

Angela Foster

085/251
652

From:
Sent: 29 May 2018 11:27
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway Objection from Leigh the Abbey Robertsbridge
Attachments: PNL RVR-1.docx

Dear Secretary of State, please accept the attached as an objection to the planned development of the Rother Valley Railway.

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

0851 652

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transports & Works Act Orders Unit
Department for Transport, Zone 1/18
Great Ministry House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

29th May 2018

Dear Secretary of State

Re: Rother Valley Railway (RVR)

I am writing to object to the proposed RVR extension from Bodiam to Robertsbridge, East Sussex. There are many objections, and I have tried to list these in order of gravity in terms of the negative impact on the local community, the locality, and the wider region.

It is crucial that you should realise that this development is being imposed upon Robertsbridge by people who live far away from the village and the surrounding area. The RVR is backed by a wealthy donor who is a railway enthusiast. In fact, the whole enterprise is dominated by railway hobbyists, not by local people.

First, the RVR business plan is not credible. The railway cannot bring significant benefits in terms of employment and turnover to a village which has a only tiny café and a couple of convenience stores. Any possible benefit will be hugely outweighed by shortage of parking. None of us accept the fiction that everyone will arrive by train from London.

Second, the creation of 3 new level crossings- one across the A21; one across the busy junction road; and one within the village- is contrary to all policy and common sense and is widely opposed not only locally but in Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill. Surely, this cannot be allowed- it will, despite the avowals of the RVR, lead to serious traffic build-up both in the village (which will be used as a 'rat-run') and along the main road itself. It seems extraordinary to spend millions on the Tonbridge by-pass and then to allow a hobby railway to interrupt traffic flow along the already congested and dangerous A21 at Robertsbridge, at the foot of a hill with several blind corners.

Third, and this is a personal as well as community issue, there is grave concern that the flood plain will be made liable to worse flooding. We do not accept the assurances of the RVR that flooding will be no worse. People living in the village in many of the low-lying

houses are at risk, despite the flood defences built after the disastrous floods some years ago.

I live at Robertsbridge Abbey, a grade I listed building under the aegis of English Heritage. In winter we are often marooned as floodwaters envelope the only track to our house and to our neighbours. There are historically important fishponds within our grounds and within the Ancient Monument boundaries and worsening flooding could seriously damage this historically important site, and possibly the building itself.

Fourth, the development of the rail link will seriously damage a precious ecology. You will know that every wild space is valuable as birds, insects and animals are increasingly deprived of habitat by humans. RVR will add to that loss. At present we have an unspoilt valley with cuckoos, warblers and other rare species maintaining a precarious existence. The RVR development will necessarily destroy mature trees and valuable habitat, and as a scientist and member of the British Trust for Ornithology and RSPB, I cannot accept that this disruption is justified by this obsession with a railway track. Once a habitat is seriously disrupted there is no assurance that the species displaced will return.

Access to the valley by foot is available through wonderful footpaths, so the public can enjoy this valley on foot- much healthier than travelling by (diesel) trains.

I am confident that political issues will not be allowed to influence the independence and objectivity of your decision, and I am confident also that you will consider the environmental as well as the logistical and political issues raised as we face a crisis in the balance between preserving rare and valuable islands of ecological diversity and the relentless pressure to 'develop' - in this case a hobby railway unwanted (and unneeded!) by many living in our local communities.

With thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Leigh

(Professor) P Nigel Leigh BSc MB BS PhD FRCP FMedSci FAAN