

TRAVEL PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2021 – 2022

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2. UPDATED TRAVEL PLAN ACTION PLAN

For the full Travel Plan Action Plan please see the following link:

<https://sites.reading.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/01/UOR-Travel-Plan-2017-2022-amended-Jan-2019.pdf>

3. USAGE DATA FOR TRAVEL INITIATIVES

This section provides an update on the uptake and usage of travel initiatives over the 2021-22 year, where data is available. The first of these reports was produced for the 2016-17 academic year.

A. STAFF HR BENEFITS

The University offers several salary sacrifice schemes and offers to encourage staff to use sustainable modes of travel. Apart from the discontinued **MyCar** scheme, every benefit had an increase in participation from the preceding year (see *Table 1*). This can in part be attributed to lower figures in previous years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The uptake in **Train season ticket loans** and **Bus-to-Work** passes may not reach the same numbers as 2018-19 because of the increased number of people working from home for at least part of the week. As a result, termly or annual passes may not be as economical for some commuters.

Table 1: Participants per annum for HR governed travel benefits (since 2018-2019)				
Scheme	2018-19 data (as of 31/07)	2019-20 data (as of 31/07)	2020-21 data (as of 31/07)	2021-22 data (as of 31/07)
	Participants	Participants	Participants	Participants
MyCar*	18	4	8	6
Cycle2Work	14	32	25	39
Trains season ticket loans	7	3	1	2
<i>Bus-to-Work applications (annual)</i>	-	-	54	83
<i>Bus-to-Work applications (90 days)</i>	-	-	14	38
Bus-to-Work participants (total)	246	186	57	109

**The Mycar scheme was removed as a staff benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-existing participants will continue the scheme until the end of their current lease, but will not be able to renew and no new participants will be accepted.*

B. BUS USAGE

Bus journeys on the 19 a/b/c routes (which services Earley Gate and Bridges Hall) have rebounded considerably compared to the 2020/21 academic year, with every month seeing an increase in year-on-year usage (*Figure 1*). Overall there were 321,720 journeys made on the services in 2021/22 compared to 176,904 in the previous year demonstrating a clear increase in usage after the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, monthly journey numbers are still lower in comparison to 2 years earlier for the months before the onset of the pandemic (March 2019 and before). This is indicative of the increased number of people working and studying from home for at some days of the work.

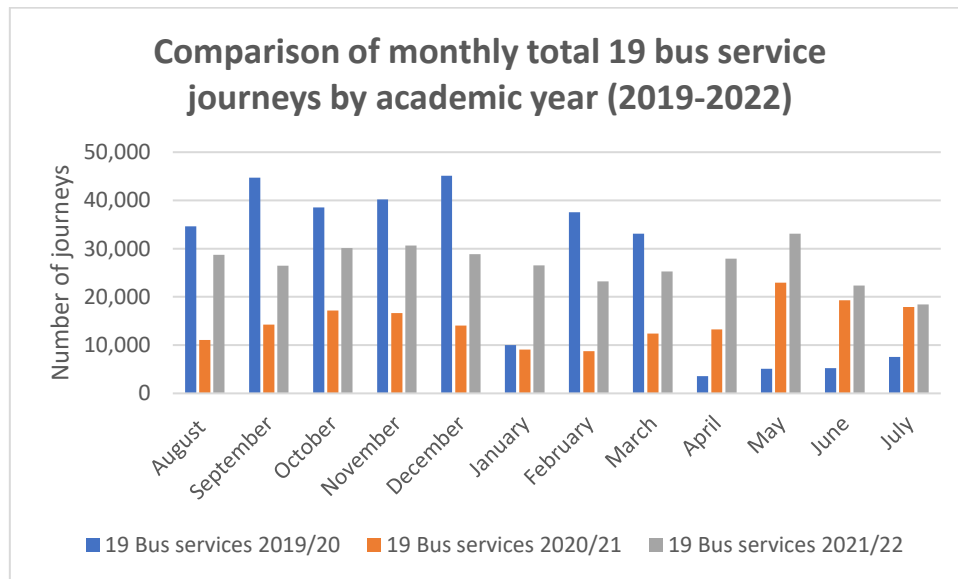


Figure 1 - Total 19a/b/c bus journeys made each month, during the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 periods.

The same trend can be seen in data for the Claret 21/21a service (Figure 2). There were 1,292,585 journeys in the 2021/22 reporting period, a 237% increase on the 544,543 journeys made in 2020/21. However, this figure is still lower than the 1,309,011 total for 2019/20, despite the significant decrease in journeys from April – July during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

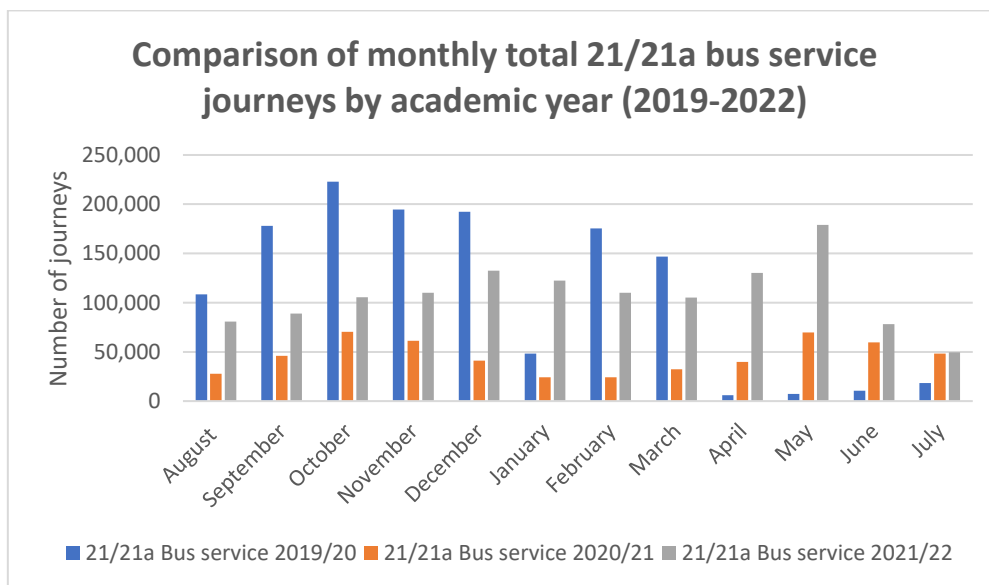


Figure 2 - Total 21/21a bus journeys made each month, during the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 periods.

C.CO-WHEELS CAR CLUB

There are two Co-Wheels Car Club cars available for hire on-site at the University – one based at Dunsden Crescent in Park Group halls and one at St Patricks Hall. There has been a decrease in usage when compared to previous years, with total bookings falling from 625 in the 2020/21 data period to 427 in the most recent year. As shown in Figure 3, total

bookings and Car 1 bookings were noticeably lower this year than in the two preceding years, but Car 2 bookings remained relatively steady with just 9 fewer bookings than 2020/21. These findings emphasise the importance of consistent promotion of Co Wheels, as identified in the University travel survey which took place in January 2022.

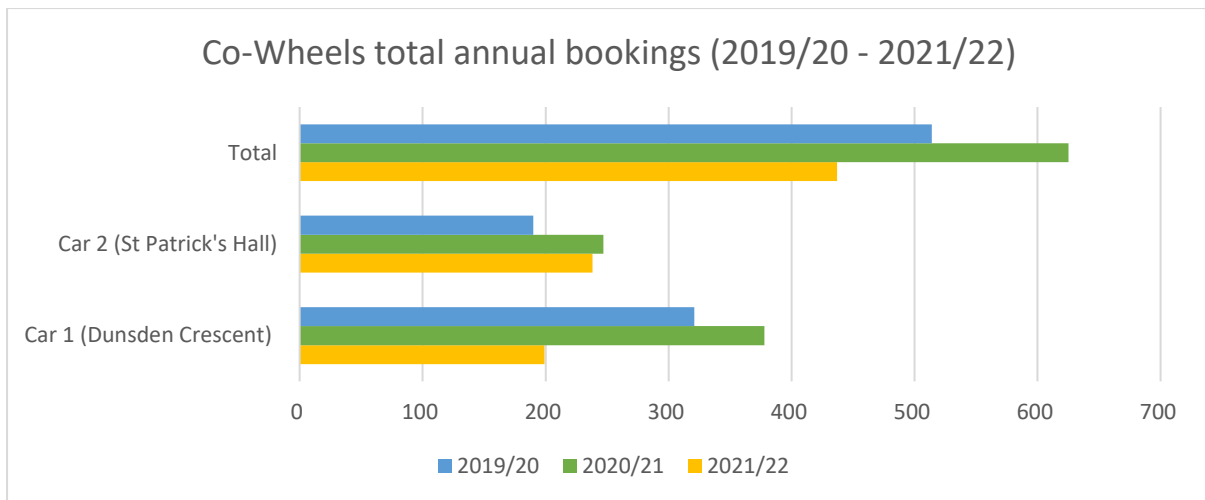


Figure 3 - Total annual Co-Wheels bookings made 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The utilisation rate (the percentage of total time in which each car is in use) also fell compared to the previous year, from 26% to 22.6%. Total usage for Car 1 (Dunsden Crescent) fell from 31.5% in 2020/21 to 21.2% in 2021/22, however the usage rate for Car 2 (St Patrick's Hall) actually rose from 20.6% to 24% in this time period. This further evidences the need to raise awareness of the scheme, especially the Dunsden Crescent vehicle.

D. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGE POINTS (EVCP)

The University has 2 EVCP's installed at the Sports Park pay and display car park on the Whiteknights campus and 1 EVCP installed at Henley Business School on the Greenlands Campus. They are all managed via the BP Chargemaster system.

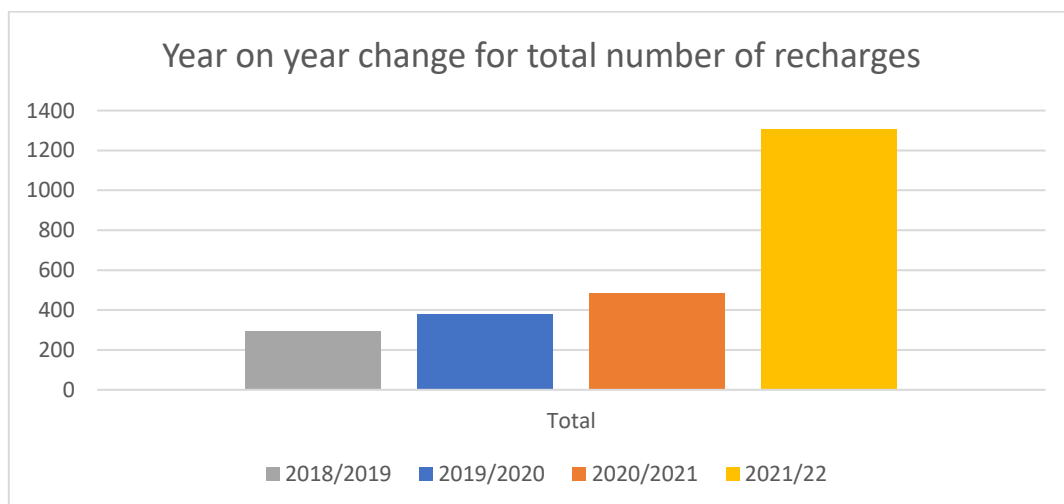


Figure 4 – Total number of recharges at all 3 EVCPs, by academic year (August – July) 2018 to 2022

The total use of charge points has increased significantly in the past academic year to 1305 total recharges, a 170% increase on the previous year.

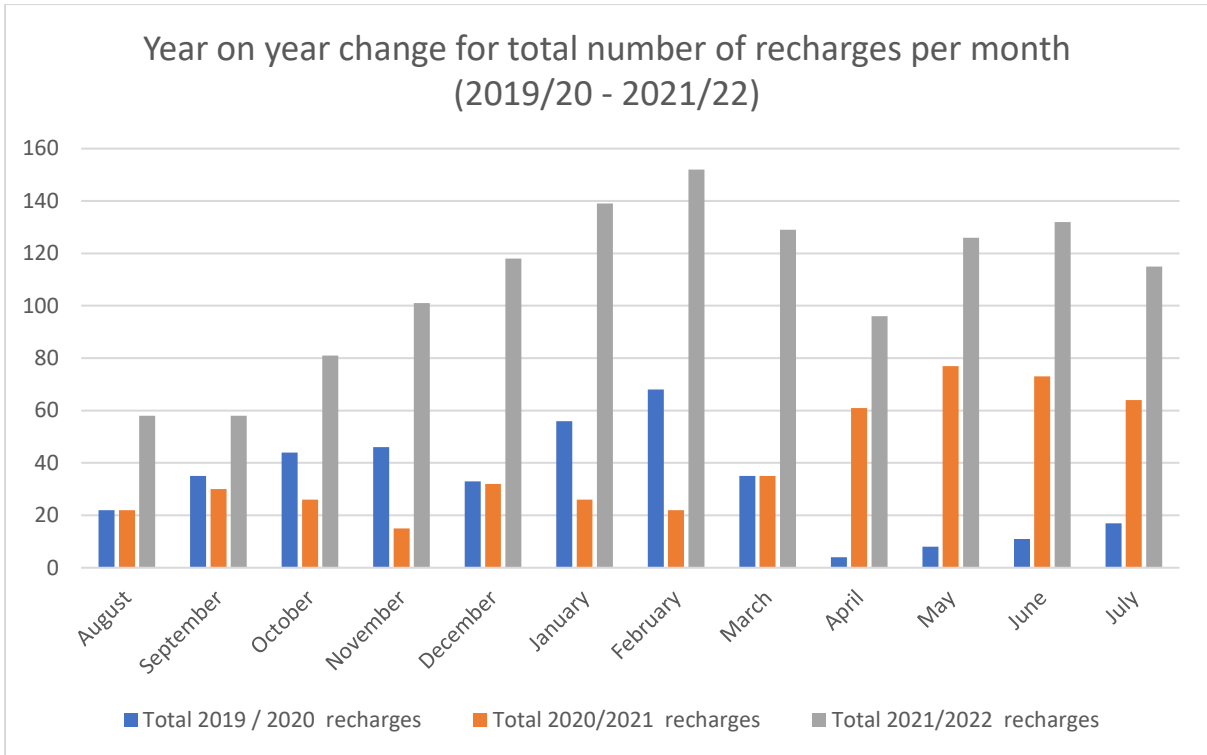


Figure 5 – Combined total monthly recharges at all EVCPs over the 19/20, 20/21 and 21/22 data periods

The comparison between the monthly data for the past academic year and the previous two demonstrates a return to pre-pandemic usage. Since April 2021, recharging numbers per month have been consistently higher than the previous year. The continuing high figures outside of termtime suggest usage by the general public as well as University staff/students.

E. EASIT DISCOUNT CARD

The Easit network provides a number of travel-related discounts, some of which are available through registering online, and others require the purchase of an Easit card at £5.35 per year.

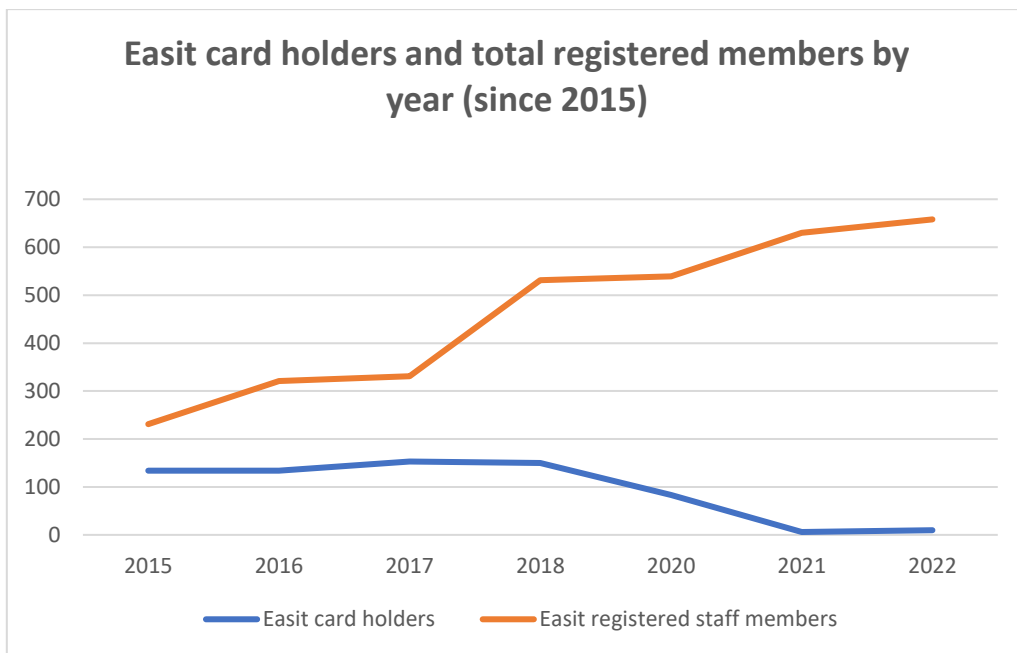


Figure 7 – Numbers of Easit card holders and Easit registered staff members by year

There has been a further decrease in both the number of Easit cards purchased (10) and new staff members joining the programme (28) this year. One of the primary benefits of the discount card; discounts on GWR train journeys, was removed in 2019, which likely accounts for the significant drop in purchased cards. Reductions may also be due to reduced commuting following the pandemic and subsequent increase in remote working.

Despite this marked drop in the number of cards purchased, the number of staff registered on the Easit website has increased to 658, the largest number since the Easit offer began at the University and continuing the trend of year-on-year increases. This allows staff to take advantage of rail discounts on Southern and South Western trains, as well as other Easit initiatives such as bus travel savings, car sharing and Halfords bicycle discount.

F. CYCLE SAFETY PROJECT OVEVIEW

The new academic year for 2021/22 started well for cycling activities, with a return to campus for most students and increase in staff working on campus. This enabled all the University-funded activities to support and encourage cycling to be run from the outset; along with participation in a number of Welcome Week and other promotional events (subject to adherence to all the University Covid risk protocols).

The full range of activities and initiatives are delivered and project managed by our training provider Avanti Cycling and include:

- Cycle skills sessions
- Dr Bike safety checks and fixes
- Reading Bicycle Kitchen (RBK) Maintenance pop ups
- Running of the Unicycle hire bike scheme;
- Managing on-campus bike recycling and resale

Take up has been really strong and there has been continued engagement and good attendance at activities as people got used to “in person” events. As the University was still operating some Covid restrictions we continued with the approach of operating more frequent events to avoid crowds/ queues and lots more 1:1 – 1:3 training

Cycle skills / training sessions

Over **120 training sessions** were held; comprising 48 individual participants (i.e. an average of 2.5 sessions per individual). This was a mix of people who already cycle but needed support in building confidence and techniques for cycling on roads / in traffic (including international students/ staff wanting to learn UK Highway code rules and those taking out a hire bike); those needing a refresh of skills – such as signalling and use of gears and quite a large number of complete beginners perhaps attempting cycling for the first time. Many were 1:1s or some 1:2 to ensure adequate distancing throughout and flexibility to fit around people’s work / tuition commitments. The breakdown for 2021/22 being:

- 25 ‘Urban Commuting’ sessions
- 52 ‘Back on bike / Rusty Rider’ sessions
- In addition 14 students and staff took up the offer of Learn to Ride lessons which is a fantastic opportunity for the University to offer. The majority of these being females who didn’t ever have the opportunity to learn as a child. Adult beginners can take up to 3/4 sessions before grasping balancing but then move on very rapidly. It’s very encouraging to note that many participants progressed through all the levels of training and now cycle regularly for study; work or leisure

- A handful of leisure rides were run for newcomers and international students and as part of wider Sustainability Dept. initiatives notably Green Week and “Show Your Stripes” day.

Several factors contributed to the continued interest:

- Flexibility on the timetable and structure of sessions to fit individuals availability and experience – particularly being able to offer out of term and evening sessions
- Moving to weekly Dr Bike events where the cycle project manager is present and cycle training / safety information is actively promoted to anyone getting their bike fixed.
- Incorporation of cycle training with the bike recycling and Unicycle bike hire schemes
- Continued momentum in communication and spreading of word by attendees / social media & variety of internal comms

G. BIKE MAINTENANCE SESSIONS

Dr Bike free maintenance

This year we invested further in the Dr Bike checks and maintenance. The ever popular “Dr Bike” qualified mechanic provides free at point of use cycle checks; basic maintenance and advice on further repairs needed. The Dr Bike sessions were increased to weekly during term time (Whiteknights) and once per term at London Road – from previous fortnightly. In addition we held two promotional “On your bike day” where Dr Bike was in attendance.

The increased frequency ensured that queuing was minimal and more time available for some fixes to be carried out on site (on top of the general puncture repair / brakes and gear adjustments which was much welcomed. The weekly structure also contributed to attendance and awareness spreading through word of mouth.

Typically between 4 and 8 people attended each 2 hour session with as many as 15 at one event!

A total of **28 sessions** took place during the year with **over 100 participants** (many people attending more than once). On very rare occasions the sessions had to be cancelled due to very poor weather.

Reading Bike Kitchen (RBK)

We also welcomed RBK back onto campus where their experienced mechanics delivered **8 pop-ups** also providing safety checks; basic repairs but with more of an emphasis on giving people guidance / support to help maintain their own bike (some cross over between Dr Bike and RBK attendees) .

RBK also supported the refurbishment / recycling of abandoned bikes to enable low cost second hand bike sales.

These repair sessions continue to be extremely popular and are generally run over lunchtime or towards end of the day to maximise potential for those working and studying to attend. The engagement with Reading Bike Kitchen has strengthened over the last few years and helps increase those who can be supported and continues drive more self-sufficiency across more cyclists.

The purchase by RUSU of outdoor basic maintenance equipment in 2019 (located by the Library covered bike racks) was sadly vandalised relatively quickly and the pump has been repaired several times but still mostly out of action. Therefore the tools bought in 2018 by this project are helpful to have onsite- securely stored in locations at Whiteknights and London Road Security offices and spares / replacements have been replenished when need with addition of several more track pumps.

H. CYCLE EVENTS

Engaging our project provider, Avanti Cycling, from early August meant we were able to flex the timetable in line with continued Covid and University guidance. We restarted some but not all of the usual programme of pre-term and Welcome Week activities along with On Your Bike days in October and January.

- During the Green Festival in November 2021, a number of cycle-based events ran as part of the programme including Light Up promotions and bike repair / recycle events.
- Plans are now in place for 2022/23 year including the previously popular ‘Cycle to Work’ day in September (potentially part of staff “Well-being” week if taking place then) and further active participation in the RUSU organised events during 2022 Welcome Week
- A further and larger ‘On Your Bike’ day in planned for October offering safety and security advice as well as promoting the entire range of cycle activities and facilities available:-
 Second hand bikes for sale / and hire scheme; attendance by third parties (Thames Valley Police / MyJourney Wokingham / The Reading Cycle Campaign / RBK / Cycle to work partners etc.)
 In the past over 300 students (and many staff) have participated in one or more of these events.

A key part of the cycle project expansion has been improved recycling of abandoned campus bicycles, which was developed more fully in 2019/20 and incorporated into the project and is mostly run by RBK ensuing full lifecycle reuse of bikes and spare parts. Over 30 second hand/ recycled bikes were sold during 2021/22.

I. UNICYCLE BIKE HIRE

This scheme enables students (& staff) to hire a recycled bicycle at low cost and much lower risk compared to buying. The hire fee (£30/ term or £75/ year) includes lights and high-quality D-lock with return secured by way of a minimal deposit.

All hirers must attend a cycle safety assessment held by the qualified Avanti Cycling training Instructor and further sessions recommended as necessary.

There has been a steady increase in participation over the years although this took a significant down turn during Covid years and with 2019/ 20 also being impacted by very poor weather in autumn 2019 followed by a huge reduction in students on campus – especially international students.

The Cycle Project now runs the scheme on behalf of RUSU which enables hands-on support for the hire bike and recycled sales schemes - fitting students and staff to appropriate bicycles, going over safety tips and information as well as providing basic riding training.-

The volume and availability of Hire Bikes for 2022/23 is still under consideration by RUSU as the scheme requires considerable time and effort to administer. Based on prior years’ success and overall benefits, resource / funding support is expected to continue in full scale (with 28 hire bikes available in a range of sizes).

Table 2: Annual number of Unicycle hires since 2016						
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of Unicycle hires	18	11	78	20	12	26 (some re-hires)

J. WEBSITE HITS

Due to a technical reporting error, there are no records of the number of visits to the Sustainable Travel web pages between early August 2021 and mid May 2022. Despite this, there have been some clear successes with website exposure: June 2022 had 4069 visits, the highest number of any June since reporting began on WordPress in 2017 and July 2022 (2926 visits) was only 35 hits short of the busiest previous July in 2019. This suggests an upwards trend in overall traffic, which will become more evident with successful reporting in the future.

K. BUSINESS TRAVEL

Business travel is discussed within the monitoring of the University's Carbon Management Programme.

4. COMPLETED TRAVEL PROJECTS

Project	Impact	Travel Plan budget cost
Contribution to cycle and pedestrian improvements around relocated Art School	Improved connectivity to existing travel infrastructure	£164,220
Cycle skills sessions, safety promotion & maintenance	Improved cycled skills, confidence and safety	£13,065
Travel subscription licences	CoWheels, Easit, Chargemaster, Doing UoR Bit	£15,406
Bus & cycle shelter cleaning and repairs		£6,328
Travel survey promotion and prizes		£634
Total Spend		£199,653