

**Before I start I would like to confirm that I have no professional qualifications regarding flooding, road safety or the environment.**

**However I hope that my opinion is listened to.**

**I am a local resident and business owner. I would like to register my objection to the TWAO.**

**There are some facts that I think are undeniable**

- 1) The A21 is the main artery into Hastings/Battle and Bexhill. It is a very dangerous road, with comparatively high levels of accidents compared to the national levels. It is also a busy congested road.**
- 2) The creation of level crossings will introduce hazards which do not exist at present.**

**The government has recently given Hastings £24 million to help rebuild the local economy after the pandemic. Putting a level crossing on the A21 seems to directly conflict with the broader understanding that this part of Sussex needs help to improve employment and attracting businesses to the area.**

**As a user of the A21 I have found it difficult to understand why this proposal has got as far as it has, while I understand that the Officer of Rail Regulation has slightly changed it's stance. At the time of local planning, the ORR and National Rail were very clear that they would not endorse any new crossings, however neither of which objected to the 3 new crossings which this railway line introduced.**

**Rother Valley Railway seems to have friends in high places. David Keay was HM Deputy Chief Inspector for the ORR and left in February 2017. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017 he became a board member for RVR and a Member on the Board of Trustees for Vintage Trains.**

**Sir Peter Hendry the Chair of Network Rail at the time of submission is also an active supporter. In fact there seems to be a theme running here.**

**When the questionnaire was submitted to the village for the local plan back in 2006 I believe the question we were asked was.**

**“If we had a steam railway in the village would we use it?”**

**I will be honest as a mother of small children at the time I said YES! However I did not realise the implications of being one of 200 odd locals who ticked the box that this meant it would be included in the Local Plan.**

**The parties who wrote this original questionnaire are both openly supporters of the railway...while I have no doubt they followed all the correct processes I personally wondered why we were not just asked “Do we want a steam railway – yes or no?”**

**The subsequent applications have demonstrated that Robertsbridge Residents are fairly evenly split for and against. There is NO HUGE desire to have this railway in the village, because of the concerns I have no doubt you have heard about parking/flooding.**

**The justification for the Railway has been about bringing new tourists to the area by National Rail, but this seems to conflict with the survey I completed on 200 visitors to Bodiam.**

**68% were visiting the area for a few days, the rest were local. Because of the distance from London, the area is not considered as a day trip. Along the line from London to Hastings, Tunbridge Wells with its historic importance, shopping and Spa Steam Railway it seems to be more attractive to any heading out from London, why would they come another 20 minutes further down the line.**

**Robertsbridge is not East Grinstead, which is where the Bluebell Railway sits and has been cited as a success story. Where rail usage**

has increased, without the need for any additional parking. The station is located next to a Sainsburys, with 250 spaces and offers free parking for 4 hours, which is slightly longer than the time required to visit Sheffield Park, one of the Bluebell Railways main attractions. In fact when I asked one of the Sainsburys staff if anyone from who visited the railway parked there and he said “Yes all the time”.

RVR have always appeared VERY confident about their success in bringing this railway into fruition and it would appear that they have friends in very high places, that would allow them to put an additional barrier across the main trunk road to an area with poor transport links and this would potentially undermine the efforts to make this part of Sussex attractive to business. In 1971 they applied for a light railway from Tenterden to Robertbridge, however this was reduced to Bodiam to Tenterden because of concerns about the A21 crossing. I am struggling to understand how after 50 years this a more attractive proposition.