

From: Susan Prochak
Sent: 31 May 2018 17:52
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: "Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order"

I am writing as one of the District Councillors for the Salehurst Ward. Having been the Councillor since 1989 I have known that the District Council have for many years supported the reinstatement of the heritage line between Tenterden and Robertsbridge. The Rother Valley Railway line has been in the Local Plan since 2006. Indeed the Council supported the connection between Bodiam and Northiam with a grant of £25,000.

The Council always required the planning application for the building of the line between Bodiam and Robertsbridge to address three concerns: the road crossings, the impact on the environment and any flood risk. The application was accompanied by detailed reports from various professional bodies who addressed these concerns. Highways England, East Sussex County Council the Environment Agency, Natural England and Rother District Council were all satisfied that the issues had been adequately addressed and were able to put forward the application for approval. When the Planning Committee of Rother District Council voted on the application it was recognised that members had to put their trust in the professional opinion of relevant experts and in the event supported approval unanimously.

Rother District Council continues to support this project as it is the only possible major tourism development in the countryside. Tourism is a substantial contribution to what is a relatively poor area in terms of average income, but the total visitor expenditure in 2015 for Rother was £245.7 million equating to an income of £291.6 million for local businesses and providing 6,836 jobs. The link between Bodiam and Robertsbridge connecting as it does to a main line station would add significantly to the tourist offer.

My Councillor colleague for this ward also supports the reinstatement. As there has been a vigorous campaign on behalf of the landowners who are against this project, there have been a huge number of opinions, some valid, some not, which in my view have been based on fear of the negative impact of the heritage railway, it would be advisable that a public inquiry could openly and publicly address concerns.

Regards
Cllr Sue Prochak