

From: BAM + Susar
Sent: 30 May 2018 05:55
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway

Transport and Works Act 1992
Proposed Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have no objection to the proposed Works but wish to comment on some of the assertions made by the pressure group "no2RVR" which is campaigning against the railway extension:

"the A21 is the most dangerous road in the country"

Local MPs Huw Merriman and Amber Rudd endorse this view and oppose the extension but they have not, as far as I can see, alleged that the proposed level crossing would make the road more dangerous, although "no2RVR" implies that they do. As you will know, it is generally not roads themselves which are dangerous, but the lack of attention and/or impatience of the road users. In the case of the A21, impatience is engendered by the fact that it is used by many heavy lorries moving relatively slowly, and that there is a stretch of nearly 10 miles from Robertsbridge to Lamberhurst with no opportunity for overtaking. On many occasions, I have seen people take serious risks by overtaking on double white lines approaching the top of Robertsbridge Hill, which is a blind summit.

If it is suggested that a short delay at a level crossing would make the road more dangerous, I would draw attention to the following: Network Rail have recently replaced the automatic half barriers on A2100 Battle Road with full barriers, controlled from Robertsbridge signal box, for safety reasons. With the AHBs, road closure was approximately 45 seconds; now it is typically 3 mins.20 secs, so it could be argued that this is now less safe!

Ms. Rudd also suggests that the delays at the proposed level crossing would affect the viability of economic regeneration in Hastings, an idea which I would have thought was rather far-fetched. With road improvements on the A21, it would appear that her aspiration is to have traffic flowing unimpeded at 50 mph all the way to Hastings, but at which point does it slow down, or does it all stop with a single jerk? Tourism is another point, but for the moment I cannot think of anything in Hastings which would be a greater attraction than this railway.

"sites of ancient monuments might be disturbed and as-yet undiscovered archaeological sites negatively affected"

Note: Not ancient monuments but sites of..... So, is all development everywhere to be challenged in case there might be something of interest buried somewhere? Was there any interest before the railway proposal?

There is indeed a problem with parking in Robertsbridge but isn't there everywhere? The bonus of this extension is that people will be able to access the railway directly via main line trains from London, Tunbridge Wells and Hastings.

"pristine habitats, mature woodland....."

As there was a railway here up to 60 years ago, I don't think these descriptions are really valid.

"carbon emissions"

All combustion engines, whether internal or external, are polluters and I have no data with which to challenge the assertions. But should we ban all steam engines or just those which might run between Bodiam and Robertsbridge?

"a medieval landscape.....small, irregular-shaped fields....."
Smaller fields is part of what the farmer is complaining about!

Councillor Sally-Ann Hart refers to *"a giant model railway.....privately-funded railway enthusiasts.....of small benefit to tourism, especially if it is in another county"* (meaning Tenterden, in Kent)

I hadn't realised Conservatives were against private enterprise or that they were so parochial! It is true that the project has been financed by wealthy individuals, but what is wrong with that? The point is that vintage railways are enjoyed by persons of all ages and all social classes, so this railway will be enjoyed by thousands, possibly millions of people across the spectrum and it is not, as she implies, just for the gratification of well-to-do "hobbyists".

The farmers say that their livelihood will be threatened but I would suggest this is an exaggeration. In southern Africa, farmers' livelihoods (and lives) are threatened; in Sussex, they will be merely inconvenienced, for which they should, and undoubtedly will, be compensated.

The pub "Salehurst Halt" is named after a feature of the railway, but the proprietors don't want the railway. They say that they already have sufficient customers and, when time permits, they enjoy relaxing and watching small insects buzzing around. It is not clear from their submission what their concerns might be; whether it is too many potential customers, perhaps of the wrong sort, or that the steam engines might drive the insects away.

So, we have a number of contradictions: small fields are good/small fields are bad; tourism is good, but we don't want tourists here; delays at the proposed level crossing would make the road more dangerous, yet the delay at an existing crossing has been increased four-fold for safety reasons.

If there was one serious reason for this project to be curtailed, all objectors would doubtlessly focus upon it, but the fact that every tenuous possibility, from global warming to disturbed newts, has been put forward, rather indicates that there isn't one.

yours faithfully,

B.A. MacPhee

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