

PARKS WINS MONEY TO KICKSTART REFURB

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Plans to renovate Pittville Park received a shot in the arm this week, with the news that the project has won £49,800 Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Funding. Friends of Pittville Park and Cheltenham Borough Council, which have been campaigning for the park's redevelopment since 2000, found out they had won the grant this week.

They will use the money to prepare a £5 million lottery bid.

Although just a first step towards the park's revamp, Friends of Pittville Park member Tony Mason was delighted.

He said:

"This is excellent news for Cheltenham. This grant will, hopefully, be just the beginning. The borough has until August 2008 to prepare a detailed bid for the millions we need.

The borough and staff are to be congratulated for their hard work."

The grant marks the end of a turbulent period for the borough and the Friends group in which they had several unsuccessful lottery bids and resisted financial pressure to lease out the Pump Room.

The Friends are calling on the public to let them know how they would like to see the park improved.

Mr Mason said:

"We're looking forward to being a major part of the project. But we're not a pressure group and we're asking the public to tell us what they'd like to see happen at the park. We have no preference, but so far suggestions include refurbishing the main gates, improving access over or under Evesham Road between both the park's parts, improved catering facilities and expanding youth facilities. We hope people will let us know what they want in the coming months so we can try to include it in our bid.

There is a lot of hard work ahead if we're to succeed in our bid, but we wouldn't have won this money if the lottery fund was not interested in what we are proposing"

Cllr. Chris Ryder, Cheltenham Borough Council's cabinet member for green environment said:

"Competition for Heritage Lottery funding is intense. Pittville Park is important for the whole of the town and this grant means that we'll have the skills and resources needed to put in a strong bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which will put Pittville Park at the heart of the surrounding communities."

To find out more about Pittville Park, or make suggestions for improvements, visit www.friendsofpittville.org