

REPORT OF THE LEISURE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Clark)

This report addresses the corporate priorities of Environment, Economy and Health

FRENCH WEIR PARK: MATCH FUNDING FOR LOTTERY BID

1 Purpose of the report

To explain the capital investment planned for French Weir Park, and to seek the approval for the submission of an application for a Project Planning Grant from Heritage Lottery and BIG Lottery Funds.

2 Summary

Officers consider that it may be possible to secure a lottery grant to add to Section 106 funds for improving French Weir Park. A development project with the community over the last year has resulted in an active Friends Group and a preliminary development plan which needs further refinement and development. This work may be funded by the Lottery and an application for such a Project Planning Grant is to be made in November subject to Members approval.

3 Introduction

French Weir Park is in need of updating to meet the needs of its community in the 21st century and to play its part in aspirations to develop the river frontage for public use throughout the town. The development plan was presented to Health and Leisure Panel in February.

4 The Project

There is an active Friends Group in the park which is supporting and helping officers to prepare a bid to the HLF/BIG Lottery. The bid will be for funds to improve and update the park's infrastructure, extend the range of facilities provided, increase the number and types of park users and increase the involvement of the community in its management.

The following are the main elements of the project: -

- Play areas
- Furniture
- Paths
- River decking
- The toilet building
- Railings & Lighting
- Entrances
- Bridge Improvements
- Development Costs
- Project Management

Outline plans for the bid have been agreed with the Friends over the last year. To develop the plans further, to the standard required by Lottery Funders for the main grant, will need the services of various experts. This is estimated at costing £32,000. The HLF/BIG Lottery may fund 75% of this cost as a Project Planning Grant, the remainder can be found within existing budgets.

5 Funding

In order to make this initial application, HLF/BIG Lottery requires assurance that the Council will be able to fund its share of the costs of both the project planning costs and final project costs. The total cost of the scheme (project planning plus capital works) is estimated at £900,000. The total share for the Council is estimated to be £225,000 (25%). The implementation project would probably start in 2009 so not all of the funding would need to be made available at the outset.

5.1 Revenue

The council's share of the project planning stage costs are around £8,000 (25%) which as mentioned above will come from existing resources for parks development projects.

5.2 Capital

The Council's capital contribution for the main project will come entirely from developer contributions to local recreational facilities (Section 106). At present the Council already holds a total of £50,616 of Section 106 money for this area of town

There is a further £144,240 due from other nearby developments which are under construction, which will be received shortly. This will give a total of £194,856 towards the Council's share of the project costs.

This leaves a shortfall in funding of £22,144. In order to bridge this gap there are further Section 106's for local sites where work has not yet begun (or is at an early stage) to the value of £108,000. It is expected that by the time the project is ready to proceed some of these agreements will be in place and available to fund the complete scheme. If this is not the case, this could be funded from the annual capital budget for play equipment in parks.

Although not key for the delivery of the original planned works these additional sums may add to the scope of the project or be available for any short falls that occur by the time of implementation.

5.3 Should the application to the Lottery be unsuccessful, the development plans will be scaled back in accordance with the available Section 106 funding. In this case a revised scheme will be presented to the Executive for approval.

6 Financial Implications

At present the Council does not have sufficient capital resources of its own to proceed with this scheme independently. It is therefore entirely reliant on

S106 monies and an application to the Lottery for funding. Should the Lottery application be unsuccessful then the works will only be carried out to the value of the available secured S106 monies.

The inclusion of a new scheme within the capital programme, such as this, is a supplementary estimate and as such requires approval from both the Executive and Full Council. This is required even if the project is entirely funded from external sources.

7 Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

1. approve the submission of an application for a Project Planning Grant for French Weir Park, followed by Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications for full project funding and
2. approve the allocation of the Section 106 sums arising in the vicinity of the park for its development and improvement.
3. Request that, subject to a successful bid to the Lottery, Full Council adds this project to the approved capital programme (project cost of £900,000) and notes that this is funded entirely from external sources, including S106 monies already held.

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Background Papers

Health & Leisure Review Panel 16/02/06 French Weir Development Plan