

**Angela Foster**

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**From:** Griffiths, Steve  
**Sent:** 28 May 2018 16:48  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Subject:** Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order.  
**Attachments:** TWAO support letter SA.pdf

Hello

Please find attached a letter of support for the application on behalf of the Rother Valley Railway Supporters Association.

Best regards

Steve Griffiths  
RVRSA

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## Supporters Association

ROBERTSBRIDGE JUNCTION STATION, STATION ROAD,  
ROBERTSBRIDGE, EAST SUSSEX. TN32 5DG  
Telephone: 01580 881833

28 May 2018

Dear Secretary of State

### **Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order**

I am writing on behalf of the above named Association, which as its name suggests strongly supports the above named Order and the reinstatement of the railway. Volunteers and other members have worked hard since the 1990s to achieve this, in line with the original aims of the preservationists who gradually reopened the line westwards from Tenterden. We are now at the point where the goal of having trains once more running between Robertsbridge and Tenterden is finally in sight. While we are part of the RVR 'family', we are an independently constituted body, drawing our funds from our membership activities alone and not controlled by the railway.

We firmly believe that reinstatement will greatly benefit this part of East Sussex and Kent. When regular K&ESR heritage train services run through to Robertsbridge once more, this can only bring additional visitors and spending to the area which increasingly relies on its rich heritage for much of its employment and future prosperity. Easy interchange to the Hastings line will make places like Bodiam Castle, Sissinghurst and Tenterden rail-accessible to a huge regional population, especially with strong coordinated marketing by the various operators involved. This is in addition to the railway's own visitors.

Being based in Robertsbridge, we are aware of some recent ill-informed comment about the road traffic implications of the proposed level crossings. However, all the evidence shows that the brief, well-spaced closures of the crossings will not cause a build-up of traffic queues of the kind claimed by opponents to the project. On a low speed railway they are not much different from pelican crossings: perhaps a minute or so closure time. The comments also ignore the fact that the planning permission already granted by the local authority - following extensive debate and consultation - restricts the operating hours of the crossings and also provides for monitoring of traffic effects. We believe the various authorities involved should be trusted to make sure there is no significant impact on journey times or accident rates.

Other criticisms also seem equally ill-founded. On the question of amenity, one only has to visit the operating section of the line between Bodiam and Tenterden, or almost any other

heritage railway, to see how well these single track lines are integrated into their surroundings while at the same time allowing many thousands of people each year to enjoy views currently seen by only a few. Again the relevant public authorities have concluded that the proposals are acceptable in environmental terms including ecological impacts, and there are many safeguards and conditions designed to achieve this.

Although compulsory purchase powers are included in the draft Order, this only comes after the railway's best efforts over many years to get agreement from the two large landowners involved, and the Association sincerely hope agreement can still be reached on an offer which will undoubtedly prove generous. It is clear that the project cannot proceed without the relatively small strips of land involved, and regrettably this does make these controversial powers essential as a long stop, if no agreement is reached before the Order comes to be signed.

We believe the order, including those powers, is fully justified by the public benefits. In particular the project will help secure and enhance the future of one of the area's most successful visitor attractions with very little adverse impact locally. This is plain from the very professional expert assessments, from the decisions already made by the inspector who took the local plan inquiry some years ago, and by local authority in granting planning permission with the agreement of all relevant public authorities. We urge the Secretary of State to sign the Order and not to be swayed by the many unsupported claims evident in much of the opposition to the project.

Yours sincerely

Steven Griffiths  
Secretary

The Secretary of State for Transport  
c/o Transport and Works Act Order Unit  
General Counsel's Office  
Department for Transport  
Zone 1/18, Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 4DR

By E-mail: