



SUPP/14

Mr John Whitmore (BSc Eng)

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

10 May 2018

Dear Sir,

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

Last Sunday 6 May 2018 at Robertsbridge Junction Station I saw the notice related to this draft order, submitted to you on 19 April 2018, to reinstate the railway link between the above places. I also looked at the land take plans and engineering long section drawings of the route. The work already completed at the Robertsbridge end – station and connecting trackwork was shown and explained to me by a member of Rother Valley Railway Ltd.

My interest in the area dates back to the years when I grew up in Tunbridge Wells and made a cycle trip to Robertsbridge, where I saw a small steam engine working on a siding from the railway accessing Hodson's Mill. On a number of occasions since I have visited and travelled on the restored Kent and East Sussex railway, seeing its development and progress. Also I have visited other attractions in the area such as the gardens at Great Dixter. Last summer I joined a group of ramblers travelling by train from London to Robertsbridge. We then walked along footpaths to Bodiam for lunch at an inn and briefly visited the castle. We returned via footpaths on the north side of the Rother valley back to Robertsbridge.

This letter is written in support of the proposed restoration of the railway, which besides being an attraction in itself, will enable access from London and other towns in the south-east by rail to this area of countryside and its places of interest.

Much work has already been professionally undertaken, with  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of track laid at either end of the section and 5 bridges reconstructed at the eastern end for flood relief channels. The connection to the main line has been made, along with the trackwork on the approaches and within the station area forming a run round loop. The station platform and the first of the station buildings have been finished. All the track materials have been obtained to complete the link. In engineering terms it has been demonstrated that they, in conjunction with their professional partner organisations, can build the scheme.

Two objections I understand have been raised. Firstly a farmland owner has said valuable ecology would be removed by the link. This can be answered by the fact that overall the cutting and embankment sides of railways are recognised to be good wildlife corridors of undisturbed natural habitats. Specialists are to look after any protected species that may need to be relocated.

Secondly objections are being made on the perceived delays to road traffic by the 3 level crossings planned. It appears they may be basing their views on local crossings on the mainline, which are much more frequently closed than would be the case with a preserved railway. Also the latter mainly operates in the summer half of the year and then not every day outside holiday periods. Closure duration would be less than at Robertsbridge mainline crossing, where closure occurs before trains slow to stop at the station southbound

and only re-open when the train has restarted and run over the adjacent crossing. There is a precedent for a new lifting barrier level crossing on a bypass road, where the preserved Cholsey and Wallingford railway, in Oxfordshire, crosses the Wallingford bypass, and appears to operate satisfactorily.

By interchange with the main rail network the new railway link will increase the areas and places reached by public transport and so provide an alternative to car travel. We hope that this scheme can be permitted to progress and complete the good work already done.

Yours faithfully,

John Whitmore