

From: Caroline Moore [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 May 2018 10:51
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

Dear Chris Grayling,

I am writing to object very strongly to the proposed Compulsory Purchase Order through Moat Farm and Parsonage Farm to complete the Rother Valley Railway. Compulsory Purchase Orders should only be used by public bodies (not a band of railway enthusiasts or other hobbyists) for the completion of a major project that is in the public interest. Basic property rights should not otherwise be violated. There is no major public benefit here: this steam railway is of course not a vital transport link, and it is completely inappropriate to invoke the laws used for HS2.

Genuine transport links, indeed, would be adversely affected. The three railway crossings proposed include one across the busy A21, where traffic flow towards the coast is already more than problematic on Bank Holidays and sunny weekends. The history of proposed bypasses testifies to the issues already existing on this road, which would be dangerously compounded by a level crossing.

Any level crossing would be a highly retrograde step: the Office of Rail and Road states that "other than in exceptional circumstances, no new level crossings on any railway" should be allowed, "therefore creating no new risks". The ORR Railway Guidance Document states that

"This should always remain ORR's starting position as it is consistent with our drive to reduce crossing risk and our support for closure and removal programmes; removing or eliminating a hazard is the priority in a hierarchy of risk control.

Network Rail also has a general "no new crossings" policy and the heritage sector is encouraged to publish details of crossings on its network and any planned closures. The Highways Agency has a policy of no new accesses on the strategic road network except in exceptional circumstances where it can be sufficiently demonstrated that there is a net benefit to the network."


The fact that a railway track crossed the road in the past is immaterial: "new" level crossings specifically include "the re-instatement of a crossing that is in place but has not been active for a period of time". Moreover, it is extremely important that "a legal right of way to have a crossing must exist (for the railway operator)." The Rother Valley Railway Company possesses no such right.

It is unclear what benefits would accrue to the surrounding area. Robertsbridge certainly would not benefit, as the RVR have admitted.

The ecological impact on the countryside has been severely underestimated. I walk through these fields on a regular basis: there are unique habitats here, including extremely rare mosses. The argument that no harm will be done because an ancient railway line is merely being reinstated overlooks the appalling and irreversible damage that will be done by modern track-laying techniques. A concrete band running through a flood-meadow would not be a restoration but a desecration, which cannot fail to impact adversely upon surrounding habitats.

On all these grounds, I object very strongly to the Compulsory Purchase Orders. Parsonage Farm has been farmed for eight generations by one family, who worked on the land even before that: their centuries of caring for these fields - in an old-fashioned, chemical-free fashion which has fostered truly remarkable biodiversity - should not be set aside lightly.

Yours faithfully,
Caroline Moore



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