

From: Tom Burnham [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 May 2018 23:15
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

Dear Sir,

I am writing in support of the application for a Transport and Works Act Order by the Rother Valley Railway, which would allow the Kent & East Sussex Railway to extend its heritage rail services to connect with the national network at Robertsbridge.

The Kent & East Sussex Railway is an established operator with a good safety record, having been running trains from Tenterden since 1974 and as far as Bodiam since 2000.

As somebody who regularly visits Bodiam Castle and other tourist attractions in the area, it seems to me that completion of the rail link between Robertsbridge and Bodiam would facilitate an increase in the number of visitors from central and south-east London, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge without placing further strain on the limited capacity of the road system of the adjacent areas of East Sussex and Kent.

Additional off-peak passenger flows from the London direction to and from Robertsbridge would make use of under-used capacity and would improve the economics of the Tonbridge to Hastings rail service as a whole.

I am also of the opinion that additional numbers of visitors would provide an economic boost to Robertsbridge. While the bypass has certainly removed the previous through traffic from the village street, my impression is that businesses in Robertsbridge have suffered from the lack of passing trade. Meanwhile there has been considerable growth of establishments such as garden centres along the A21 road in locations away from traditional village centres which are wholly dependent on the private car. A proportion of people arriving at Robertsbridge by main line train to travel on the heritage railway would undoubtedly make use of the facilities in Robertsbridge village, bringing a much-needed boost to the local economy. This has certainly happened in Tenterden, for example, and in my view Robertsbridge has nearly as much potential for this sort of activity.

I am aware that there have been concerns as to the effect of the reconstruction of the railway on flood risk in the area - and flooding is certainly a continuing problem in the area. However, the section of the railway that has already been rebuilt between Robertsbridge station and Northbridge Street appears to have been constructed on a very substantial scale to meet the requirements of the relevant drainage authorities and I see no reason why this should not be the case east of Northbridge Street.

Yours faithfully,

Tom Burnham
[REDACTED]