

065/195



The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
c/o Transport and Works Orders Act Orders Unit  
General Counsels Office  
Dept of Transport Zone 1/18  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

May 27th 2018

Dear Sir,

**Re: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order**

I wish to register in the strongest terms my objection to the above application.

This proposal is a vanity project run under the name of a charity by rich steam fanatics who have tunnel vision and no consideration for community or environment. This railway should, as per the terms of the original agreement to rebuild, stop at Bodiam and go no further.

If there was one reason for opposing this application that would be cause enough for concern however there are multiple reasons:

**QUESTIONABLE HERITAGE** – The Tenterden to Robertsbridge railway was a shambles from its inception. It was poorly planned, poorly engineered (crossing flood plain), poorly built and with sub standard rolling stock and a tiny customer base. It was never a commercial or engineering success and finally closed after WW2. The track bed ripped up and the land returned to its previous use.

**AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY** – The parish of Salehurst and Robertsbridge lies entirely within an AONB, a designation intended to conserve the landscape, maintain quiet enjoyment of the countryside with regard to those who live and work there. This railway proposal funded by "city money" for tourists from outside the area will ruin this environment.

**ENVIRONMENT** – Diverse flora and fauna exists in the proposed building areas as a result of sympathetic land management by the current landowners. This would be destroyed by the proposed works. The railway would go over a current flood plain, if track were to be laid the same as the original track it would be washed away several times a year (as it used to be) so RVR propose to move and lay tons and tons of concrete and aggregate all over these unique beautiful meadowlands completely destroying them in the process and creating a visual eyesore

whilst polluting the air with steam and diesel emissions (yes RVR propose to run, not just cute Thomas the Tank engines, but dirty filthy diesels just when all environmental advice is to cease using diesel)

**INCREASED TRAFFIC** – Salehurst and Robertsbridge are laid out on medieval street plans that now have to service 21<sup>st</sup> century traffic. The infrastructure of the village can not currently cope with traffic flow ( even after the bypass) or parking. A Government directive requires additional housing to be built in the village adding to increased traffic flow and parking. RVR tourists would result in yet more car traffic and parking requirements. No proposals have been submitted by RVR as to how they would deal with this, indeed they claim visitors would arrive and depart by train, most unlikely given the costs, time and logistical problems of travelling a family on our current rail network.

**LEVEL CROSSING PROPOSALS** – It is absolute folly to build 3 level crossings especially one across one of the most dangerous roads in the South East - the A21. The proposed crossing in Northbridge Street is in a residential area used for on-street parking and within yards of a planned new housing estate. The proposed crossing on the B2244, a road where traffic notoriously travels at great speed, lies between two narrow bridges. In addition the office of Rail and Road policy is that apart from exceptional circumstances no new level crossings should be built yet the owners of RVR not only propose one but three. How exceptional is this vanity project that we as a society would be willing to dramatically increase the potential risk of injury or indeed death to members of the public.

**COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDERS**- Parliament enacted CPOs to ensure that public body developments, such as essential housing or road building, for the public betterment could proceed without the agreement of the landowners. The building of a vanity railway by a charity is not for the public betterment. This is a case purely of the rich abusing the law to grab what they want. If these compulsory purchase orders are enacted it sets a very dangerous precedent.

**ECONOMIC BENEFITS** - RVR claim there will be economic benefits to our community. They have not published any details. However, Robertsbridge is a residential working village, not a tourist attraction, it does not have an employment problem. RVR is primarily staffed by volunteers. Most of the village service businesses are for local trade and unlikely to attract tourist trade (are visitors going to bring their lawnmowers for repair?) or currently operate at near full capacity with no desire or ability to expand.

In summary please reject this application it is an unnecessary project that has already caused severe distress to individuals, concern and anger within our village community it is completely without merit or benefits. These railway extension proposals should be stopped in their tracks now and not steam ahead to burn our limited government funds on a public enquiry.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Susan MacGregor

Cc Rt Hon Huw Merriman MP