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Eurotunnel revenues jump after Olympics

By Mark Odell

Eurotunnel reported record revenues and traffic last year, boosted by the London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The operator of the Channel tunnel between England and France said the event, combined with diamond jubilee celebrations, helped lift the number of cars and coaches carried on the Shuttle passenger train service 7 per cent to 2.48m.

Freight traffic on the Shuttle hit a new record, with the number of trucks up 16 per cent to 1.46m, surpassing the pre-recession numbers of 2007. The overall market, including ferry traffic across the Dover Strait, rose 2.5 per cent, but total freight traffic was still 10 per cent below 2007 levels, Eurotunnel said.

The increase in passenger Shuttle traffic included a 7 per cent jump in the number of cars carried, which defied the wider 2.4 per cent drop in total cross-Channel car volumes, which includes ferries. This trend saw Eurotunnel lift its market share for the total market for passenger vehicles to 50.8 per cent and to 44 per cent for freight.

Jacques Gounon, chairman and chief executive of Eurotunnel, said he was “quite confident” that the UK competition watchdog would approve Eurotunnel’s deal to buy three ferries belonging to the now defunct Sea France. The move led to complaints by rival ferry operators.

Late last year, the French regulator cleared the deal, with conditions, just weeks after the deal in the UK was referred to the Competition Commission. A ruling is expected in April.

A 2 per cent jump in passengers on Eurostar trains, for which the operator has to pay Eurotunnel access charges, to 9.9m helped lift total revenues to €993m, up 14 per cent on the previous year. The company is due to report full-year earnings in March, and Mr Gounon said he expected to exceed the 2011 net profit of €11m.

Eurotunnel’s shares rose 3 per cent to €6.44 in Paris.

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