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25/05/18

Dear Secretary of State

RE: Rother Valley Railway's (RVR) Application to the Department of Transport for a Transport and Works Act to 'construct, operate and maintain' a new railway line from Bodiam to Roberstbridge. Planning Application Ref: RR/2014/1608/P

I am writing to **object** to the above proposal on the following grounds:-

- If granted this project will require 3 level crossings, one of which will cross the A21. This is a major route from Kent to Hastings and is well known for being one of the busiest and most dangerous roads in England today. It is exceedingly busy throughout the day and especially so during the summer and at weekends and bank holidays. We already experience frustrating delays and long queues of traffic. The level crossing closures, supposedly 14 per day, will only make the situation worse. Level Crossings in themselves can be hazardous and there is a high risk of accidents associated with them. In this particular instance the traffic flow is sufficient to result in the regular blockage of a roundabout just north of the proposed level crossing. In addition, traffic from the south would be approaching the level crossing at 60mph.
- In order to build this new railway local farmers are facing Compulsory Purchase Orders of their land. The farmers do not want to sell their land to RVR. I find it extremely worrying that the livelihoods of local farmers can be seriously affected and potentially destroyed for what is a non-essential leisure amenity and if the CPO's are granted then a precedent has then been set for similar events to happen elsewhere in the country. CPOs must surely only be used for urgent and essential services and works?
- There will be an impact on the village of Robertsbridge. As there are no plans to provide extra parking for the users of the steam railway in Roberstbridge then where will they park?
- I am also concerned about the environmental impact this new railway could have. The proposed route is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is home to many native species of flora and fauna which will be destroyed if the project goes ahead with an extensive loss of mature woodland, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and flood plain marshland. The additional levels of pollution created by the steam trains, and queuing cars and commercial vehicles would increase CO2 emissions, which must be unacceptable, particularly when the Government is committed to reducing these.

I do hope you will give the above concerns your most serious consideration. The existing RVR from Tenterden to Bodiam is already established and does not go over any major road routes. Bodiam is a natural end point for the railway, having the castle, river and local facilities, and being a tourist attraction in its own right. I cannot see any advantages to building a new railway line from Bodiam to Robertsbridge for all of the reasons stated above. The negative impact far outweighs any potentially positive ones such as increasing tourism.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kathryn Kneller