

STATEMENT OF MRS EMMA AINSLIE

1. My name is Emma Ainslie and I live at Moat Farm Cottage, Salehurst, with my family.
2. You will by now have heard from all the experts but I feel very strongly that you need to understand the impact and reality that this proposal will have on those who live not only on the farms but also in the surrounding area. I think it is also very important that everyone understands our position and experience over the last 10+ years. This proposal is a whim and vanity project of a very few individuals backed up by some influential benefactors. To say that it has been David versus Goliath fight is an understatement. It is a living hell.
3. Moat Farm is one of the Farms that RVR, KESR and their associates are trying to steal away from my family. I have lived at Moat Farm all of my life and am the 3rd generation to do so. I love it more than I can possibly explain. I, like my grandfather, grandmother, mother and aunt feel a responsibility to Moat Farm and the surrounding area and am being followed quickly by the 4th generation (3 of them) who are all wanting to continue the legacy of the amazing environment that has been created with love and care over the last 70+ years since my grandparents bought the farm in 1946 on my grandfather's return from the war.
4. I am the granddaughter of Bobby (Robert) and Noel de Quincey who together in 1946 bought Moat Farm. My grandfather having been a prisoner of war on the railway in Burma was left with physical and terrible mental scars from his experiences, but Moat Farm was a sanctuary for him and became his life's work. He always felt (as did my grandmother after his death) that to be custodian of such a beautiful part of England and to have the opportunity to look after it for generations to come was a

privilege and that he would do it to the best of his ability, an ethos he instilled in his daughters and subsequently me.

5. During his lifetime the farm was maintained to the highest standard and he ran a successful dairy (his herdsman Digger, whose house I now live in with my family, had been on the railway with him in Burma) and soft fruit (apples) business alongside what was left of the dwindling stretch of 'the hop picker's line' until its overall closure on 13th July 1961. The line (now derelict and over grown), remained the property of British Rail until he was finally able to complete his part of his own 'Missing Link' and buy it for £2000 in 1981. This was a large amount of money for him to find at the time after milk quotas came in and he had had to disperse his beloved dairy herd. He purchased the land in good faith on the understanding that the line would never be reinstated. He had always wanted to put the farm back together but sadly only got to enjoy the knowledge that he achieved it for another 6 years as he died after a long illness in early 1987.
6. I would like you to understand from the beginning of my statement that as a family we aren't against steam railways at all and are definitely not 'anti'steam. In fact it was my direct great, great, great, great grandfather Richard Trevithick (my grandmother's maiden name was Trevithick) who preceded George Stephenson and invented the first high-pressure steam engine (1799). He also built the first full-scale working railway steam locomotive (1801). What we are against however are those that ride rough shod over other individual's human rights.
7. RVR have cleverly veiled their obsession behind the rather romantic sounding screen that is The Rother Valley Railway Heritage Trust. All professionals can and will use clever words to offset each other's arguments but the impact upon our love of the farm cannot be mitigated.

8. We live and breathe these farms and this landscape. We are the ones who know where the dormice are, the kingfishers on the Rother, right by where RVR want to put their access track and rip out precious habitat of mosses which hadn't been recorded in over 100 years. We are the ones who wait with bated breath for the first spine tingling note from the Nightingales early each summer. They nest on the now mature habitat corridor that is the derelict track that runs through our home.
9. We are the ones who know where the Mandarin duck hides her ducklings (10 this year all still intact!) in the reeds each year away from the Herons who nest in the wet wood and come to the river to catch the ducklings...
10. The heart break is almost unbearable to us who watch and love the barn owls flying their boundaries each year and who laugh at the resident Little Owls (who are so naughty and angry we are here most of the time – they really let you know you shouldn't be in their vicinity) as they whiz about the flood plain.
11. We are the families who go to the same part of the woods every year because we know we will find the wild orchids and be thrilled when there are many more than the year before... and if we are very lucky see the Tawny owl who is the most elusive although the most noisy of them all.... We are the family who have told our children/grandchildren/great grandchildren the same story we were told at their age of the haunted wet wood (the most healthy seen of the very few remaining in the southeast) that on very dark nights you can see the lights coming up out of the water of the tractor that sank there years ago and sitting there at dusk watching their faces as they try so hard to see those lights as we did.
12. It is us the families (and the village and community) who have witnessed the valley at its best (and its worst). It needs protecting and preserving in its current and progressive natural state rather than being ripped to pieces again like the Victorians

did at the turn of the last Century. The Victorians were amazing but they didn't know what we all know now about how we need to look after the delicate balance of the earth that the human race is rapidly destroying. While it isn't a rain forest with orangutans or a coral reef, it is just as important as there are very few places like Moat Farm left anymore and it is all of our responsibility to protect it. Yours and mine!

13. These narrow minded railway men want to destroy this incredible valley of its natural beauty and of the decades of regeneration and the incredible habitats that live in it.
14. If this fallacy is allowed to go ahead for really what is just a few individuals' private pleasure, an amazing and unique habitat will be lost forever.
15. They can shout and scream they are doing it for the good of the wider public but there are enough tourist attraction lines already (this one already operates between Tenterden and Bodiam, and the Spa Valley Railway, which operates between Tunbridge Wells and Eridge, is only half an hour's drive from Robertsbridge). This is not an area short on heritage railways. The existing ones however don't propose running huge Diesel engines on them like there will be if this is allowed to go ahead!
16. I do not consider that RVR's arguments are remotely plausible.
17. RVR have never lived in this valley or the village (not one of their committee is local to Robertsbridge). They don't live on site so therefore cannot begin to understand and see the daily, monthly, yearly ebb and flow of how the farm and the systems work. They don't appreciate the strong community bonds between Salehurst and Robertsbridge and the increased threat through their development on the flood plain which will impact directly on people's homes. There are countless examples throughout the UK when flood defenses fail even after the engineers have provided a 'solution'. Quite simply there are

certain natural forces you cannot master and flood plains are one of them.

18. Can it seriously be suggested that introducing barriers across the A21 and 2 other busy roads will not substantially increase the chances of a serious accident? Who will take responsibility when a motorbike piles into stationary traffic due to a level crossing being down? Why have Network Rail spent millions removing crossings from our roads only to have 3 re-instated for someone's private hobby?
19. They are proposing to take out all but one of Moat Farm's crossings because according to Gardiner Crawley (Chair of RVR) they need to placate the ORR who are rightly concerned at the high levels of crossings that this project had originally. Surely removing 3 farm crossings does not make up for adding 3 onto the national road network?
20. Quarry Farm, to the east of Moat Farm, have a thriving glamping business however RVR own the line through the middle of their farm. Whilst RVR will sit here and say they are keen to support and promote local businesses, why are they currently trying to close historic farm crossings on the Quarry farm section of track which will cut off a substantial area of the camping grounds directly affecting the business? This is another example of reality not shaping to RVR's spin.
21. The rich ecology of Moat Farm is testament to the way in which it has been managed for decades. This was a deliberate choice my family made about how they wanted to operate the farm. Although re-wilding has become a recent catch phrase this farm has naturally taken this path over the last 50+ years. It is impossible to replace or mitigate the exceptional environmental and ecological gem found on the farm despite what the various consultants will tell you. It has taken decades to create this habitat and planting a few tree whips as mitigation is simply

ignorant; once we lose the habitat through this proposal it will be gone forever.

22. RVR see our home simply as a commodity but we have, as a family over generations fought to better the farm and the delicate balance of commercial pressures against securing the natural habitat and the wildlife corridor. The amazing diversity that this has secured is now under severe threat. For example the rare wet wood will be affected by the runoff into the water course across the farm with the pollution from the diesel trains destroying this forever. The natural corridors that the moths take following the river Rother upstream will be lost through the severe tree felling required by RVR. It will cause total destruction to an ecology that has taken more than 60 years to regenerate to the amazing maturity it is now because it's been left as nature intended and protected from modern pressures.
23. This is not the first attempt RVR have tried to force us to sell them the land. Having been thwarted from buying the line from British Rail in the 1960s, Gardiner Crawley (RVR Chairman) started contacting my grandmother shortly after my grandfather's death in the late 1980s. It continually worried her and I would hear her crying about it whenever it flared up again. This time around they threatened my grandmother in her own kitchen with a TWAO unless she sold to them – and here we are! My mother and husband were asked by Mr Yonge to meet at his home as he feigned that he was appalled by RVR's actions towards our family but actually it was a clumsy attempt to simply try to change her mind. When he was confronted at an open village meeting by my mother he simply laughed and patronized her naivety.
24. My concern is that RVR's proposal could not have got this far without serious influence and seems to the layman that if you employ enough consultants, spend enough money and have the right connections within the establishment then anything can be yours. It reminds me of the land grab in the wild west of

America in the 1800s. We have had conversations with statutory authorities on a number of occasions who state that the decision has been taken out of their hands and taken to a higher level but with no clarity on who or why this was done. There seems to be a lack of transparency throughout the whole process from planning to TWAO. They have abused the principles behind a TWAO to try and force a CPO for a project that clearly fails the tests and they have constantly fudged their proposal and delayed and deferred simply to wear us down. May I remind you that the original planning permission was submitted in 2014 but the shambolic way RVR have run this process, with repeated delays and the drip-feed of information is a testament to their lack of professional integrity and competency.

25. An example of their incompetence was made clear to me last year when we walked Gardiner Crawley across both the farms in March 2020 and that his approach was very 'back of a fag packet'. He didn't understand that the engineering plans provided by his own consultant Mott MacDonald weren't physically workable but when challenged by us he was just nonchalant. The arrogance he showed was not only contempt to us the farmers and owners of the land but also a lack of care and responsibility to the village and road users.
26. So I ask you what will happen if RVR are given, by the Secretary of State, the TWAO and are then allowed to CPO our land. What happens when the money runs out one day for instance or when their benefactors die and their families pull out of the projects for a 'trains really aren't our thing' reason. What happens when their woefully inaccurate costs forecasts in reality double (as other train projects are testament to) and they can't afford to even start the project for say another 10 or 20 years? We will have to live with the daily stress of knowing we don't have any say over the long stretch of land in the middle of our home and will have people being able to access and destroy parts of it for no reason other than just because they can. It will

be devastating to have to witness this and I for one don't think I could bear it... it would destroy me.

27. There are a large number of railway related documents archived at Kew in the National Archives from the 1960's because of the refused LRO (Light Rail Order) and subsequent case taken against the government for refusing it. The documents are fascinating because if you just changed the dates and names to those of today's inquiry it could be exactly the same case. It was turned down then for all the same reasons you are hearing today but with Barbara Castle summing it up in her report; 'the interest of road users, tax payers, landowners and drainage authorities must be allowed to prevail over the desire of the promoters to operate a railway which would not in the main perform a serious transport function'. Surely all these reasons have only been exacerbated over the decades including the addition of a main trunk road and increased flood levels.
28. RVR have proven their own disregard for any formal conditions or required undertakings with the construction of the line to the east of Austins Bridge carried out during the middle of the nesting season in May/June 2019 (against their own ecological proposal) and without providing the required habitat replacement. There was complete apathy from the local council and official departments with RVR making a mockery of the safeguards supposedly put in place by the relevant authorities.
29. This whole project has put enormous financial and emotional strain on both my family and the Hoads. It is impossible for me to overstate the heartbreak tears and upset that the onslaught of over 30 years has caused and continues to cause my family. How would you feel if it was your daughter, granddaughter, mother, sister any relative or indeed friend in the same position that we have been forced into? This has been going on in various forms for decades. It's not just since the first letters started arriving 11 years ago for this latest onslaught which has lead up to this Public Inquiry. It makes us feel like a tiny mouse

being played with by a big fat cat who thinks they can do whatever they want just because they want something that isn't theirs. It makes the inside of your stomach seize every time you think about the what ifs and whys? And when face to face with these seemingly sweet old men sitting before you, you have vitriol thrown in your face or the awful trolling that some of us have experienced on social media by people who have never even met us. RVR had no qualms about sending my grandmother who was 91, to her grave in October 2016 totally broken. They had niggled at her since just after my grandfathers death about getting hold of the track again and she felt for the entire time she was in charge of the farm that she was just a custodian for the future generations but always worried about 'them' hanging over her. After her death my mother and Aunt were desperate to continue their parent's legacy for us who were to follow. My mother who was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer in June 2019 aged only 67 had obviously hoped for many years of enjoying her home and putting her stamp on its future but the continued threat of it being taken away always hung heavily over her as it continues to do for my aunt. By the end of 2019 Mum felt she couldn't fight it anymore and was so distraught at the thought of the bullying tactics they have used over the years from pretty much the day my grandmother was widowed! It is wicked. My grandmother went to her grave so stressed and upset as did my mother who only the week before she died last July was crying due to the cheques she was having to write to defend her home and to cover our amazing professionals costs. She was at the pre-inquiry meeting last year, just 3 months before her death and had wept that night due to the sadness and anguish the meeting caused and the thought of the public inquiry to follow in July. It has caused so much stress and makes you feel sick every time you think about the 'what ifs' and has done for so many years not just today. I put off revisiting this document because it makes me cry and breaks my heart knowing it is now up to me to defend our beautiful farm which is above all my home and has been all of my life. The enormity of it is crippling.

30. I ask you please to think of what will be lost forever if this vanity project which will do nothing but harm to what is a precious and unique part of our landscape and natural heritage is allowed to go ahead.
31. When the flood waters back up into Robertsbridge village or when the life changing accident happens at one of the level crossings who takes responsibility? When something goes wrong are we simply going to hide behind the mountain of conflicting documents and consultants when common sense and reality screams that this is all a terrible error of judgment at every level? It would be far better to have the strength now to refuse this application rather than allow the inevitable crisis that will follow should it be approved.
32. Surely we need to progress not regress. This is the 21st Century not the 19th! At a time when we are all being asked to consider how we live to create a greener planet this proposal is asking the Government to support some of the most polluting transport ever built.
33. I invite you to come and walk round our home so you can see and really understand how we feel and hear how we know the farm inside out and how heartbreaking and destroying it will be not just for us but also for generations to come if you allow this privately funded folly to go ahead. What are our human rights here? If allowed it will affect every day of our lives from the minute they set foot on our home to lay the first sleeper to certainly the day I die and I think beyond.