Huge profits hike at TransPennine Express revealed as train fares hit by largest rise since January 2013

Pre-tax profits at TransPennine Express surged by more than £70m over the last year ahead of the largest rise in train fares since January 2013.

The train operator, which is owned by FirstGroup, has reported profits of £72.1m for the 12 months to March 31, 2021, up from the £3.5m loss it posted for the prior year.

The company's turnover also increased from £290.2m to £437.7m over the same period.

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During the year, passenger receipts fell by more than 82% because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the company said the hit was "largely mitigated" by a revenue subsidy from the Department for Transport of £325m.

The business operates rail services in the North of England and Scotland, connecting Manchester and Manchester Airport with Liverpool, Leeds, York, Newcastle, Sheffield, Hull, Preston, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The accounts, which have been filed with Companies House, come after train fares in England and Wales increased by up to 3.8% from Tuesday, March 1, the largest rise since January 2013.

A statement signed off by the board said: "There are uncertainties as to how rapidly demand will recover.

"It is difficult to assess what effect the continued impact of the Coronavirus pandemic might have on the wider economy and the areas in which we operate.

"However, this impact on the company was mitigated by the ERMA arrangements up to 30 May 2021 and subsequently the NRC terms.

"The agreement of the NRC has provided longer term security to the business and cemented the ability of the business to continue to operate as a going concern.

"Despite the challenge presented by the pandemic, we continue with the Transpennine Route Upgrade Programme.

"We will bring customer benefits through more reliable journeys, improved customer information and enhanced customer experience; along with improved station facilities and roll out of smart and enhanced customer experience; along with improved station facilities and roll out of smart ticketing.

"We believe that this will help drive the long-term recovery in our annual patronage and revenue growth, from the reduced levels resulting from the effect of Coronavirus."

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