

£4m PARK REVAMP

by MORT BIRCH



FUNDING is being sought for a multi-million pounds revamp that would restore Nuneaton's Riversley Park to its former glory.

Members of the borough council's Cabinet meet next week, to rubber-stamp an application for a staggering £4 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

If the bid is successful, the park, which has celebrated its centenary, will undergo a spectacular facelift.

Alan Franks, environmental services director at the Town Hall, said: "The proposal is to restore Riversley Park as far as possible, to how it originally was."

The original entrances will be restored, along with the original style of landscaping and other features, so the park will look almost like it did when it was officially opened in 1908.

There would be a new play area, a possible wet play area, new signs, toilet facilities and other improvements.

One important addition would be a central community building: "That would be used for demonstrations and exhibitions, talks on the park itself and a starting point for nature walks. It would be a focal point," said Alan Franks.

The facelift would embrace the George Eliot Memorial Gardens and the Pingles, and making the whole area a place for the townsfolk to enjoy.

Competition for money from Parks for People, which is funded by the Heritage Lottery and the Big Lottery draws to a close on September 30: "There is a deadline and the HLF received bids totalling over £60 million in the last submission round with only £20 million and it is anticipated that a higher number will be entered in the last round in September," said Alan Franks.

"We have got to produce a high quality bid to stand a chance and that is what we will do if the cabinet agrees."

The Heritage Lottery Fund requires applicants to provide a minimum of 25 per cent match funding towards the grant they are applying for.

"We would be putting up £273,000 in capital and £708,000 on account, which is money that we estimate we would have to spend on the park spread over ten years," said the environmental service chief.

Cllr Des O'Brien, portfolio holder for culture and recreation on the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, will have the task of spearheading the drive for the improvements to the park, if the money is forthcoming.

Riversley Park was given to Nuneaton in 1907 by Alderman Edward Melly for the benefit of the community and was officially opened the following year.