

PREMIER PARK, by CLAIRE HARRISON



RIVERSLEY Park could be revitalised into the West Midlands 'premier' park in just four years time.

On Tuesday, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council will officially apply for more than £3m funding to pay for the sensational facelift.

Should the application be successful and make it through three rounds, work could start on the project in early 2012.

Cllr Des O'Brien, cabinet member for culture and recreation said: "This is just the first stage but we are

obviously confident because we believe our application is a good one.

"Should we get the funding, Riversley Park will stand out completely in this whole area."

Costing £4.011m in total, including funds from the borough council, the entire park will be transformed, from the George Eliot Memorial Gardens in the north to the Pingles Leisure Centre in the south.

More than 400 residents and local schools have helped create the vision for the new-look park which boasts scores of new features, as well as enhancing its rich heritage.

A brand new play area will be installed in a more prominent location alongside a new community building and bandstand.

Replacing the old 'whale' paddling pool will be an interactive water system, in the form of a fun stream, where youngsters can paddle and play with different features.

To pay tribute to Alderman Melly, who gave the park to the borough in 1907 prior to its opening in 1908, replicate entrance gates from the era will be installed at the park.

There will also be new information boards, signage and nature and education trails.

Extra on-site presence will be provided in the shape of a projects manager, a community ranger and trainee.

Speaking about the project, Liz Richardson, horticultural officer for the borough council's parks and countryside team, said the project will bring many benefits.

"The purpose is not to replicate what was there but we can certainly pay homage to it," she said.

"Heritage elements of the parks have been unsympathetically maintained or lost and we want to restore this. The local economy will also receive a number of benefits: job opportunities; it would bring in outside visitors which would give some boom to our trade and an improved setting for the registry office."

Council leader, councillor Marcus Jones, has given the bid his thumbs-up.

He admits that the park is 'tired' and in desperate need of a facelift that the council cannot afford to fund alone.

"I think this is an excellent opportunity for this borough, this type of project is exactly what the lottery funding was designed for," Cllr Jones said.

"I sincerely hope that we can go forward and be successful. The park is quite tired for want of a better word, there are a lot of people that remember how the park was seven years ago and want to see it back to its former glory."

The council will know whether the first stage of the bid for the Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery funding has been successful in April next year.