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Garry Watts

Monday, 14 May 2018

Dear Secretary of State

**Rother Valley Railway. Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction Order**

I am writing to object strongly to the proposal to build the above extension to the existing Tenterden to Bodiam Steam railway. My objection is as a sometime resident of Robertsbridge and a frequent visitor to the area.

I am objecting on the following grounds and would urge you not to grant the application and associated Compulsory Order.

The proposed route crosses three roads by means of three new level crossings. These include, rather incredibly, one across the A21 trunk road. This is a very busy road carrying traffic to and from the coast at Hastings – particularly at weekends and bank holidays – exactly when the proposed railway line will also be at its busiest. The A21 is already regarded as one of the most dangerous roads in Sussex and further lengthy delays will only make that worse.

The route is across a notorious flood plain of the River Rother; following a series of serious floods, substantial flood defence works were carried out some years ago; new rail embankments will negate much of the benefit of these works and increase flood risk to homes and local businesses.

The proposal makes no provision for increased road access and parking for the 50,000 forecast visitor numbers, this will create significant disruption to the village and to local roads and homes.

The economic case set out by the applicants seems to be fundamentally flawed; it is common ground that most benefits will accrue to Bodiam and Tenterden not to Robertsbridge. The current railway uses volunteers and very few paid jobs will be created by the extension.

The romantic appeal of an extended steam train line does not justify riding roughshod over an AONB nor over landowners rights by the use of a Compulsory Purchase Order. These landowners have farmed the land for many generations as proper working farms. Significant parts of these farms will be rendered unviable by construction of the proposed line with detrimental effects on their livelihoods.

I would be pleased to provide further details of my objections if required, please do not allow the application to proceed.

Yours sincerely

Garry Watts