

Transport and Works Act Order 1992  
Transport and works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004  
Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order  
Proof of Evidence  
Graham Bessant Statement

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Graham Bessant

1.2. I am the Independent Competent Person under The Railways and Other Guided Systems (Safety) Regulations (ROGS).

1.3. I have 42 years of experience of railway structures design, construction, maintenance and management obtained while working for London Underground (LU) where I was Head of Profession (Bridges & Structures).

1.4. After completing my indentures with Messrs Rendel Palmer & Tritton, Consulting Engineers, I joined London Transport and subsequently became a Chartered Engineer. I am a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, an Associate Member of the Institution of Structural Engineers and a Chartered Member of the Institute of Logistics and Transport. I represented LU on the UK Bridges Board, The London Boroughs Engineering Group, and the Bridge Owners Forum. I also represented LU on code drafting committees and I still sit on the British Standard committee B/525/10/01 Bridge Loading.

1.5. My involvement with the Rother Valley Railway began in 2013, when I was asked to advise them with regard to construction of 4 new bridges and the new Robertsbridge Junction station. They asked my advice as I was the Consultant Civil Engineer to the Kent & East Sussex Railway and many members of K&ESR also belonged to Rother Valley Railway. I had also been the Civil Engineer to the Spa Valley another heritage railway near Tunbridge Wells.

## 2. OPTIONS STUDY

2.1. I have had extensive experience of appraising Feasibility Reports, and Option Studies during my career at LU. The Option Study carried out by Messrs Arup is of the same standard as those consultants carried out for LU.

2.2. It is thorough and detail is appropriate.

2.3. There are 4 options, 1. At grade, 2. Rail under road, 3. Rail over road, and 4. Re-align the road. All are dealt with equally and I believe objectively.

2.4. I had been asked by the Rother Valley Railway to carry out an approximate preliminary design into a rail under road crossing, and came to much the same sizes and conclusion as the Arup study for that option, so I can vouch personally as to its accuracy.

2.5 I have also been asked by the Rother Valley Railway to give an opinion on the type of culverts needed for an "At grade" scheme, so again I can vouch for the accuracy of this part of their report.

2.6. I have not been asked to give any opinion on a rail over road or a road re-alignment scheme.

### 3. COSTINGS

3.1. I have been retired from LUL for approaching six years now, and so I am not up to date with current costs, and when I was working I was used to civil engineering costs in London, which do tend to be higher than in the rest of the U.K. However having said that the prices in the costings seem to me to be about right.

3.2. As far as the RVR costs are concerned, I favour the RVR costed option of £1.5m. I have had experience of heritage railway new works as the Civil Engineer for the Spa Valley Railway, the Competent Technical Person for the Rother Valley Railway and for heavy repair and maintenance works on the Kent and East Sussex Railway where I am the Consultant Civil Engineer.

3.3. The advantage that heritage railways have is that their volunteers are invariably experienced and qualified professional engineers and skilled tradesmen who all work together free of charge to achieve a goal. Also there are none of the minor conflicts and communication difficulties that can increase costs on commercial projects. They are also able to call on innovative techniques which deliver the projects at what would seem to an outsider to be "bargain basement" prices

3.4. As examples I cite the four bridges on the Rother Valley Railway which were constructed using re-assessed repaired and re-configured bridges disposed as scrap by Network Rail and the platforms at Robertsbridge which were constructed using second hand precast concrete retaining wall units. There is a further bridge which was repaired to the design of another volunteer professional engineer, John Sreeves. I inspected and certified all of these works so I can attest to their quality.