

Caroline O'Neill

Suppl. 189

**From:** PETER SIMPSON [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 31 May 2018 21:32  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Subject:** Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) order

Dear Sirs

I am writing in support of the above application which I believe passionately should be granted. Though I currently live in South Lincolnshire, I was born and brought up in Hastings, spent the first 25 years of my life there, still return regularly - at least four times a year and always via the A21 - and intend to return permanently within the next five years. I will also claim a little specialist knowledge, as I have spent my whole working life after leaving university in 1984 as a heritage transport journalist.

I have an intimate knowledge of the Kent & East Sussex Railway - having known it for 50-plus years - and know that it is something special among preserved railways - the only standard gauge 'Colonel Stephens' Light Railway in preservation, and a massive asset to the area both commercially and as something which should be preserved in its own right. Reinstatement of the line to Robertsbridge - and a main-line connection - will make the K & ESR an even better tourist attraction than it now is, and could well now or in the future allow it to once again become part of the country's national transport network. It will also reduce road traffic in the area, as with a direct rail connection it's inevitable that many more people who are interested enough in railways to want to visit one will prefer to make the journey by rail if at all possible. The line was also only taken up relatively recently - the last rail movement on it was in 1972 -

I also believe strongly that the objectors concerns are misplaced, misguided and, unfortunately in a few cases, misleading. In particular, the claim that the old line no longer exists is not correct - as I understand it all that has been removed is a very low embankment across an area of low-lying land - the route itself remains and has not been developed. As a regular user of the A21 (and the A229) since the late 1970s I also know the traffic flows well, and on weekends it is far and away busiest in the early-mid morning and late afternoons - trains crossing between these times would have minimal impact. In this context, it needs pointing out that unlike the crossings further upline which are next to stations and crossed by trains either starting from or slowed to a stop, these will be crossed at the light railway running speed of around 20-25mph. With modern barriers and lights, what traffic is delayed would be held up for 2-3 minutes at most!

In conclusion, I contend that the benefits of reopening the Robertsbridge section of the Kent and East Sussex railway far outweigh the drawbacks, and I ask the Secretary of State to grant the application. I also look forward to seeing steam trains in Robertsbridge again in my lifetime..

Yours Faithfully

Peter Simpson  
[REDACTED]

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