

From: Jo Rainsbury [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 May 2018 23:24
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) order

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to express my concerns with regards to the proposed works to be undertaken by the Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) order.

My concerns are that the promises made by RVR are not substantiated meaning the negative impacts for the village overwhelmingly outweigh the positive impacts.

'Job creation'

The railway is run by volunteers. There will not be paid jobs within the RVR organisation. During the works, numerous volunteers have already completed various jobs that were not offered to local businesses, as shown on the RVR website.

'Improved local custom'

The Robertsbridge junction has been classed by RVR as a gateway station. That is, it will act as a boarding point for those wishing to travel up the line to Bodiam and onwards into Tenterden, Kent, a town that has already built up a substantial retail, food and drink offering. The only thing that the town doesn't offer is a mainline station, which Robertsbridge can and therefore offers an increased customer base for RVR. It is unlikely that a substantial number of those travelling to the Robertsbridge Junction will spend any time within the village or any money within local businesses. If the link is merely aimed at getting more of a customer bases, why not run a bus shuttle service between the Robertsbridge mainline station and Bodiam.

'New business opportunities'

Given the above, it is very unlikely that any new business will be viable on the basis of new\additional custom due to RVR customers.

I also feel that there are several other aspects of the project that do not make sense. In particular, I am concerned with the addition of 3 level crossings, one on the main arterial route to Hastings the A21. I see no sense in this for traffic flow and feel it will lead to potential accidents. The A21 regularly faces congestion and given the amount of time and money recently spent on the works to dual part of this road at Tonbridge it seems rather silly to then introduce a bottleneck. I recognise that the number of trains running and the timing of these are considered to reduce this however there is just no need for it at all given it is purely a leisure pursuit. Also how will this affect the response time for the emergency services to the local area?

A further concern is that Robertsbridge is at the bottom of the Rother Valley. Potential flooding is clearly in residents minds given recent (last 20 years) flooding events that lead to the environment agency spending millions on flood defences. It is my understanding that the review carried out indicates that these defences lessen in their effectiveness if the railway is to proceed. I feel this is a risk that the village should not be expected to face.

The land where the railway is due to go is an area of outstanding natural beauty with rare and protected species living there. These areas were established when it was believed that the railway line would not be reinitiated and are of environmental significance. I feel it is an unnecessary

extravagance to put a hobby project before protecting our declining areas of outstanding natural beauty.


Robertsbridge is not a large village and its roads are basically a T shape of the High Street which was the old A21 before the bypass and Station Road. If we are to believe RVR, then the visitors that flock to the village will add to an already congested environment. Parking is already an issue, one which will only be exasperated by the 155 homes due to be built under the neighbourhood plan.

I understand that 2 families who do not wish to sell their land are to be forced to do so by a compulsory purchase order and the reason behind this does not seem to be for an essential infrastructure project but for leisure activities. I do not believe that someone should lose their land and livelihood just to satisfy an unnecessary hobby project.

Overall, I am not convinced by any of RVR's optimistic offerings and feel that they are attempting to do as they will to get what they want and appeal to you to ensure that there is a public enquiry that offers an objective view and allows you to make an informed, unbiased decision.

Regards,

Jo Rainsbury



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