



Kent & East Sussex Railway



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RVR/W9/I

THE PROPOSED ROTHER VALLEY RAILWAY (BODIAM TO ROBERTSBRIDGE JUNCTION) ORDER

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

of

SHAUN DEWEY

THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY



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I Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Shaun Dewey.
- 1.2 I am the General Manager of The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Limited (K&ESR)
- 1.3 I hold a BA (Hons) Business Studies (Transport)
- 1.4 After graduating and prior to joining K&ESR, I spent 40 years in the airline industry, primarily involved in commercial operations, aircraft leasing, airline start-ups, airline management and consultancy projects.

2 Involvement in the RVR Project

- 2.1 My involvement in the RVR project is with the coordination of commercial and operational matters between K&ESR and the Rother Valley Railway (RVR).
- 2.2 RVR are responsible for the design, construction, oversight and funding of the extension of the railway line from Bodiam Station to Robertsbridge.
- 2.3 Following completion, it is proposed that K&ESR will run services over the extended line and will be responsible for safe operations in accordance with its Safety Management System.
- 2.4 My evidence addresses issues relevant to points 1 and 3 in the Statement of Matters.

3 Evidence summary

- 3.1 K&ESR is an established educational charity operating for the public benefit, supported by a substantial membership and a volunteer force of over 450 people.
- 3.2 K&ESR have over 40 years of experience across the full scope of heritage railway operations.
- 3.3 Safety is managed in a structured manner and is regulated by the Office of Rail & Road, with risk assessment and competence management at the core.
- 3.4 Existing signalling installations and railway crossings – whether for pedestrian, landowner or road traffic use – are operated effectively and safely.
- 3.5 A wide range of commercial offerings is available for the enjoyment of all ages. Educational events are staged in partnership with schools.
- 3.6 Accessibility for wheelchair users is a priority and a specially adapted carriage is popular with individuals and groups alike.
- 3.7 Independent data sources show that the public rate K&ESR extremely highly as a visitor attraction.
- 3.8 The economic benefit of K&ESR to the area is substantial with pre-pandemic turnover in excess of £2.2m p.a., which is supplemented by additional spend by visitors in the locality estimated by Tourism South East at a multiplier of 1.22



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(source: Steer Davies Gleave, RVR Economic Impact Report, 2018). In facilitating increased passenger numbers, the extension will enhance economic benefit.

- 3.9 Extending the line to Robertsbridge will substantially improve ease of access for visitors, in particular by creating the ability to arrive by mainline rail. Road is the dominant mode of transport for visitors to the existing line. The extension will therefore provide a more environmentally friendly means of access.
- 3.10 A sustained increase in passenger numbers is likely to create opportunities for further investment in visitor facilities in the years after the extension opens. In common with all leisure-related businesses in the UK and beyond, K&ESR's finances have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Details of the investment programme following the reopening of the line will be determined by Trustees in relation to the finances available at the time and in the overall interests of the charity. K&ESR has a track record of consistent investment in the line and related facilities over many years. Substantial capital investment has already taken place to ensure the economic opportunity of the extension can be exploited.
- 3.11 The frequency of use of new level crossings will be low. The KESR generally operates timetabled services and Railway Experience days on approximately 50% of days annually.
- 3.12 Based on current projections 192 days per annum will have no passenger trains timetabled and only 18 days per annum will have more than 5 return passenger trains timetabled.
- 3.13 K&ESR provides a significant opportunity for volunteer activity. Volunteering provides both economic benefits and benefits for the volunteers themselves. Principal volunteer benefits include improved well-being, a positive impact on mental health, and the acquisition of life skills that promote confidence and increase employment opportunities. Volunteering opportunities will increase with the extension, in particular in Robertsbridge and the surrounding area.

4 Overview of The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Limited

- 4.1 The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Limited is a registered charity (Charity No: 262481).
- 4.2 The purposes of the charity are to preserve, restore and operate the whole or parts of the railway from Tenterden in Kent to Robertsbridge in Sussex (known as The Kent & East Sussex Railway) as a permanent public exhibition, display and operation of steam and other locomotives, rolling stock, equipment and other relics. The charity thereby aims to contribute to technical, historical and general education concerning the operation of a rural light railway.
- 4.3 The Trustees and the Charity Commissioner consider that the company's objectives are for the public benefit and that its activities, achievements and performance are



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consistent with its objectives having had regards to Charity Commission guidance, including the guidance “Public Benefit: running a charity (PB2)”

- 4.4 K&ESR has operated the railway in preservation since re-opening in 1974 when the line extended from Tenterden to Rolvenden. Since that time the railway has re-opened in stages, reaching Bodiam in 2000.
- 4.5 To achieve its objectives the charity:
- Operates a heritage railway service with authentic locomotives and rolling stock
 - Acquires, preserves and restores steam and other locomotives, rolling stock and relics of historical, educational and general interest
 - Maintains, improves and develops the railway and the land, works and buildings relating thereto
 - Encourages and promotes the interest, support and participation of young people in the railway by establishing and maintaining contacts with schools and universities, and
 - Maintains a public museum and library of objects of interest to the history of the railway, its founder Colonel Stephens, and his other railways.
- 4.6 The K&ESR has 2,500 members of whom 450 are active volunteers, and 25 full-time equivalent employees. Day to day operation is dependent on volunteers who predominantly live locally.

5 Scope of Activity of K&ESR

- 5.1 Core Business. The core business activity is the delivery of heritage railway passenger services, at a maximum speed of 25 mph (40 kph) in a rural area, operating on infrastructure currently with 5 stations over a 10 ½ mile single-line railway that extends from Tenterden Town to Bodiam. All passenger trains are either locomotive hauled or operated by Diesel Multiple Unit.
- 5.2 Train services are seasonal in nature. Services of up to 8 round trips per day are scheduled according to commercial demand plus charter trains and evening dining services.
- 5.3 Stations. In addition to the two terminal stations of Tenterden Town and Bodiam the railway serves intermediate stations at Rolvenden, Wittersham Road and Northiam. There are passing loop facilities and sidings at each station, but single platform faces only at Tenterden Town, Rolvenden, Wittersham Road and Bodiam. Northiam has two platforms.
- 5.4 Rolling Stock. Passenger rolling stock in regular service is mainly stabled in sidings at Tenterden Town station at which the Carriage and Wagon works is also located. There is also a four-road carriage storage shed located at Rolvenden providing covered accommodation.
- 5.5 Locomotives. Locomotives and cranes are stabled at Rolvenden, which also houses the locomotive repair and servicing facilities. Locomotives awaiting repair



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- are also stored in the open in sidings at Rolvenden.
- 5.6 Signalling. Between Tenterden and Northiam the single line is signalled on token operated, absolute block principles utilising mechanical or electrical motor operated semaphore signals interlocked with mechanical or point machine operated running line points. The signalling is controlled from 4 signal boxes located at Tenterden Town, Rolvenden, Wittersham Road and Northiam stations and trains on the single lines between all stations, are controlled by means of “key tokens/tablets” for each section, which allow flexibility of operation whilst only allowing one train to be on any one single line section at any one time.
- This theoretically permits the operation of four trains simultaneously but in practice the normal train service uses two or three trains.
- Wittersham Road and Northiam signal boxes are designed to be closed out of use when the timetable does not require trains to pass at these stations.
- 5.7 Permanent Way. The Permanent Way depot is located at Wittersham Road where sidings have been laid to accommodate permanent way cranes, track maintenance machines, rail bogies, ballast hoppers and other service vehicles. This yard is also used on occasions for the road delivery of rolling stock to and from the railway.
- 5.8 Management of Operations. A “Controller” is rostered to act as the responsible person on site, in overall charge on days when the railway is operating. Other managers are available as required and in emergencies.
- 5.9 Strategies are in place for both locomotive and carriage overhauls to ensure K&ESR has both the right number and type of rolling stock and locomotives to enable operation to Robertsbridge.
- 5.10 Safety. The K&ESR is regulated by the ORR (Office of Rail and Road) and operates primarily under the provisions of the Railways & Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 (as amended) known as “ROGS”. Safety on the K&ESR is managed by way of a three tier Safety Management System (SMS), upgraded in 2021 (**RVR/W9/2-1**). It covers (i) safety system overview, (ii) railway wide standards, and (iii) departmental standards. The SMS is a customised document but follows ORR guidance and is commensurate with our standards of 25mph operation.
- 5.11 Training and competency of staff undertaking safety critical duties, such as operating the trains or maintaining the locomotives and rolling stock is managed in accordance with departmental standards, following principles outlined in ROGS. Training regimes exist for all such roles and feature both theoretical and practical elements, supported by mentoring and the keeping of trainee logbooks to record progress and highlight developmental points. A qualification assessment will be undertaken by a qualified Manager or Supervisor to ensure that the individual is fit to undertake their duties and further periodic assessments will then be undertaken to ensure that competence is maintained. Any promotion within safety critical grades follows the same training and assessment process. Competency management records are



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recorded through the online Heritage Operating Processing System (HOPS), a database system used by a large number of Heritage Railways in the UK

- 5.12 The Safety Standards include procedures to follow in response to Flood Warnings, for reporting floods and running trains during flood conditions. The procedures include provision of watchmen and patrollers to observe parts of the railway likely to be affected by flooding and provision for the closure of the railway line/cancellation of train services. The procedures include inspection of the railway line and structures prior to recommencing services.

6 Existing crossings

- 6.1 There are 40 crossings along the existing line from Tenterden to Bodiam.
- 6.2 These fall into three categories: Level crossing for road traffic (5), accommodation crossings, e.g. for public footpaths (8), and user worked crossings for land-users neighbouring the railway (27). The user worked crossing at Rother Bridge between Wittersham Road and Northiam stations is also a public bridleway.
- 6.3 Level crossings: these exist at Cranbrook Road (across the Tenterden to Cranbrook Road); Rolvenden station (across the A28); Wittersham Road station (across the Rolvenden to Wittersham Road); Northiam station (across the A28) and Bodiam station (across the Staplecross to Bodiam road). Northiam and Bodiam Level Crossing are the subject of Level Crossing Orders, required under the Level Crossing Act of 1983 and these mandate the protection arrangements required for the crossings. The other two Level Crossings predate this legislation and protection arrangements are contained in the Light Railway Transfer Order of 1973.
- 6.4 The operation of level crossings is governed by the K&ESR Rule Book and crossings are manually operated by qualified staff.
- 6.5 Accommodation crossings: these all have warning signs for users to beware of passing trains. Gates are installed at the Tenterden crossing where the line crosses a private road which is used to access the K&ESR car park, industrial units and private dwelling.
- 6.6 User Worked Crossings: The gates of these crossings are operated by users, typically farmers, when they need to cross the line. Once the user has crossed, they are required to close the gates behind them. Some authorised users keep these crossings padlocked to prevent unauthorised use.
- 6.7 All crossings are protected in accordance with requirements of the ORR Publication Railway Safety Publication 7 "Level Crossings: A guide for managers, designers and operators" - December 2011 (orr.gov.uk). Each level crossing is periodically risk assessed in accordance with this guidance and the appropriate risk mitigation measures implemented. These include information signs for crossing users, warning



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signs for train drivers, whistle boards to indicate to train drivers to sound an audible warning on the approach to crossings and speed restrictions to ensure that there is sufficient sighting distance for both crossing users and train drivers.

- 6.8 K&ESR maintains a positive relationship with land-user neighbours along the line, liaising on matters of access, lineside vegetation management, etc. User Worked Crossings provide ready access across the line with few interruptions caused by the small number of train movements each day. For instance, communications have recently been issued to all landowners along the line advising them of our return to passenger services following the pandemic (see **RVR/W9/2-2**). Also, in 2020 we collaborated with a neighbour to undertake work at the perimeter of his land relating to vegetation and fencing which improved drainage for the benefit of both the landowner and the railway. The landowner in question has written to K&ESR complimenting the positive collaboration and the planning and execution of the work. Where dangerous or overhanging trees are identified close to the railway, the necessary work is agreed between the railway and the landowner, and carried out by K&ESR's volunteer Forestry & Conservation team. Contact details for all landowners are held in the railway's incident manual (Safety Standards Manual 01) ensuring that neighbours are alerted in the event of any issues adjacent to their land.

7 Safety – Signalling and Level Crossings

- 7.1 Operation of signalling and level crossings is undertaken by members of the signalman/crossing keeper team who report through the signalling inspector to the Operating Manager. In accordance with ROGS, a key aspect of the industry regulations is for the railway duty holder (in this case K&ESR) to ensure the competence of staff performing Safety Critical Work. Tasks deemed as safety critical are defined in detail in Railway Safety Publication 4, Safety Critical Tasks – Clarification of ROGS Regulations Requirements.
- 7.2 Management of Safety Critical competency forms a key part of the Safety Management System of the K&ESR and procedures are in place to ensure that staff undertaking such activities are adequately trained for the duties which they perform. Training needs are determined by a task analysis and appropriate Risk Assessments undertaken to define the standards required to safely complete the tasks. Following training, which takes the form of both theoretical coaching and practical instruction/mentoring, staff are assessed as to their understanding of the rules and regulations applicable and their practical aptitude to undertake the duties.
- 7.3 Regular practical reassessments, rules & regulations reviews and examination take place as part of the ongoing maintenance of competence, with appropriate



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procedures to address instances where individuals do not meet the standards or are involved in any accident or incident.

- 7.4 Operation of individual level crossings is risk assessed and reviewed in the light of the appropriate Level Crossing Order and practical considerations, from which local safe operating instructions are developed to manage the risks identified and define the requirements for safe and efficient operation of the crossing. This ensures a consistency of performance by staff operating the crossing.
- 7.5 These instructions and the underpinning risk assessments form part of the training delivered to staff who will undertake duties at individual crossings and form part of both the theoretical and practical competence assessments of the staff concerned.
- 7.6 The K&ESR has a considerable number of very experienced railway staff amongst its ranks and they form a team of mentors to ensure that practical training of staff on new equipment and/or new locations is properly supervised and performance is in accordance with the laid down instructions and standards. This is then validated by the ongoing competence assessment process.
- 7.7 These arrangements have been in place for many years on the currently operational section of the K&ESR and all signal boxes and level crossings are worked according to these principles, with the safety and efficiency of both road and rail traffic managed by the processes described above.
- 7.8 The automated nature of the proposed A21 crossing will provide for a high degree of safety and efficiency, enabling optimised operation for rail and road traffic.
- 7.9 All crossings, including the bridleway, will be managed within the established safe practices demonstrated by the railway, with appropriate arrangements put in place under the oversight of our experienced staff.

8 Commercial Activity

In full operation before the pandemic, K&ESR offerings included:

- Regular trains (normally 2 trains operating a total of 5 round trips per day between Tenterden and Bodiam)
- Special price promotions for “Pensioner treats” are available in June/July and September/October
- Price promotions are in place with the National Trust at Bodiam Castle to encourage National Trust visitors to travel by train rather than car
- Catering add-ons are available on Regular Trains, including, coffee and pastry, ploughman lunches, and cream teas, sourced from local producers whenever possible
- Onboard trolley services



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- Special event days including for example - Santa Specials, Day out with Thomas, 1940's, Evacuation, Bright Bricks Lego event, CAMRA Real Ale Festival, Hop Festival and Halloween Special
- Wealden Pullman Dining Services offering on board fine dining lunch and dinner services whilst steaming through the beautiful Wealden countryside
- Special summer evening fish and chip and real ale / cider trains
- Railway Experience Days
- Coach parties and cruise ship groups visit regularly throughout the year
- The Colonel Stephens Railway Museum at Tenterden Station is free to enter and provides a fascinating insight into the light railway empire of Colonel Stephens, who built the K&ESR
- Station refreshments at Tenterden Station
- Café at Northiam Station and take-away refreshment facility at Bodiam
- School educational events such as the Evacuation experience for Key Stage 2 pupils. We welcomed 1,750 pupils over the six days of this event since 2017
- We also offer a Victorian Experience to Key Stage 2 students which is often chosen for an end of school year trip
- Schools participating include those from Greater London, Bromley, Orpington and Chislehurst.

Accessibility for wheelchair users is a priority and a specially adapted carriage is popular with individuals and groups alike.

Local suppliers are used whenever possible - for instance extensively for both station and on-train catering - bringing direct benefit to businesses in the locality.

Activities have been significantly curtailed during the pandemic due to the various lockdowns and public health requirements such as social distancing. The programme is being re-established in stages in accordance with the government's roadmap, prioritised according to the value added by each activity towards the achievement of our charitable aims.

9 Visitor numbers

- 9.1 K&ESR currently carries between 80,000 and 90,000 visitors per year in normal circumstances (see table 1 (no.)).

Table – 1 Visitor numbers to K&ESR



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	2019	2018
Operating Days	189	183
Regular Passengers	57,931	58,600
Santa Specials	13,862	15,240
Day out with Thomas	10,512	5,220
Pullmans	2,969	3,400
Platform Tickets	2,296	2,100
Total	87,570	84,560

- 9.2 Services were severely curtailed in 2020 due to the pandemic, with only 15,514 visitors, a reduction of 82.3%. Restrictions have continued into 2021 but the operation successfully re-opened to the public on 22nd May 2021 in line with the government roadmap, running three trains a day carrying approximately 200 passengers appropriately socially distanced. It is expected that it will take some time for visitor numbers to return to pre-pandemic levels. Public confidence will take some time to rebuild and the busy event days of the past are unlikely to be possible during this period.
- 9.3 All services commence at Tenterden except for the Sunday lunch Wealden Pullman which positions to and from Northiam to commence its service. Many trains are therefore only well loaded in one direction. The extension to Robertsbridge will enable Robertsbridge originating customers and balance passenger loadings making far more efficient use of resource.



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10 Visitor Experience

- 10.1 K&ESR has been awarded TripAdvisor's 'Certificate of Excellence' in every year from 2014 to 2019. At the time of writing the attraction has a rating of 4.5 out of 5 from a total of 1,123 reviews. 71.9% of reviews afford K&ESR the maximum rating of Excellent.
- 10.2 The Railway achieves ratings that compare very favourably with other local attractions (e.g. National Trust, Bodiam Castle – 52.7% Excellent), local heritage lines (e.g. Bluebell – 69.6% Excellent, Spa Valley – 54.9% Excellent) and national heritage lines (e.g. North York Moors – 68.8% Excellent).
- 10.3 Reviews from customers often cite the heritage nature of the line, the friendliness and enthusiasm of volunteers, the countryside and wildlife along the line, and the facilities which enable disabled customers to travel using the wheelchair-friendly access available.
- 10.4 Google Reviews has over 1,568 entries for K&ESR giving a rating of 4.7 out of a possible 5.0.
- 10.5 VisitEngland last undertook a 'mystery shopper' assessment of K&ESR in October 2019, awarding an overall quality score of 82%. 45 different aspects of the railway were scored, across the following categories: Pre-Arrival, Arrival, Attraction, Cleanliness, Toilets, Catering, Retail and Staff. No individual section was scored lower than 'Good' and 8 categories were rated 'Excellent'.

11 Increasing Access Through Extension

- 11.1 Currently K&ESR is accessed by passengers including school groups, etc., almost exclusively by road transport. There are options available by public bus service to Tenterden Town and Bodiam, but the service is too limited in both route and frequency to serve anything but a minority of visitors.
- 11.2 Annexed to this proof is a heat map analysis of 2019 passengers' post-codes where we hold these details, which is a significant sample size at over 90% of total online bookings.
- 11.3 This confirms the substantial reach of K&ESR as an attraction, bringing visitors to the locality with the associated economic benefits. It also shows that there is the opportunity to increase visitor numbers both from the coast (Hastings and its environs), and from London and within the M25.
- 11.4 Increased accessibility by mainline rail connection from London and Hastings (and relevant connections) will open up K&ESR to travellers for whom it is inconvenient or impossible to travel by road.



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- 11.5 Increased access by rail will also be far preferable from an environmental perspective, adding journeys via electrified public transport and reducing the necessity to travel by motor vehicle in accordance with the UK Government's Net Zero 2050 legislation.
- 11.6 K&ESR will widely advertise the convenience of the mainline rail connection encouraging customers starting their journey with us at Robertsbridge to utilise this facility. Customers wishing to travel to us by road will be advised of the parking provision at Tenterden and Northiam stations.
- 11.7 The main station building facilities being constructed at Robertsbridge by RVR will enable K&ESR to provide ticket sales, a shop, refreshments and toilets. Together with a canopied area beside the building, these will provide comfortable facilities for visitors transferring from the mainline.
- 11.8 No impact is anticipated on littering in Robertsbridge. The dropping of litter has not been encountered as an issue at the stations/locations where passengers principally join and alight from trains: Tenterden, Northiam and Bodiam.
- 11.9 The mainline connection will enable visitors to reach the National Trust's Bodiam Castle by public transport. The attractive riverside village of Newenden is accessible on foot from Northiam station with Great Dixter house and gardens a short taxi ride away. Passengers will also be able to enjoy the attractive and historic town of Tenterden, including visits to the town's Museum and the Old Dairy brewery adjacent to Tenterden station. There are published walking routes from all of K&ESR's stations, encouraging visitors to enjoy the villages and surrounding countryside. The journey along the line itself will open up the countryside along the Rother Valley for visitors to enjoy rural vistas that would otherwise remain unseen.

12 Finances

- 12.1 The Trustees' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 October 2019 show that The Kent & East Sussex Railway Company Limited had net assets of £2,987,966 (**RVR/W9/2-3**). Assets are comprised principally of fixed assets such as freehold land, permanent way, bridges and buildings, and railway locomotive and rolling stock.
- 12.2 Income in the year totalled £2,155,849. There was a surplus of £12,162 after depreciation of £95,460.
Trustees have managed finances carefully during the pandemic in order to minimise the negative financial impacts of enforced closure to visitors. Draft accounts to 31 October 2020 show a deficit of (£56.7k) after depreciation of £140.8k, i.e. a pre-depreciation surplus of £84.1k. This is a creditable position given the extraordinary circumstances. The company has received awards under the Department of Digital,



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Culture, Media and Sport's Culture Recovery Fund, acknowledging the significance of the heritage under our care and the positive impact of the Railway on the local economy and community. £301,500 was awarded for the period October 2020 to March 2021, and a further £250,700 for the period April to June 2021.

13 Timetable with Robertsbridge extension

- 13.1 It is currently anticipated that timetabled passenger services will involve 173 operating days per year of which no more than 18 days per year will have more than 5 return journeys per day, subject to a suitable location of the enabling passing loop between Bodiam and Robertsbridge and more detailed operational planning prior to opening:
- 13.2 On days when there is no timetabled passenger service the railway may be used for Railway Experience Days, Private Charters, and for maintenance work. Such days would not usually entail more than 3 return journeys in a day.
- 13.3 The timetabled service usually operates between 10:00 and 18:00. Evening dining services depart after 19:00 with the latest return at 23:00.
- 13.4 The restrictions on the use of the A21 in planning permissions, i.e. crossings not permitted between 07:00-09:00 and 17:00-19:00 Monday to Friday and on Bank Holidays are noted and can be accommodated within the overall timetable.

14 Capital development plan

- 14.1 A number of significant capital investments have been made in anticipation of the extension and in order to enhance K&ESR's operation. These include:
 - A new carriage shed completed at Rolvenden (investment c£650k)
 - An extension completed to the Carriage & Wagon workshop at Tenterden (c£150k)
 - Hydraulic lifting gear installed at the Carriage & Wagon workshop (£50k)
 - A project to provide improved kitchen car facilities for the Pullman nearing completion (c£300k)
 - K&ESR has engaged in a rolling programme to overhaul locomotives and rolling stock to support the operation
 - Over the last seven years a total of £1.2million has been invested by K&ESR in capital expenditure, improving facilities and rolling stock and readying the line for the opening of the extension



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- 14.2 A separate company formed for the purpose, The 4253 Locomotive Company Limited, is undertaking the restoration of GWR Locomotive No.4253, which will be ideal for the fleet to haul trains across the extended line. The Loco will be complete by the planned Robertsbridge opening date and, subject to contract with the owning company, will service the line. (c£400k)
- 14.3 Individuals connected with the railway have Invested in on-track plant to ensure the track itself is maintained to the required standards (c£90k)
- 14.4 An engine turntable has been transported from Network Rail at Hither Green to Robertsbridge. This will be of interest to rail enthusiasts and will facilitate operation of mainline steam charter services through access to the railway (c£250k)
- 14.5 Improvement of facilities at Northiam station is envisaged, subject to funding, as is modernisation of level crossings and signalling on the existing line in order to facilitate a 50 min journey from Tenterden to Robertsbridge.
- 14.6 The Steer Davies Gleave report on the economic benefit of the extension project, sponsored by RVR and finalised in 2018, indicates that an increase in visitors is to be expected at opening and can be maintained. This was before the Covid-19 pandemic and the lasting impacts of this on the wider economy and K&ESR are unknown. However, should a sustained increase in passengers be seen and subject to detailed financial analysis at the time, within 3-5 years of opening the extension K&ESR could consider investment in additional facilities, e.g. a visitor centre at Tenterden. Such projects would require the support of grant-giving bodies.
- 14.7 Any such future investments are aspirational since the K&ESR charity trustees cannot commit to expenditure in future years at this stage. All decisions would be taken at the time based on the financial position of the company and in protecting the charity's existing operation and goals.
- 14.8 As outlined earlier in this evidence, K&ESR has a long history of investing in the Railway and once the line is complete, future investments will be targeted at visitor facilities and furtherance of our educational purpose.



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15 Socio-economic benefits of volunteering

15.1 Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, has defined three categories through which volunteering contributes to social welfare:

- The *economic value* of goods and services created by volunteers – i.e. the GDP-equivalent value of volunteering services;
- The *private value* of volunteering activities, in particular the benefits felt by volunteers themselves; and
- The *social value* of volunteering activities, as societal gains may be a multiple of economic and private benefits.

(Source: 'In giving, how much do we receive? The social value of volunteering', Sep 2014, see **RVR/W9/2-4**)

15.2 Haldane concludes that *economic value* 'could exceed £50 billion per year, or around 3.5% of annual UK GDP. This would place the volunteering sector on a level pegging with the UK energy sector (both extraction and utilities). Very few sectors add more value.'

15.3 Regarding *private value*, 'The balance of benefits differs across individuals. For example, younger people are most likely to highlight the importance of acquiring new skills and enhancing employment prospects, while older volunteers see the benefits from increased social interaction and improved health. But enjoyment and satisfaction rank high across all volunteer types.'

15.4 Specifically regarding health benefits, 'Volunteering is typically found to have a positive impact on mental health – for example, by enhancing social integration and engagement...Remaining active and socially engaged can be particularly important for older age groups, post-child raising and post-retirement.'

15.5 Specifically regarding employment benefits. 'A recent poll by YouGov found that nearly all managers believe that workplace skills can be gained from volunteering. And recent research suggests a link between the emotions induced by volunteering (like confidence and self-esteem) and factors important in the workplace (like performance ratings and efficient problem solving).'

15.6 The *social value* created by an educational charity preserving and operating a heritage railway for the benefit of the community might be considered intangible, but the *economic value* to the local area and *personal value* to volunteers are real.

15.7 K&ESR currently attracts over 450 volunteers across all ages and from a variety of walks of life. Volunteering opportunities include the operation of train services, maintenance of track and infrastructure, care of our stations and their gardens, forestry and conservation work, signalling and telecommunications, preservation of locomotives and rolling stock, catering, and business activities such as marketing. These opportunities allow individuals to meet other people, remain physically active,



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learn new skills, give back to the community and appreciate their surroundings: both natural and heritage. These benefits correlate exactly with the NHS's '5 steps to mental wellbeing' A significant number of additional volunteering opportunities will be created through the extension, particularly for the residents of Robertsbridge and the surrounding area, promoting these benefits in the local community.

- 15.8 Volunteers based at Robertsbridge station, or taking scheduled breaks there, will also bring custom to local shops and facilities. Some volunteers travel from further afield and are likely to make use of local facilities for overnight stay, meals and refreshments.

16 Concluding remarks

- 16.1 There are significant benefits from the proposed extension, including the economic benefits derived from the increased visitors flows to K&ESR which will provide direct benefit to the local economy; the societal benefit of increased volunteering opportunities including positive impacts on well-being, skills development and attracting people to live in the area; increased access to heritage to people from a wider geographic area and broader demographic; and ensuring road free access to the attraction via an electrified public transport route.
- 16.2 The government's Restore Your Railway initiative recognises the benefits that could accrue from reinstating axed local services and restoring closed stations, with public money available from the Restore Your Railway Fund to support such initiatives. This proposal does not call upon the public purse but will bring socio-economic benefits being sought by the government's initiative, specifically relating to tourism and increased local employment.
- 16.3 The RVR investment will further enhance a successful, popular and highly rated educational and leisure facility and carries the whole-hearted support of The Kent & East Sussex Railway's Board of Trustees.



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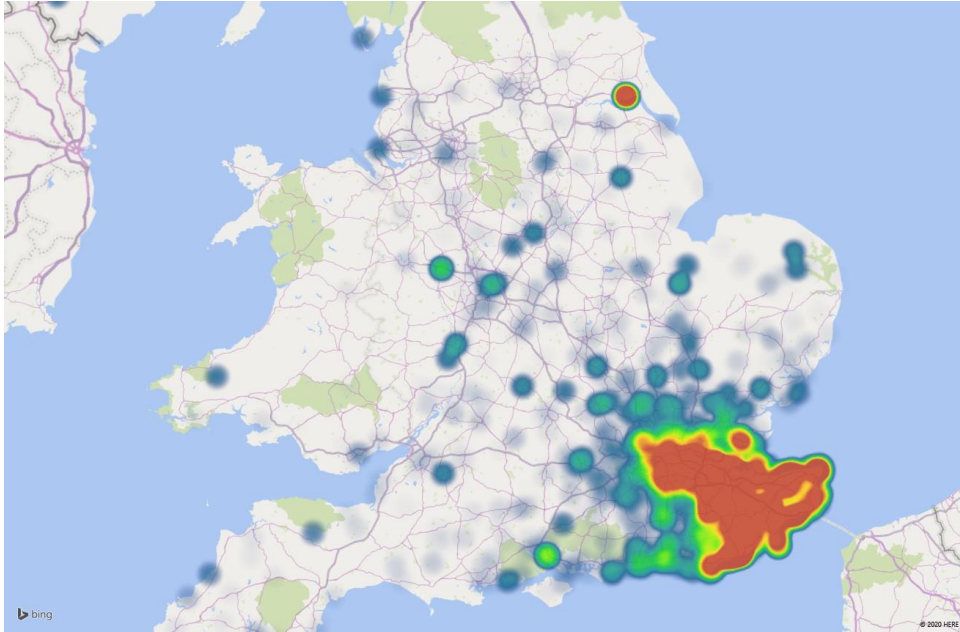


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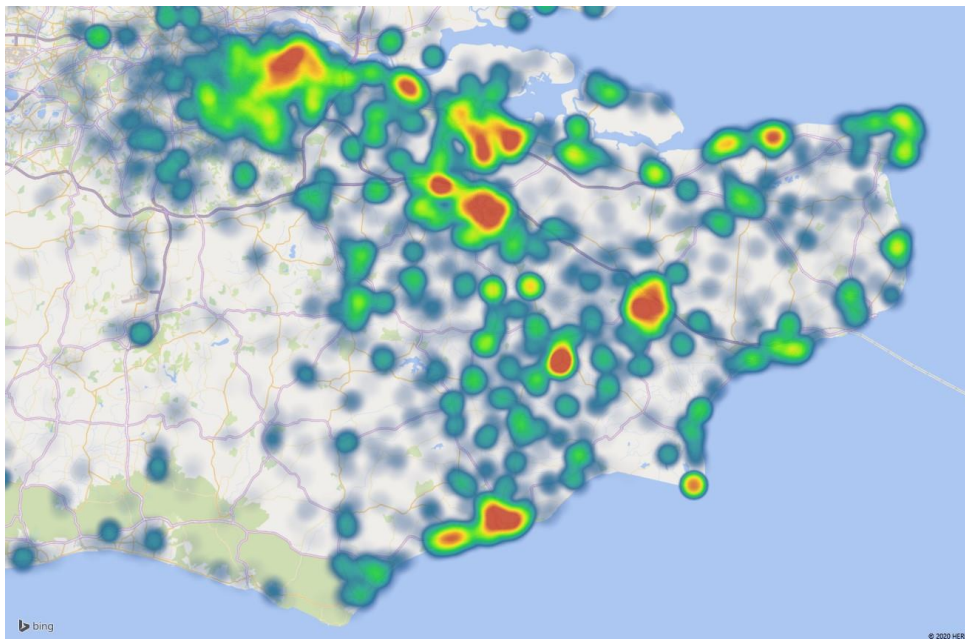
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Annexe – K&ESR 2019 Passenger Postcode analysis

England



South East



South East London

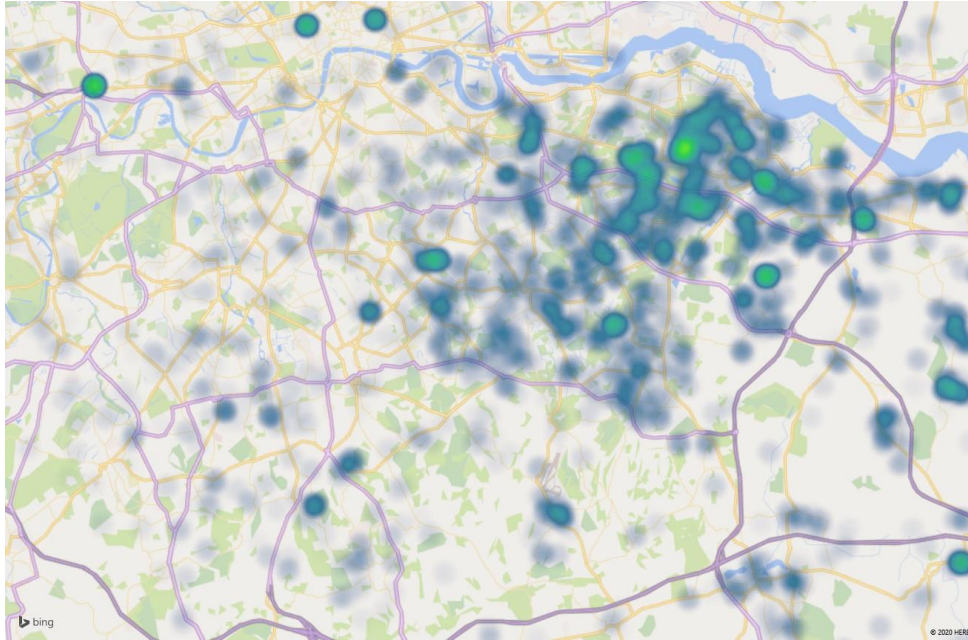


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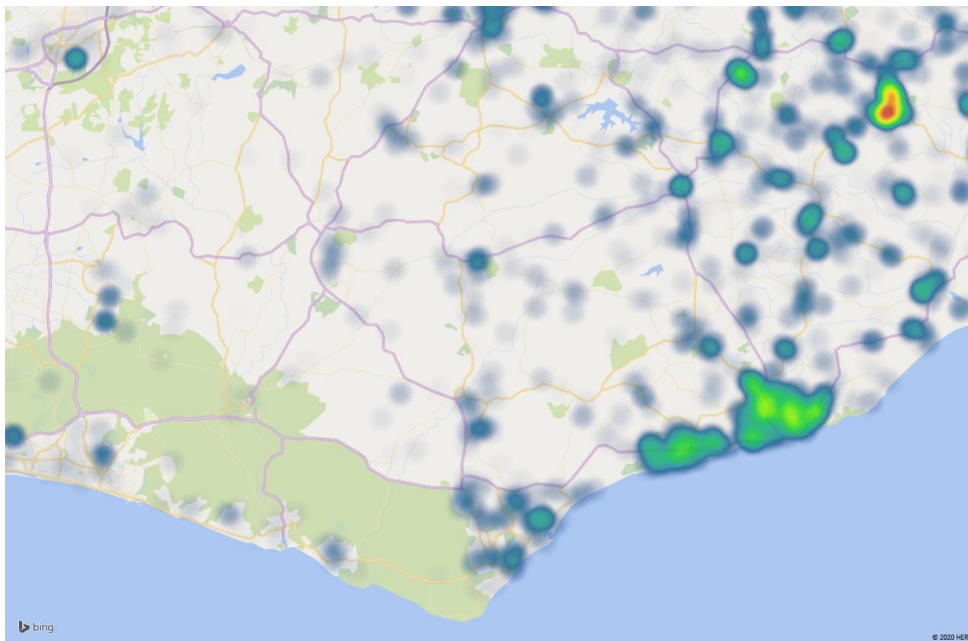


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List of Appendices

RVR/W9/2-1 – K&ESR Safety Management System overarching document

RVR/W9/2-2 – Letter to Landowners regarding re-opening

RVR/W9/2-3 – The Kent & East Sussex Railway Co Ltd accounts to 31 October 2019

RVR/W9/2-4 – In Giving, How Much Do We Receive? A Haldane (2014)