

“WE WON'T GIVE UP ON OUR PARK

Plans to restore Pittville Park to its Regency glory have been dealt a blow after a lottery bid was turned down. Cheltenham Borough Council wanted £50,000 to prepare a bid for £5 million. But the Heritage Lottery Fund said it was unclear how the renovations would help get more people into the park.

The Friends of Pittville Park, set up to support the bid, want to restore the park to Edward Pitt's original vision. Their plans include restoring the gates and ironwork in Clarence and Wellington squares, making the cafe in Central Cross Drive a focal point and creating extra seating, and widening the Evesham Road tunnel and adding lighting.

The rejection is a major setback and means the completion date of 2014 will now be delayed. The council said the bid would be resubmitted in June, after receiving encouraging feedback. Councillor Chris Ryder (Charlton Kings), cabinet member for green environment, said: "This is disappointing news especially for our friends group, who put so much effort into this first bid. We intend to reapply in the next few months and hope that our second bid will be more successful so that we can continue with our aspirations for Pittville Park."

The friends said the news was disappointing. But they say they are encouraged by the feedback and prepared to redouble their efforts for a new bid in June. Air Vice Marshal Tony Mason is chairman of the group, which was launched especially to support the lottery application. He said: "Bids to the heritage side of the lottery are facing stiff competition because of the cash being pumped into the Olympic Games. Bids which would have sailed through last year are struggling this year. The news will be circulated to our members this week and will be discussed at our committee meeting on Tuesday night. We're not going to be discouraged by this. If anything, the encouraging feedback will make us stronger and more prepared to bid come June. We remain absolutely committed to the goal we were set up to achieve."

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