

From: Ian Mantel
Sent: 16 May 2018 14:12
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

Dear Mr Grayling MP

I write in support of the above Order as I believe it will be of benefit to the majority of the population on the border of Kent and East Sussex.

There is very good history of a link to the Network Rail mainline proving to be an immense success. One only needs to see the benefits brought following the link of the Bluebell Railway to Network Rail tracks a few years back at East Grinstead. It has also proven to be a popular move with the villages served by the Bluebell Railway. The link means that:

Visitors from London, Croydon etc can and do now travel by public transport rather than private car. This is beneficial to the environment, to our rail services and reduces the number of vehicles clogging the lanes around the villages served by the railway.

Rotherstbridge is on the mainline from London via Orpington, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells, all centres of population and the extension will allow visitors direct access on the public rail network.

From the south trains from Hastings and Battle will provide a similar service. At present visitors have to drive to Tenterden or Northiam (there being no or limited parking at the other stations on the Kent and East Sussex Railway). The car park at Northiam frequently fills up on a Sunday whilst the number of vehicles at Tenterden often causes tailbacks onto the High Street.

There will be true economic benefits to the area and no risk to the public purse. All costs of the scheme are being financed by private individuals, some rich, some just donating a few pounds. However the additional visitor numbers to the area will bring a direct benefit to the public purse with increased sales of goods and tickets generating increased VAT income to the Treasury along with benefits to the local authorities including Ashford Borough Council, Rother District Council, East Sussex and Kent County Councils.

There have been a small number of protestors against the scheme. At the last Bank Holiday when approximately 20,000 bikers came down the A21 to Hastings these protestors had a petition for them to sign to object. this petition raised, I believe, just 600 signatures, so approximately 3% of those approached. And most of those were out of area and not likely to be affected.

There is considerable dis-information being spread by the protestors. in fact just this week the Hastings and Rye Conservatives suggested there would be major rush hour delays on A21. This simply is not true as no trains will run before 10am or after 5pm. In fact during mid-week there will be very few trains at all traversing the level crossing on the A21.

It is a fact that heritage railways are a major source of voluntary employment for the more senior members of society. As we live longer there are more seniors who need activities to enrich and fulfil their lives. it is well documented how a sedentary old age, slumped in front of the TV all day, is detrimental to health. Equally well known is the fact that seniors who are offered the opportunity to get out and give back something to the society in which they live will in general live longer and happier lives. Having volunteered and being a regular visitor to heritage railways I am aware of the interaction between old and young. The older volunteers impart knowledge to the young visitors, not in a school room manner, but just by chatting with them. This encourages learning and an interest in the world and in turn enriches the younger visitors' lives as well. Allowing the Rother Valley Railway to thrive will encourage interaction between young and old.

As a local resident, as a user of the A21, as a payer of Council Tax to Hastings Borough Council and in turn East Sussex County Council, I wholeheartedly support the Rother Valley (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order and I request you bring the Order into effect without delay.

Yours sincerely

Ian K Mantel

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