

Shenaz Choudhary

From: Paul Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 May 2018 17:10
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) order
Attachments: RVR Objections 18 (2) Environment.docx

To whom it might concern,

Please find attached my objection to the above.

Kind Regards

Paul Smith

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06J/684.

The Transport & Works Act 1992

The Transport & Works (Application and Objections Procedure) (England & Wales Rules 2006)

Proposed Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order.

Background of self

Paul [REDACTED] Smith,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am a career railwayman of forty one years' experience. I moved to Robertsbridge with the intention of living near a heritage railway, which in later life I could pass on my railway experience to a new generation. I deliberately bought a property that overlooks the railway.

However, I have since changed my views on the Bodiam to Robertsbridge extension as I feel that the way the creation of this railway extension is being undertaken by the RVR is flawed and requires further investigation. This includes the purchase of land by compulsory purchase.

Nature of Objection

The Creation of a new Railway from Robertsbridge to Bodiam will be against Policy EM8 in the Rother District Councils, District Development Plan in that the construction of the railway will go against point 2 of EM8 *'It (The RVR) has an acceptable impact on the High Weald Area of outstanding natural beauty.* I do not believe the railway will have an acceptable impact on the High Weald A.O.N.B.

Extract from Statement of Aims Published by the RVR on the 19th April 2018.

Grounds for objection:

The Railways effect on important natural habitats

Since the closure of the railway in 1961 the former track bed has become a species rich corridor of secondary woodland. This is an important mixed woodland habitat that supports a raft of interesting species, plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and fungi that greatly enrich the landscape of the Rother Valley.

I believe that the destruction of these habitats and the displacement of those that rely on and live within these habitats will have an unacceptable impact on the High Weald A.O.N.B

The Operation of first generation diesel trains

In view of the concern with pollution caused by emissions from diesel cars and the more stringent MOT regime for diesel cars which came into force on the 20th May 2018, it seems surprising that diesel locomotives or trains with little or no protection from poisonous emissions will be allowed to run along the Bodiam to Robertsbridge extension.

During the operating season currently operated by the Kent & East Sussex Railway, diesel trains operate two round trips on 88 days of the year; this does not include maintenance trains or diesel gala days which attract visiting diesel locos (although diesel galas do not appear to be part of the K & ESR operation at present).

I do not believe that the operation of first generation diesel trains (built 1950/1960s) will have an acceptable impact on the High Weald A.O.N.B.

The railway as an agent for facilitating access to the High Weald A.O.N.B.

Mr Gardner Crawley in an article in the Daily Mail on 12th May 2018 'Where Not Chuffed' makes these points:

'There are a lot of very wealthy people in East Sussex but parts of it are very deprived-and the big employer nowadays is tourism. Making tourism here more accessible to people who don't have cars is very important'

I would argue that Mr Crawley's statement above is does not work from a personal finance point of view, especially for deprived people and families on limited incomes. First people will need to get to Robertsbridge by train which is good but it will be at a cost which will be higher the further they travel. Using the K & ESR current fare structure as an example of what might be charged when the railway is fully open:

Family Ticket £38 (2 adults 3 Children)

Adult £18

Child £12

I very much doubt if many people from deprived areas could afford with total travel costs of £50 or more for a day out on the new railway and that is before eating and drinking is considered.

Therefore, I think this argument as a reason for building the railway is flawed, as it would appear that passengers on the new railway would have to be fairly well off to use it, if the current fares regime remains in place.

Mr Crawley goes onto say It's not a though were putting a new line across virgin land-there was a railway there until the 1960's'.

Mr Crawley is correct in saying that there was a railway on this route; it closed to freight in 1961 and to passengers 10 years before. However, Mt Crawley does not say that the railway only opened in 1900 and therefore only operated for 61 years. Hardly a success story if compared to the Tonbridge to Hastings Mainline which opened in 1852 and is still serving its communities.

After the railway was closed it was sold by the British Transport Commission to adjoining landowners to become part of their lands. As for virgin land most of the track bed has gone or what remains has become part of the secondary woodland already mentioned. So in fact a lot of Virgin Land will be built on, this land is currently used for farming or open pastures, these activities add to the local ecology of the Rother Valley and support the High Weald A.O.N.B.

Therefore, is it worth destroying important elements that make up the High Weald A.O.N.B.so the RVR/K &ESR can run its Diesel Trains, its Fish & Chip Supper trains, the 1940's weekend and of course Thomas the Tank Engine weekends, these are all operated by the K & ESR now.

If the railway were to be built over where once newts and birds coexisted in beautiful woodland in luscious landscapes, to be replaced by the K & ESR/RVR Real Ale Trains amongst others. Will that not have an unacceptable Impact on the High Weald A.O.N.B.? I think it would. Surly our precious environment must come first over building a heritage railway with limited appeal.

END

