

Heritage Lottery Fund: Parks for People programme

Project Planning Grant Application: Pittville Park & Estate, Cheltenham

The application form comprises a total of 25 questions. Questions (Q) 1 to 10 establish the details of the applicant organisation namely:-, name, address, bank account, location, size and ownership of the Park, VAT status etc.

Q11: Description of the Park

The original Pittville Gardens were designed by Richard Marr for Joseph Pitt, to form the centrepiece of the Regency estate of Pittville on the (once) outskirts of Cheltenham. The gardens were laid out in 1825-42 to provide walks for those taking the waters at Pittville Pump Room or living on the estate. The estate was purchased by Cheltenham Borough Council in 1890, as part of the 1889 Cheltenham Improvement Act. The grounds of the adjacent Marle Hill House were incorporated into the estate in the early part of the 20th century. In 1986, 33 ha of the estate were Grade II listed by English Heritage on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

Today the 33 ha Estate is divided into unequal halves (East & West) separated by the main Evesham road. The eastern estate contains part of listed gardens (8ha), Grade I listed Pump Room, Pittville Lake (1ha), Pittville Lawns, Pittville Crescent and a small area containing the original (and listed) entrance gates to the estate. Many of the large Regency villas and terraces, dating back to the original estate are visible from and overlook this area. The western estate, with extensive views to the nearby Cotswold escarpment comprises a further 25ha of Grade II listed park with second lake and small rock cascade at its outlet, a well wooded area and island, recreation grounds and part of an 18 hole pitch and putt golf course. A further 10ha lies outside the listed park and includes a section of the golf course and Wellington and Clarence Squares which are part of the original design and contain a number of listed features.

Q12: Tell us why you think the community values the park as part of their heritage

This project aims to restore, conserve and enhance a historic Grade II landscape. However the project is also being promoted in recognition of the degree to which Pittville Park is used by a wide-ranging community, primarily made up of local residents and frequent visitors to Cheltenham. For many local residents, Pittville Park is the most tangible form of local heritage in the town and it is available to them free of charge throughout the year.

The recent establishment of the Friends of Pittville is an example of the community valuing the park as part of their heritage. This friends group was set up without reference to this HLF Bid and has its roots in a liaison group that was started some three years ago by the council to improve communication, liaison, coordination and responsive action between the council, local residents and the police. The positive feedback from the local community over this coordination and stewardship role by the council is a further example of the value the local community place upon the park as

part of their local heritage. The outcome of this work includes the increasing numbers of people turning up to find out more about Pittville Park and increasing numbers who have offered their services free of charge in terms of promoting the future restoration of the park.

The number of well-attended events held in the park, attended primarily by the local community further demonstrates its value. Pittville Park is a hugely important recreational and cultural asset and there is good evidence of third generation users. Pittville Park's popularity is influenced by its significant and dominant location within the town and this popularity explicitly implies that the community values Pittville Park as part of their heritage. In addition, the Grade 1 listed Pittville Pump Room is an important hub of activity for the community within the park.

Q13: Tell us how the park meets social, economic and environmental

The park and estate provide a popular venue for families, youngsters and adults of all ages to pursue a 'Healthy Living' agenda by walking, running, jogging or cycling through the park. Residents, students and office workers come in summer to picnic and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere. There are areas of social housing adjoining the park, with significant levels of social deprivation, exclusion and poverty where there will be significant levels of regeneration activity in future. Meanwhile the park provides a vital resource for people living within these communities to enjoy the open space, facilities and sports activities which include tennis, golf, boating, fishing and skateboarding. The park is a much valued venue for activities organised by Gloucester Youth Service, Early Years Play rangers, Neighbourhood Junior Wardens and the council's Community Rangers. The Park also provides important and popular walking and cycling commuter/access routes.

The heritage designations of the Park and Pump Room attract national and international tourists to the town and both play key roles in the festivals programme for which the town is justifiably renowned. The rural setting, regency design and commitment to ongoing maintenance contribute significantly to the above average property prices in Cheltenham.

Pittville Park & Estate is Cheltenham's largest area of open green space and is a vital 'green lung' for the town. The park has a biodiversity value of B+. The two large bodies of water play an important role in the management of water flow and quality from the Cotswold escarpment into the R Severn. The listed aviary buildings and diverse and important tree collection provide a valuable introduction to 'wildlife' for youngsters. A local resident and her team monitors wildfowl around the two lakes.

Q14 Tell us how you encourage local people, and others with an interest in the park, to be involved in managing this park.

The Pittville Area Residents Association (PARA) was formed a number of years ago to represent residents' interests in a broad range of matters and the Council routinely consults with this group on all planning related matters in the area. More recently, the Council actively encouraged the setting up of the Pittville ParkWatch scheme and members have worked closely with and through the Council's Green Environment to address persistent vandalism and antisocial behaviour in the park, with considerable

success. Over the last 12-18 months, senior managers within the Council have worked closely with Pittville ward members, to establish a Friends of Pittville group, which was formally constituted and an Executive Council elected in September 2006, in the presence of over 40 residents and supporters. The Group have expressed a keen interest in assisting with the management of the park and this objective is set out explicitly within the Objects of their Constitution. Strong links have already been forged between the Friends, PARA and Parkwatch groups.

Council Community Rangers support and participate in the North Cheltenham Community Safety group, which operates under the umbrella of a Crime and Disorder Partnership across two socially deprived wards on the boundary of the park. The group brings members of the community together to help find solutions to local crime. In addition, the Rangers support the work of Cheltenham Borough Homes recently introduced Neighbourhood Junior Wardens scheme, to increase local environment awareness among young children from the two wards.

The council has consulted with skateboarders over the design and layout of new equipment in the skateboarding park, in a successful attempt to enlist their help in reducing vandalism and unsociable/threatening behaviour in and around the skateboarding area.

Questions 15 to 25, seek to establish the financial cost of the work proposed, how these costs have been arrived at, who will be involved, what expert advice has been taken, the process involved in selecting consultants and the timetable.

We have calculated the total cost involved to submit a Stage 1 application to be ££75,681 of which £25,810 will be provided by non-cash contributions (CBC staff time + value of volunteer input) and a cash contribution of 5% from CBC. Consequently, we have applied for a Project Planning Grant of £49,870 to cover the difference. In answering these questions we have indicated that the Friends will contribute both volunteer support and specialist help (attracting an honorarium payment). We also included in the supporting documentation submitted with the application, a letter from the Chairman of the Friends of Pittville confirming the strong support, breadth of representation and extent of volunteer input from the group.

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