

The logo for Riverbank features a teal brushstroke above the word "riverbank" in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

PRESS RELEASE

WE DID IT! MARLBOROUGH PROJECT WINS £50,000

17 November 2006

A Proposal to restore the River Kennet through the centre of Marlborough, and create a riverside arts festival, became a reality last night (Thursday) after the scheme was awarded £50,000 lottery cash.

Viewers of *The People's Millions* on ITV West were asked to choose between two projects that would receive the cash. Following a sustained publicity campaign, and furious voting on the day by supporters in the community, Marlborough's *Reclaim Our River* project emerged victorious.

The head-to-head battle between Marlborough's bid and a scheme in Yate, near Bristol, to provide a space for youngsters to play ball games was televised on the ITV West news on Wednesday night.

Volunteers from environmental campaign group Action for the River Kennet (ARK) and the Kennet Valley Arts Trust (KVAT), which had made a joint bid for the lottery cash, then faced a nail-biting wait of 24 hours to find out whether their application had been successful.

They gathered at the Wellington Arms in Marlborough, where – on live television – a heavily-disguised Rupert Evelyn, ITV West news presenter and face of *The People's Millions* in the west, presented a giant cheque from inside a rolled-up newspaper to Charlotte Hitchmough from ARK and Anna Sexton from KVAT, whose tireless work had made the project a success.

"This is great news for Marlborough, great news for the River Kennet and great news for the Arts in town," said Charlotte after the presentation.

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"We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who voted for the project and asked their friends, families and colleagues to vote."

Anna Sexton added: "This really does prove what a great community spirit there is in Marlborough. KVAT now faces the challenge of raising additional funds to total £5.75million needed to build the Riverbank arts centre in Marlborough and the support thrown behind this bid gives us a real confidence boost!"

Peter Davison of Secret Agent Marketing, which led the publicity campaign, said: "We went into this competition as underdogs. Not only is Marlborough much smaller than Yate – 8,000 inhabitants to 18,000 – but half the TV aerals in town pick up Meridian, rather than ITV1 West, on which the programme was screened.

"Our bid was heavily promoted – especially on the day it was televised when the secret vote line number was revealed. We used the local press and radio, posters, flyers, email, t-shirts and even the services of the town crier to encourage people to vote."

The *Reclaim Our River* project will take two parts. The first, led by ARK, will be the restoration of a 75-metre stretch of the Kennet at the bottom of the Priory Gardens, from the edge of the Waitrose car park to the Figgins Lane bridge.

The restoration should create a sparkling chalkstream, attracting new wildlife including trout, water voles and kingfishers – much more attractive than the rats that currently inhabit the riverbank

Once ARK's restoration work is complete, KVAT will run a series of arts workshops and display the results of public art competitions, including photography, poetry, painting and sculpture along the river bank as part of a festival of the arts.

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