

Beware of rail 'information'

By Norman Bradbury

Railfuture members should be aware that *RAIL* magazine issue 572 on 15 August contained some misleading and inaccurate information.

On page 12, a column of figures headed Headline Numbers purported to show the railways' consumption of diesel fuel per year and how this equates to passenger miles and freight tonne miles per gallon and concludes with the erroneous claim that had this rail traffic been transferred to roads, there would have been a fuel saving of 20 to 25%.

My research found that the source for these figures was Transport Watch "Fact Sheet" number 5, dated 2004.

Transport Watch is the name of the anti-rail campaign group lead by Paul Withrington.

I believe the editors of *RAIL* magazine have unwittingly published anti-rail propaganda from a minority group that wishes to see railways converted into roads for buses and lorries to use, no matter how impractical such conversion would be and who manipulate statistics in an attempt to support their argument.

It is known, for example, that their claim that road transport is more energy efficient than rail is arrived at by comparing the total fuel consumed by rail including that used for empty stock movements for stabling and maintenance purposes while ignoring similar movements by road vehicles.

Furthermore, Department for Transport statistics include the movement of materials for road maintenance while rail freight statistics exclude the movement of materials for railway maintenance — hardly a basis for a like-for-like comparison of energy efficiency.

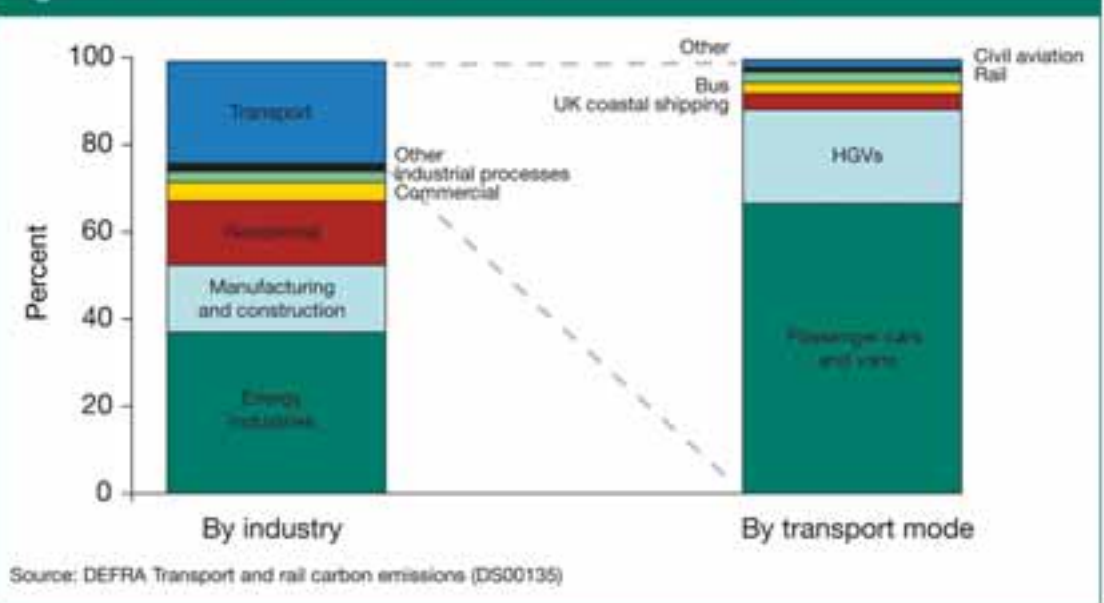
Sadly, the editors of *RAIL* have failed to publish letters from me and railway author Ted Gibbins explaining the facts, nor have they published a rebuttal to the article in issue number 572.

To set the record straight, *Railwatch* readers should be advised that the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution says that, on average, road freight uses three to four times more energy per tonne km than rail freight.

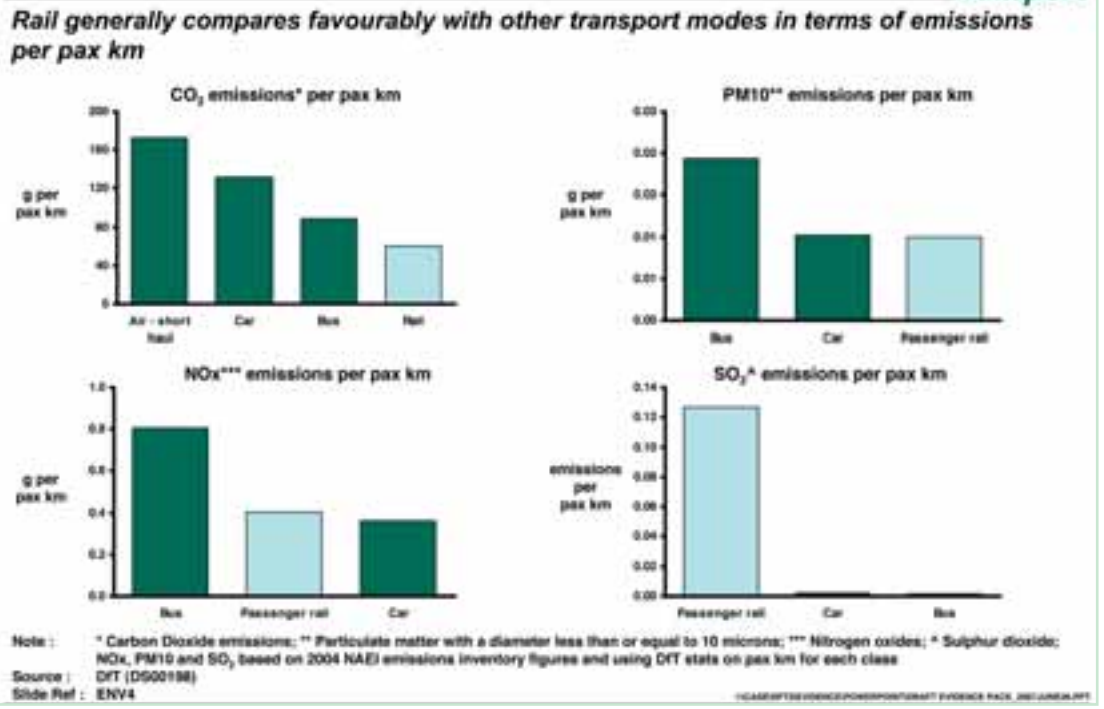
This is borne out by statistics released by Eddie Stobart following their transfer of Tesco goods from road to rail transport which found that a round trip by road between Daventry and Scotland used 11,147 litres of fuel while the same round trip by rail cut this to 3,185 litres, a saving of over 70%.

The official figures, from Department for Transport graphs, reproduced above right, seem to tell a different story to *RAIL* magazine and Mr Withrington.

Figure 1.4: Sources of UK carbon dioxide emissions



Source: DEFRA Transport and rail carbon emissions (DS00135)



European journeys without borders

By Trevor Garrod
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Nowadays it is easy to drive across most European borders by car, since there are fewer frontier and customer controls.

Crossing borders by train or other public transport is not always so easy, however.

International high-speed trains such as Eurostar and Thalys do it seamlessly; but there are sections of the Franco-Belgian and German-Polish borders, for example, where crossings are infrequent or inconvenient; or where lines which used to cross the frontier

now lie disused. But there are also regions where three countries meet (such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany; or France, Germany and Switzerland) where cross-border train and bus links have improved in recent years and it is easy to use them to live in one country and work, shop or study in another.

A 36-page report *Journeys Without Borders* just issued by the European Passengers' Federation, examines all rail crossings between European Union countries, plus Switzerland and Norway, pointing out good and bad

examples such as those above. It has been sent to the European Commission, MEPs, other international bodies, national governments and train operators. The report is in English with introductions also in French and German.

If you would like a copy, please send stamps to the value of 72p for postage to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

The report will also be accessible on the EPF website www.epf.eu. The report is not the last word on this subject. It is intended to stimulate a debate.