



◦ LIMITED ◦
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY
Patrons: Gregory Barker MP, Chris Green MA FCIT
**ROBERTSBRIDGE JUNCTION STATION, STATION ROAD,
ROBERTSBRIDGE, EAST SUSSEX. TN32 5DG**

Planning Application RR/2014/1608/P - Rother Valley Railway

Summary of the scheme:

This application is for the reinstatement of the final 3.5km of the Rother Valley Railway between Northbridge Street in Robertsbridge to Junction Road in Bodiam. This will link up with the sections of railway already rebuilt by Rother Valley Railway under previous planning approvals granted by Rother District Council. It will allow the final completion of the line between Robertsbridge Junction Station and the Kent & East Sussex Railway at Bodiam.

The route will follow the line of the original line of the railway, utilising the existing embankments where extant. The reinstatement will include restoration of shallow embankments, the re-construction of 5 bridges, 2 causeways, (to improve the flows in the River Rother) and 10 culverts. There will be 3 new modern automatic full barrier level crossings and 3 pedestrian/bridleway crossings. The application also includes the provision of a "Halt" platform at Salehurst.

The Local Plan - Rother DC statement of support (Policy EM8)

"An extension to the Kent and East Sussex Steam Railway from Bodiam to Robertsbridge, along the route identified on the Proposals Map, will be supported, subject to a proposal meeting the following criteria:

- (i) it must not compromise the integrity of the floodplain and the flood protection measures at Robertsbridge;*
- (ii) it has an acceptable impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;*
- (iii) it incorporates appropriate arrangements for crossing the A21, B2244 at Udiam, Northbridge Street and the River Rother."*

RVR has addressed the criteria:-

(i) A full Flood Risk Analysis has been undertaken by Capita Symonds. The work was carried out in close liaison with the Environment Agency and the key results are based on a 100 year flood. Utilising the new guidance from the June 2009 UK Climate Impact predictions, the new modelling shows that minor overtopping of the existing flood protection scheme would occur with this greater severity of rainfall.

The modelling found that the construction of the railway would have virtually no effect on the flooding. Utilising the new guidance parameters small sections of the defences are overtopped in both the existing (baseline) and 'with railway' scenario. Working with the Environment Agency, RVR will raise the defences at the small number of vulnerable points to take account of both the new 2009 flooding guidelines and the railway re-construction.

(ii) Following discussions with the High Weald AONB office, they have confirmed by e-mail that they are content that the railway will have no significant impact and that

they do not anticipate that the proposals will have any significant impacts on the AONB but reserve their position pending this planning application.

(iii) Extensive discussions have taken place with the deciding body for level crossings, the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR). There will be Full Barrier Level Crossings which will close the full width of the carriageways and footpath while the crossing is in use by a train, and will be local monitored and controlled by a railway signalman. These crossings have an excellent safety performance record. Traffic delay time while the level crossings are in use is very low with a closure time of around a minute per train crossing.

Nevertheless if Planning Permission is granted, the level crossings can only be built with an Order under the Transport and Works Act that will be subject to a future application by Rother Valley Railway to The Department of Transport

(iii) Designs for the bridges have been shared with the Environment Agency.

Economic and Social Benefits

Manchester Metropolitan University and specialist consultants have been commissioned to undertake a full economic and social analysis and initial work indicates a potential annual economic benefit in excess of £10m and significant employment opportunities.

Transport Benefits

There will be significant removal of some road traffic from country lanes. Tourist companies and the National Trust are already planning to bring in tourists via the link to Network Rail at Robertsbridge.

A key benefit will be direct access for visitors to the new railway from the main Network Rail Line at Robertsbridge. (With South-East Train's operations to London, Hastings and along the south coast).

Environmental Impact

An environmental impact assessment has been undertaken by Temple Environmental Consultants in conjunction with local consultants CLM. The study found that there would be no significant environmental impact.

Construction

Access to the site during construction will be mainly from the A21 at Robertsbridge for vehicular traffic and then along the line of the railway ensuring that little use is made of minor roads in the area. Wherever possible, materials will be brought in by rail utilising the new link to Network Rail at Robertsbridge Station. Installation of the level crossings will be at a time to avoid excessive disruption to road traffic.

Land issues

Discussions and consultations are ongoing with the agents of, and the landowners who will be affected by the reinstatement of the line.

Finance

Finance is in place to enable the construction of the Railway once the necessary approvals are in place.