

**From:** Emma Watkins  
**Sent:** 08 May 2018 20:32  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Subject:** RE: Rother Valley Railway

To confirm I am objecting to the railway and my full address is as follows:

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**From:** Emma Watkins  
**Sent:** 06 May 2018 22:09  
**To:** 'transportandworksact@dft.gsi.gov.uk' <transportandworksact@dft.gsi.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Rother Valley Railway

Dear Mr Grayling,

I am writing to you with regard to the Rother Valley Railway planning application.

As a local business owner and employer, I rely heavily on the A21 to access Hastings and Bexhill, as we all know this road is far from ideal. The A21 falls under the top 10 busiest high risk roads – Road Safety Foundation Report.

The proposal for the Rother Valley Railway would mean that the A21 gets closed for around 2 minutes twice an hour for 181 days a year, on some days RVR admit there will be up to 3km of queues. The idea of putting a level crossing on the A21 seems to directly conflict with all the work that is being done to improve employment and attracting businesses to this area.

According to the Mott Macdonald figures given by RVR the A21 exceeds capacity at a flow rate of 1649 vph, stating that the barrier closure would have no discernible effect on overall journey times..as most drivers would be in a queue anyway. However, the A21 at Robertsbridge works very well and even when busy the traffic is never queueing or even that slow. Putting in level crossing would certainly add to increased journey times and congestion.

RVR have stated the railway will reduce local traffic because their customers will all arrive by National Rail, rather than drive.

In order to understand the reality of this statement we completed a survey of the visitors to Bodiam Castle.

200 visitors were questioned and the results were as followed:  
68% were staying for a few days or more  
94% had driven to the castle and the average visitor number per car was 3.  
32% came on a day trip to the castle.

When asked if they could take a mainline train to Robertsbridge, would they then take the steam train to Bodiam. Not one person interviewed thought that this would be possible as they were either not near at station on the Robertsbridge line or they needed their car for another part of their visit (ie lunch in Rye).

By stating that all their visitors will come by train, RVR are trying to claim that their railway will reduce traffic movements, it also means that they also do not have to provide any traffic flow assessment which includes the

increase in traffic caused by visitors to the railway. They are therefore, quite deliberately, underestimating the queues on C18 Northbridge Street and the A21 and the negative impact of the extra traffic on Robertsbridge as well.

While RVR may aspire for their users to travel by public transport, there is no factual evidence they will or a good local example that this is achievable. Spa Valley Railway, operating within a 10 minute walk of Tunbridge Wells main line railway, stated that they do not currently see any significant numbers of customers coming from the main station. If RVR were to undertake a major marketing campaign to change public behaviour, surely there is a danger that the public will decide to visit the nearer station, rather than take the extra 30 minutes (and cost) of coming to Robertsbridge. Therefore, when assessing their application it cannot be assumed that visitors will come by train, that is completely contrary to current visitor behaviour. The reality is that the majority of their passengers will be arriving by car.

In your role as Secretary of State for Transport, I know that you are doing your utmost to aid the regeneration of the South East and the recent construction of the Bexhill to Hastings link road and the Tonbridge bypass are a reflection of a huge amount of effort to ensure investment. With £500 million to be spent on economic regeneration across East Sussex over the last 4 years. These roads support this regeneration and opens up land for housing, business development and employment opportunities.

The Bexhill – Hastings link road was supported by a rigorous and proven economic case, which saw land supply studies and feedback from local firms and the Chancellor confirmed funding for the Link Road because of its “economic regeneration benefits for a deprived community in the south east”.

*East Sussex County Council recognises the A21 as a strategic corridor in the South Coast, supporting regeneration and economic growth throughout the South East Region. Improvements to the A21 should therefore proceed as a matter of urgency – Rother Members Bulletin, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012*

***“A business considering locating in the South East might conclude that it is a great location let down by a tired and inadequate transport network”***<sup>1.15</sup> Taken from *MIND THE GAP - The Case for Supporting National Economic Growth through Strategic Transport Investment in the South East England* published by South East England Councils, South East Strategic Leader, SEDEEPT (South East Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport).

Rother Valley Railway will bring an additional barrier across the main trunk road to an area with poor transport links and potentially undermine the efforts to make this part of Sussex attractive to businesses. In 1971 they applied for a light railway from Tenterden to Robertsbridge, however they were asked to reduce this to Tenterden to Bodiam, so that they would not cross the A21, how after nearly 50 years is this a more attractive proposition to the government?

I am sure you are aware of some of the issues I have highlighted but thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Yours faithfully

Emma Watkins  
Director Greenbottles Recycling Ltd

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