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**From:** Susan Russell  
**Sent:** 05 May 2018 07:32  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Subject:** Rother Valley Steam Railway Extension Application

28-4-18

Dear Mr Grayling ,

I am concerned about the plans to build an extension of a steam railway line to Robertsbridge in a beautiful, relatively unspoilt part of the High Weald in East Sussex. This area is of great environmental and historical importance as it is in an area which is designated as being of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is also part of the historic Medieval Landscape of the High Weald which is unique in the UK and almost unique in Europe.

Whilst heritage projects such as this railway are often to be applauded and can add to the attractions of a local area, I fear that this project does not do so. In most of these cases there is an existing trackbed which is simply reinstated, however in this case the line closed about 70 years ago and the track bed was removed and the land it was on has been largely farmed ever since. In building the new line acres of farmland will be destroyed, much of which is very productive, and centuries old farms will be broken up by a railway line bisecting their land. Much of the land on Moat Farm has been unploughed for decades and ecologically is of great importance. I believe that there has only been a cursory assessment of the possible effect on wildlife in the Rother valley and that more detailed inspection would find that the impact on protected species, such as dormice which are known to inhabit the area, would be considerable. At the very least a full ecological impact survey needs to be done before this application is considered.

The plan for the line includes 3 level crossings, one on the busy A21 which can only have a detrimental effect on local transport links. The A21 in the area is already congested and the crossing will only make matters worse, possibly leading to drivers taking unsuitable diversions leading to negative impact on local communities and safety issues with more traffic on smaller roads.

The application for compulsory purchase orders in order to build this line would set a very dangerous precedent for this power to be used for non essential transport links or infra structure. The line will serve no purpose for commuters or travellers. As a small tourist project, which the proponents have admitted, will not benefit Robertsbridge or the surrounding area, the whole project risks setting a precedent whose impact in other areas could be considerable.

Although now living in I spent the first 25 years of my life on a farm in nearby and know how devastating the railway would be for the very stable, hardworking farming families of the area who have given their lives to food production alongside very positive stewardship of the land.

I urge you to look carefully at this application and at least to ensure that the correct reports and documentation are produced before the application is considered further.

Yours sincerely

Susan M Russell

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