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May 28th 2018

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

Dear Mr Grayling,

RVR's plan to renew this line is not viable on many counts but its worst aspect is the company's attempt to use Compulsory Purchase powers to acquire land on the route.

CP powers are generally accepted to be necessary to provide essential infrastructure for community or national benefit; that RVR intends to use what I understand to be CP powers under the Transport and Works Act to acquire private land for profitable recreational use, ie *non-essential* use, is devious and improper and is an abuse of those powers.

RVR says its plan is to reinstate the line but this is incorrect; the old track bed was dug up and removed and the land restored to agriculture decades ago. It would entail building a new line on what is now private agricultural land.

The extension to Robertsbridge would seem to offer no tangible benefit to the area, rather it would have quite the opposite effect. Aside from the inevitable disruption caused by its construction, the consequent permanent difficulties and hazards caused by three new level crossings, two across the very busy A21 and the busy and fast B2244 Junction Road, with traffic holdups, air pollution and more ugly flashing road signs would be unacceptable. Noise from diesel trains and the real risk of fire damage to ripe cereal crops adjacent to the line would also affect local homes and farms.

At a public meeting in Bodiam many years ago RVR, as a major part of its pitch to 'sell' to local people its vision of the benefits of the Tenterden to Bodiam extension, claimed that it would increase visitor numbers to Bodiam Castle. The response from a National Trust representative was that Bodiam Castle had more than enough visitors and would find difficulty coping with extra numbers.

Recent local reaction - typically that of The Salehurst Halt pub and restaurant - to RVR's plans supports the view that local traders would not benefit from this project and that we locals who would have to live with it and its consequences do not want it.

I understand that RVR has received major Lottery funding and I guess will be spending much of it on expensive lobbying; please listen not just to them but to the people who matter, the locals who will only suffer from this unnecessary development.

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Horton

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport  
cc to:

Huw Merriman MP

Amber Rudd MP

Salehurst and Robertsbridge Local Council

Rother District Council Chair Mrs Mary Barnes

E Sussex CC Leader Councillor Keith Glazier

Mrs Sally-Ann Hart, District Councillor, Eastern Rother Ward