

SUPP/221

Transport and Works Act 1992
Rother Valley Railway Limited Proposed Rother Valley (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction)
Order
PUBLIC INQUIRY

I, ANTHONY WILLIAM ROBINS, of The Ostrich Hotel, Station Road, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5DG will say as follows:-

1. I am the proprietor and licensee of The Ostrich Hotel and have lived there since I purchased the property in November 1993.
2. The Ostrich Hotel was built in 1851 in anticipation of the main line London to Hastings route passing through and stopping at Robertsbridge. It is thus only 100yds from the main line station and exactly opposite the end of the proposed Rother Valley Railway. This will reinstate a branch line which I understand was originally built by a Colonel Stephens.
3. I am, therefore, a small business owner employing full time, part time and casual workers in the village of Robertsbridge and consider that the reinstatement of the Rother Valley Railway will be of major economic benefit to this area.
4. In the time that I have lived here, I know of at least 10 small businesses that have closed including a jewellers, an antique shop, a hairdressers, a cycle shop, a motor bike business, a drapers, a dress agency, a TV and electrical shop, a body repair workshop, a mill and a garage. Most have not been replaced by other small businesses. In my opinion, Robertsbridge is rapidly becoming a dead commuter village with little or no work opportunities for anybody let alone young people who, as a general rule, have to leave the village in order to find work.
5. The reintroduction of the line will lead to an influx of visitors to the village that would be of immediate benefit to those businesses that are still here (obviously including my own) and could well lead to the introduction of others e.g. cafés, souvenir and craft shops. There are plenty of talented people in Robertsbridge – it is evident at the village market which takes place monthly on the first Saturday of each month – most of whom I imagine would be pleased to have a much larger outlet for their goods. In fact, the village market itself would benefit.
6. Then there is, of course, the economic benefits to Rother District Council and Ashford Borough Council which, I am advised, will be in the region of £4.1million per annum. All councils are desperately strapped for cash and this can only mean a boost to their income and, indirectly, a boost to services in the area. Neither the Councils nor the inhabitants and ratepayers in the area that will benefit are being expected to contribute as all the funding is coming from private philanthropists.
7. There has been a lot of quite unnecessary panicking about a massive influx of traffic to the area, but this has been considered by the planners from Day 1. With my private car park directly opposite the station, I would be a prime target for unauthorised parking but I hope the situation will not arise as I know that access from London will be via the mainline railway and provision has already been made for car parking on land immediately behind the station for those who will drive here. I think most traffic will come from London on the railway as the Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction line will enable visitors to travel to Bodiam Castle (one of the most visited National Trust sites in the country) the famous gardens at Great Dixter, Tenterden town and Sissinghurst. I have personal experience of the frustration of visitors hoping to visit

either Bodiam or Great Dixter when, upon arrival at Robertsbridge mainline station, they discover that they still have to make a journey of an additional three miles to get to Bodiam with no taxi service nor any other means of transport being available.

Unfortunately, I am frequently held responsible for their problems.

8. Travel by rail, it hardly needs to be said, is far better for the environment than the pollution caused by motor vehicles
9. There will be full and part time jobs available in connection with the running of the railway itself. Not everything can or will be run by retired bank manager volunteers with a penchant for steam trains. I consider that there is probably potential for apprenticeships at some future date which will give young people the chance to remain in the village and forge a career without having to leave the village as they all do now.
10. Rother Valley has already reconstructed three quarters of a mile of rail at the Bodiam end and half a mile in Robertsbridge also creating a terminus station adjacent to the Network Rail main line station. Essentially, this means that London passengers only have to cross from the mainline stop straight over to the new terminus station and hop on a steam train. I have seen some of the building work that has already taken place and consider it to be of the highest quality and entirely in keeping with its Victorian heyday. It is, after all, the way the hop pickers used to journey here annually to pick the hops on the local farms. Of course, I acknowledge that this is taking place directly opposite The Ostrich Hotel and I would hope that I, and those who come after me, will benefit. It was why this establishment was built in the first place and, with a bit of luck, will ensure that The Ostrich Hotel will remain here a part of village life for many years to come.
11. Again, I believe this project will bring significant benefits and employment to the area as well as bringing huge pleasure to a very wide cross section of people who will have access from London and the South Coast. The project has been thoroughly researched and developed with wide consultation using some of the country's leading professionals in the field. I am also aware of the fullest consideration that has been given to the ecology of the area with considerable studies of the local flora and fauna. Amongst other things I have learned, for example, that dormice can only be relocated during a period of about 8 weeks in any one year. I know that the needs of this rare little animal have been respected and planned for accordingly.

I MAKE this statement believing the same to be true

.....

A W ROBINS

Dated this.....day of.....2021

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

Transport and Works Act 1992

**Rother Valley Railway Limited Proposed Rother Valley (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction)
Order**

PUBLIC INQUIRY

I, ANTHONY WILLIAM ROBINS, would summarise my statement in support as follows:-

- 1. As the proprietor of The Ostrich Hotel for nearly 28 years, I support the above application believing it will introduce business and tourism opportunities to Robertsbridge which is otherwise becoming a moribund commuter village.**
- 2. Small businesses have continued to close throughout my time here. Both banks and a full scale Post Office have also gone.**
- 3. An influx of visitors will be of immediate benefit to the shops, pubs and teashop already here. The monthly village market with its many local, small and hobby businesses will benefit as their potential clientele will be greatly extended by tourists.**
- 4. It will enable others to offer overnight accommodation as there are many visitor hotspots on the line with no need to travel to them by car.**
- 5. The Parish and District Councils will also benefit without needing to contribute to the re-opening.**
- 6. I believe the 3 acres of planned parking at the station site will ensure the village streets and environs remain as they are. Many visitors will travel here by mainline train and simply cross over to the steam train. A much greener option than driving. My establishment is directly opposite the junction with a car park. I do not think it will be overrun by visitors' cars.**
- 7. Running the railway will lead to full and part time jobs in the area, not just volunteers. Young people may not need to leave the village to get work. There is the potential for apprenticeships in e.g. engineering, hospitality, retail.**
- 8. The “green” option of train travel also means that the railway embankments will become wild life corridors. Protected species such as dormice will continue to receive the greatest care and attention.**