

Obj/11

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

Hugh & Laura Chivers

Department for Transport

Great Minster House

33 Horseferry Road

London SW1P 4DR

via e-mail

01 May 2018

Re: Rother Valley Railway Planned Extension

Dear Sir

We live in and grew up locally; our children go to school in Robertsbridge. We oppose the proposed extension to the Rother Valley Railway (RVR) on practical grounds and the use of compulsory purchase powers for a non-essential vanity project on principle.

We object to the RVR extension for the following key reasons:

1. The creation of three new level crossings on Junction Road, Robertsbridge High Street and the A21 itself is madness. To stop-up the A21 in particular can only be damaging to the environment and local economy – to create an impediment to traffic on the same road that has been the subject of so much (successful) investment to enhance traffic flow is obtuse. To do this in order to accommodate a hobby railway defies belief.
2. Ecological impact appears to be unquantified as the Environmental Statement attached to the original planning application to Rother District Council acknowledged a “lack of access” and “significant gaps in knowledge”. What seems beyond dispute is that the RVR will cross countryside through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – this can only have a negative impact on natural habitats which cannot be undone. Whether the aesthetic of the Rother Valley is enhanced or not by steam and diesel trains is a matter of opinion; it is ours that it will not be.
3. Pollution caused by the trains (diesel and coal-burning steam) and the increased emissions from cars held up at the numerous level crossings cannot be dismissed as they will be detrimental to the quality of life of local residents, not to mention damaging in a broader environmental sense.

On top of this, RVR wishes to forcibly acquire privately owned land via statutory compulsory purchase powers. Such powers are designed to acquire land for publically beneficial infrastructure projects, as was the case with recent improvements to the A21 – to employ them to appropriate land for a vanity-driven hobby railway, to the detriment of farming livelihoods and an AONB is tantamount to state sponsored vandalism. This is not HS2.

It is unclear whether an RVR extension will bring any social or economic benefits, but the negative impact on the economic viability of local farming will be tangible. It is very difficult to envisage who stands to gain from this project other than the steam-train enthusiasts who have wanted this extension for so long.

We therefore wish to register our objection to the proposed RVR extension and the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders to accommodate it. The impact on the local environment and community can only be damaging, and will far outweigh any modest benefit from an irrelevant and vanity-driven project.

Yours faithfully

Hugh & Laura Chivers

cc. Chairman Nick Greenfield, Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council

Mrs Mary Barnes, Rother District Council

Councillor Keith Glazier, East Sussex County Council

Huw Merriman MP, Bexhill & Battle

Amber Rudd MP, Hastings & Rye

(all via e-mail)