

# Objection to the proposed Rother River Valley Railway.

By

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## Introduction:

I have been living at Summertree for 16 years and know the property for over 30 years as my step parents owned it before I inherited the Stud.

Summertree Stud is next to the Abbey and three of its fields abut the River Rother and at certain points are within 50 yards of the proposed line.

All the fields flood, two of the fields between the river and the lane are totally submerged as is the lane to the house. In my original letter of objection I included photos taken of these two fields looking across the river to Salehurst showing the effect of flooding in 2009 ( I am not reattaching the letters to this document which were in my objection reference OBJ/1035).

My attention to the issue of flooding regarding the proposal was when I read a notice in the Robertsbridge car park about the plans and where it stated quite clearly that according to a study there was no increased risk of flooding **in the village**. The specific reference to the village and not a more general statement that there would be no increase in flooding I found telling and disturbing.

## History:

As mentioned I have known the area for over 30 years and that therefore includes 2000 when Robertsbridge village was seriously flooded. At the time I recall that many locals believed that much of the problem had resulted from the building of the bypass, which when built clearly the issue of flooding must have been taken into account. However the unprecedented volumes of rain in 2000 saw the village inundated and on the national news, and any models that may have been used proved useless.

Subsequently considerable expense was spent flood protecting the village. This of course inevitably increases the flow of water further downstream, ie towards Summertree, Redlands Lane, the surrounding land and beyond.

The pictures of the flooding in 2009 speak for themselves. The total rainfall in 2009 was I believe considerably less than 2000. 2019/20 has again seen extensive flooding in the valley.

### **The issue:**

This last winter has seen very high levels of rain and the fields have been flooded. Flooding in itself is not surprising given that this is a flood plain. However what is notable, and what gives major cause for concern, has been the increase in the speed at which the land has been flooded and the longer time it has taken for the water to run off. How badly we are flooded is also dependent on the vagaries of the tides. I quote from the RMAIDB (Romney Marsh Area Internal Drainage Board) Newsletter of April 2020:

#### **'2019/2019 Season Recap**

Another year of irregular rainfall across our districts in terms of both timing and distribution has proved challenging to ourselves.....February 2020 brought storms Ciara and Denis. The former consisted of gale force 9 winds and occurred during a period of high spring tides which tested the sea defences to the point of partial failure in some locations. Denis followed a week later and was more of a rain event, **mercifully during a period of neap tides but the Rother still flooded the Wet Level** (my emphasis) as it is designed to do during peak flows....'

Clearly this part of the valley falls within the Wet Level and this begs the question what would have been the result of flooding if there has been the same high tides as the week before coupled to what is termed this or a worse 'rain event'?

Since 2009 let alone 2000 weather patterns have become more extreme. There are few who do not accept the issue of Global Warming. Not only are there few who do not accept this but there has been an **exponential growth** in extreme events worldwide and also more to the point in the UK. The seriousness of Global warming has drawn increasing comment for action in the last couple of years. Inherent in this increase in incidents there has been a significant increase in unpredictability. The 'normal' strictures as to probable weather patterns have been tossed to the winds. So much so that I read that the government were considering investing a vast sum into a new computer weather model for the Met Office to try and get a handle on this problem.

The report on which we are being asked to rely was drawn up in 2013. By definition in relation to what has happened since then generally it cannot be considered reliable. It is completely out of date.

Indeed, I do not think at the present time it is possible to provide any really reliable forecast or models of weather patterns, and in particular to small specific areas.

All we know is that we have had and are going to have more and more extreme weather occurrences.

In this context I would suggest it simply cannot be correct or prudent to rely on this report. The fact is that the whole eco system is a delicate balance, a balance which has been and will be under threat without any further local human intervention.

To rebuild the embankment, even with culverts ( which have a nasty habit of getting blocked) will undoubtedly change this balance to an unacceptable level.

Under the map estimating the impact of a 1/100 or extreme event ( whatever that might mean in the new world?) the flood waters are predicted to pass literally in front of my house. When I say in front I mean within a couple of yards of the house through the front garden.

We know for certain:

The statement of a 1/ 100 year event is now ?/ 100 years.

Extremes in number of times is matched by extremes in the seriousness of the actual events.

In this context any modeling is highly questionable. In fact modeling per se is indicative, a best guess which we all know in practice can turn out to be outrageously inaccurate. In the world of economic modeling the issue is not how often the economists get it wrong but when do they ever get the major movements right, such as the crash of 2008/9. The current Corona Virus emergency shows just how susceptible models can be to black swan events. In Global warming we are moving from Black Swan to White Swan events, we know the extreme unpredictable is going to happen.

Added to accuracy of any modeling, we know the model used for this predictive purpose is by definition out of date and cannot be relied upon. I question the ability of any body to guarantee that this proposed development will not seriously increase the risk of flooding in the village and most certainly outside the village.

The detrimental impact of extreme event(s) for those affected is in itself extreme. I consider the potential of having my house flooded extreme.

## **Conclusion**

This proposed project, and most definitely non critical project with all the other questions marks hanging over it, simply should not be allowed to generate such a clear and dangerous increase in flooding risk.

