

# Annual Travel Monitoring Report 2023/24

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# 1. Introduction

This report sets out the travel related activities undertaken through the academic year 2023-24 (August 2023-July 2024) by the University of Reading's sustainability team.

## 2. Appointment of a new Sustainable Travel Officer

A new Sustainable Travel Officer was appointed in September 2023 to oversee the travel activities at the University. Their responsibilities include:

- Preparing and consulting upon the next five-year Travel Plan and associated Action Plan;
- Moving forward, implementing the Plan and its actions and taking responsibility for travel plan targets;
- Conducting biennial travel surveys of all staff and student travel patterns to establish a baseline, track progress against targets and gather feedback;
- Continuous communication with stakeholders including staff and students, visitors and external stakeholders such as local authorities, local travel-related companies and charities and organisations;
- Keeping up to date with local, regional and national travel-related legislation to ensure that the University continues to meet its' sustainability objectives.

The Sustainable Travel Officer is also responsible for monitoring and reporting on the results of travel related activities, including through this annual report.

## 3. Travel Plan

A new Travel Plan has been developed for the period 2024-2029. The five-year Plan can be found [here](#). The Travel Plan sets out the University's commitments to supporting sustainable travel by our staff, students and visitors over the next five-year period.

The Travel Plan supports Principle 3 of the University's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan ('play our part in tackling climate change and [are] recognised as a University that leads on global environmental sustainability'). The Travel Plan also forms a key part of our ISO14001 Environmental Management System, the Carbon Management Plan and the wider sustainability vision.

The Travel Plan covers the three main UK campuses and includes:

- Staff and student commuter travel;
- Business Travel;
- University Fleet and operational travel; and
- Visitors and Deliveries (where travel can be managed/influenced).

The Travel Plan contains targets for increasing the percentage of journeys made by sustainable modes, which are based on the results of the last travel survey (see further detail below) as well as historic trends and considering available budgets and timescales.

The targets have been expanded upon in a series of objectives, which consider challenges and opportunities based on our knowledge and experience of travel at the University as well as feedback from the last travel survey. These opportunities have been refined into a detailed Action Plan which also provides timescales, responsibilities and broad costs for each action.

Delivery of the Travel Plan will be an ongoing process over the next five years. It will be managed and monitored by the Sustainable Travel Officer with support from others. Biennial travel surveys will continue to monitor the success (or otherwise) of the travel measures.

## 4. Travel Survey

Travel surveys are undertaken every two years, with the last survey undertaken in January 2024. The aim of the travel surveys are to:

- Establish (broadly) where staff and students live, how often they travel to campus and when;
- Establish the primary mode(s) of travel used by staff and students when travelling to and from campus and any secondary/alternative modes;
- Establish reasons for using this mode(s), which may include those relating to personal circumstances which are unable to be influenced by the University, or could include those which the University could potentially have some influence over;
- Ask for their opinions on the potential to either switch to various travel modes if not already using, or ask for opinions on what would aid in their travel to campus;
- Understand further views on potential future changes such as the potential to switch to an electric vehicle in the future (to help the University plan for the future); and
- Provide an open opportunity for any further feedback on any travel related matters relating to the University and the journey to/from.

This year was the first time in which two separate surveys were undertaken for staff and for students. This was to enable tailoring the wording of each question and to provide additional questions on work from home patterns for staff, and on travel at the start and end of term for students.

A total of 1,215 staff and 503 student responses were seen in 2024; the highest staff response rate since 2016 and the highest student response rate since 2018.

A full report has been prepared to detail the results of the 2024 travel surveys, which can be found [here](#).

## 5. Usage Data for Travel Initiatives

This section provides an update on the use of the various travel initiatives over the period 1 August 2023 - 31 July 2023. Where data is available, usage data has been compared to previous years; where possible this includes some pre-COVID data.

### A. Staff HR Benefits

The University offers several salary sacrifice schemes and offers to encourage and support staff to use low or no-carbon modes of travel to work. Table 1 below shows how many participants use the schemes each year.

Scheme (all as of 31 July)	Cycle to Work	Bus To Work	Rail Season Ticket Loan
2018-2019	14	246	7
2019-2020	32	186	3
2020-2021	25	57	1
2021-2022	39	109	2
2022-2023	27	132	0
2023-2024	59	152	3

The above table demonstrates a reasonable increase in staff utilising the HR Travel benefits available to them. Significantly, this includes the 'Bus to Work' and the 'Cycle to Work' scheme. For both schemes, 2023-2024 represents the highest level of utilisation since COVID-19. Whilst the rail season ticket loan also remains low, usage still represents an increase in comparison to the previous three academic years.

The university will continue to promote the above schemes to staff, to encourage low or 'no carbon' methods of travel to and from the university.

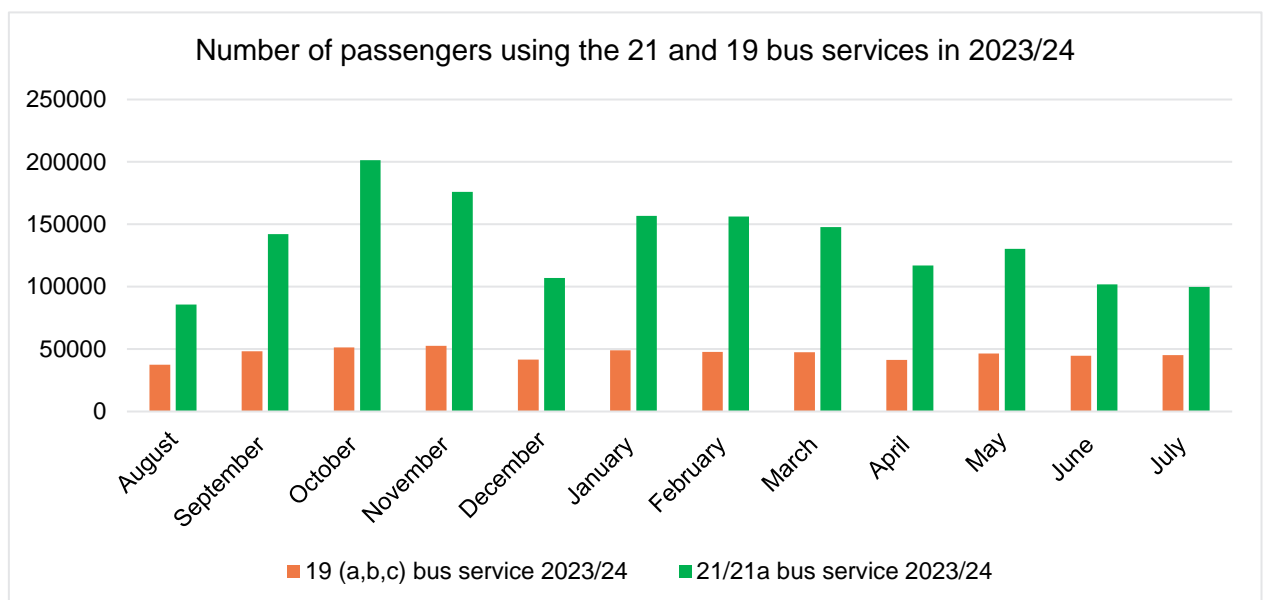
It is noted that the University previously ran a 'My Car' scheme which gave staff the opportunity to sacrifice a fixed amount of their monthly salary in exchange for a leased vehicle. The benefit was removed during the COVID-19 pandemic and has not since resumed. There is potential to explore similar schemes in the future, if there is demand to do so.

### B. Bus Use

The University of Reading Whiteknights campus is served directly by the Reading Buses 21/21a (which comes directly onto campus) and the 19a, b and c services which stop

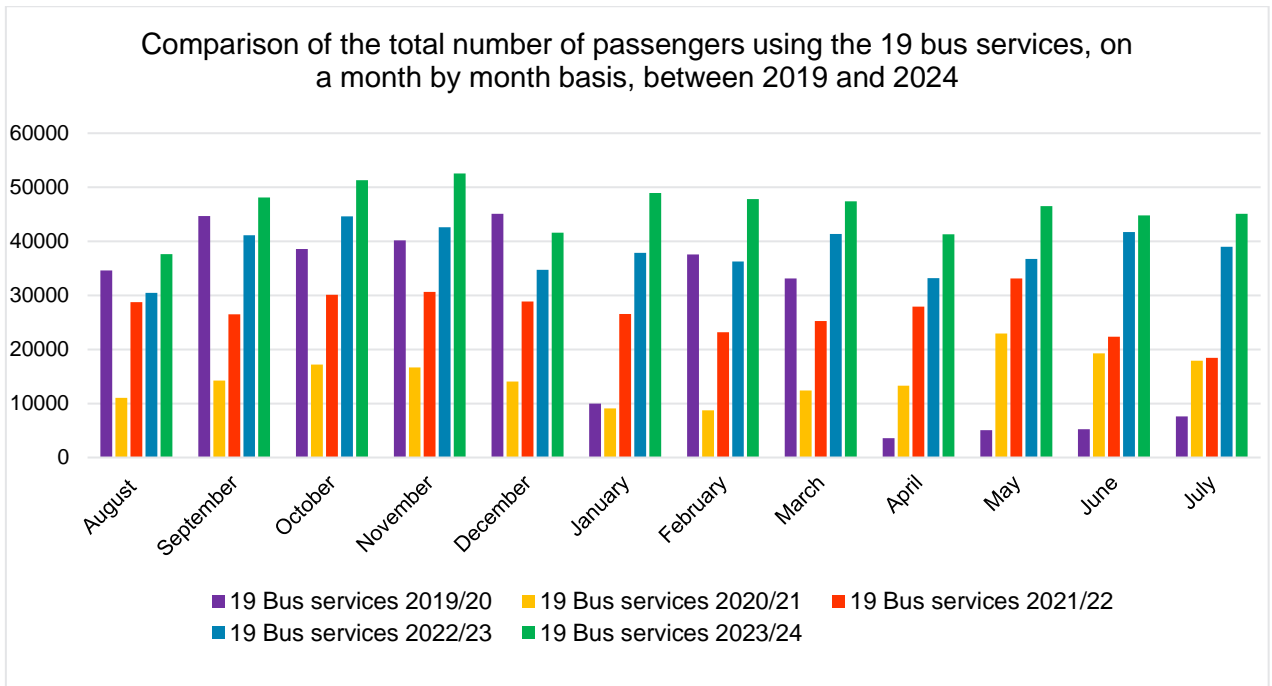
outside of campus on the Earley Gate side. The Buzz 9 and the Lion 3 also travel past campus on Shinfield Road. The 17 bus does not directly pass campus, though runs within an approximate 5-minute walk from some of the main on-campus halls and provides a regular, 24-hour service into the town centre; thus is well used by students. The 21/21a also routes down Kendrick Road, with a pedestrian route through to the London Road campus.

Reading Buses provide data on bus use for the 21/21a and 19a, b and c routes; being those primarily used by staff and students. Whilst not all passengers will be staff or students, Reading Buses seek to refine the data provided to us by assessing passenger numbers as they stop at or near to Whiteknights campus. Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate a comparison of the total number of passengers using the 21 and 19 bus services over the past year.



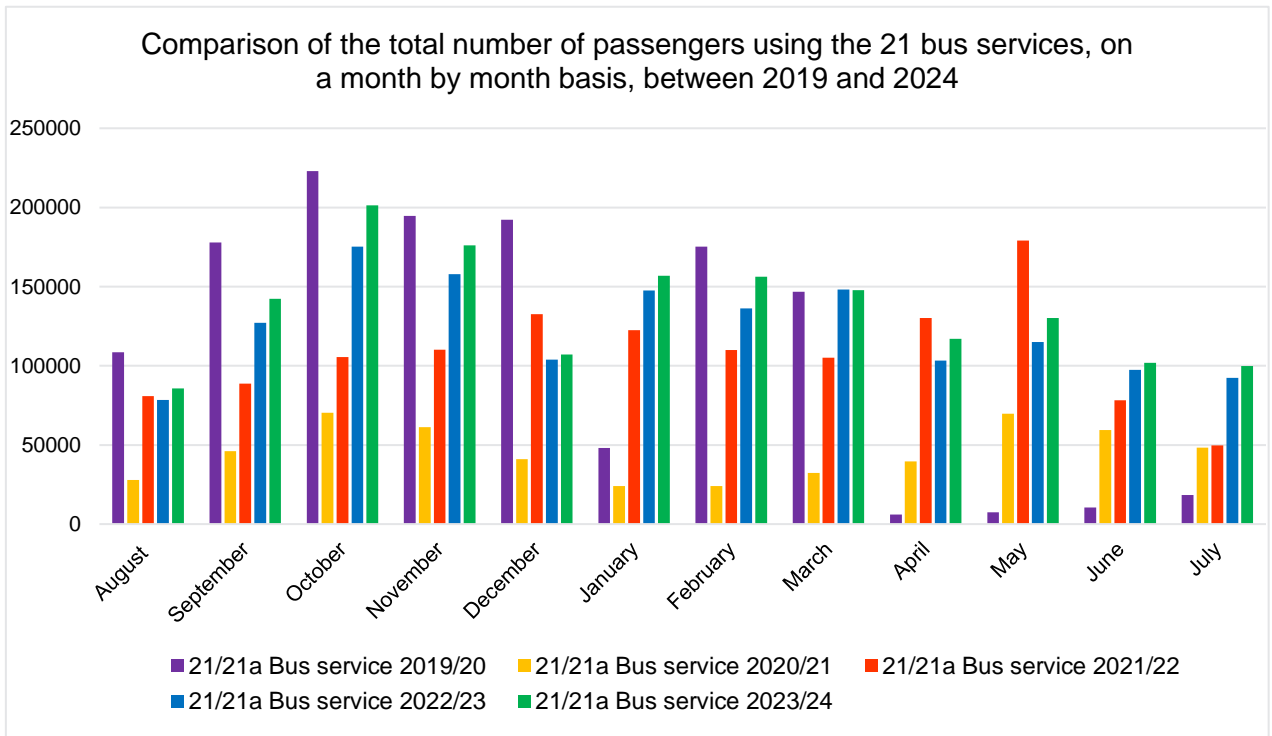
**Figure 1** - Comparison of the total number of passengers using the 21 & 19 bus services in 2023/24

Bus journeys on the 19 a/b/c routes (which services Earley Gate and Bridges Hall) have increased compared to the 2022/23 academic year, with every month seeing an increase in year-on-year usage (Figure 2). Overall, there were 553,062 journeys made on the services in 2023/24, compared to 459,594 in the previous year demonstrating a 20% increase in usage over the past couple of years, and since the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Figure 2 - Comparison of passengers using the 19 bus services by month (2019-2024)**

There is a similar trend in data for the Claret 21/21a services (Figure 3). There were 1,622,156 journeys in the 2023/24 reporting period, a 9% increase on the 1,482,629 journeys made in 2022/23. The 21/21a services are utilised almost three times as much per year than the 19a, b & c services and utilisation levels are now exceeding pre COVID-19 levels.



**Figure 3 - Comparison of passengers using the 21/21A bus services by month (2019-2024)**

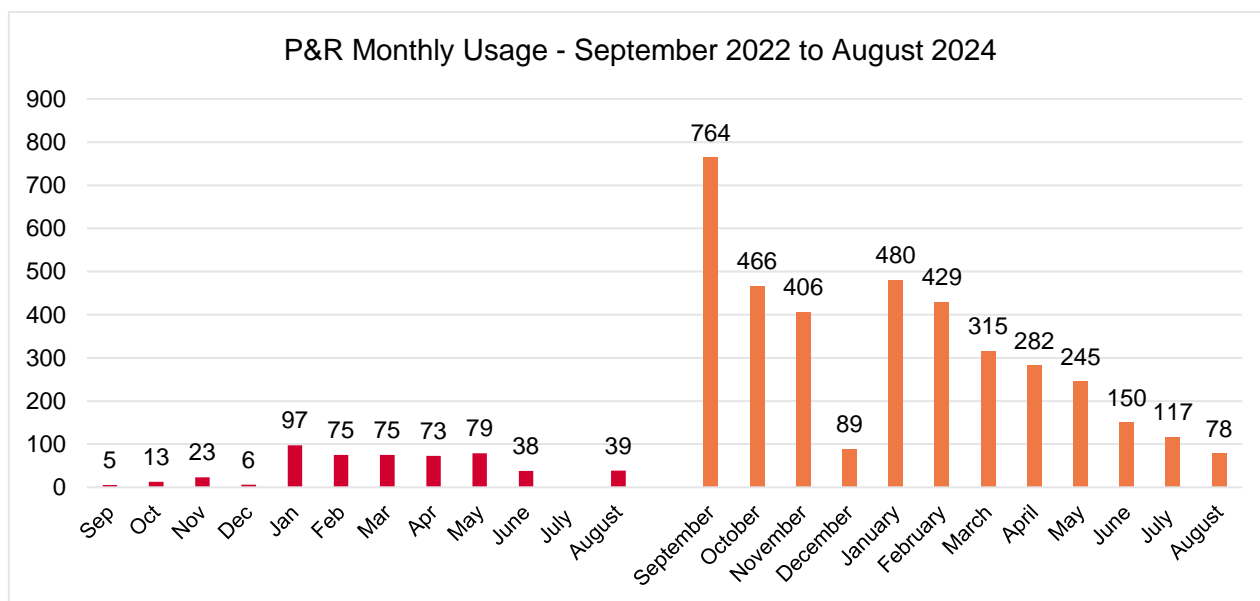
The University has collaborated with Reading Buses to launch a new service which will commence operation in September 2024. The new service, the ‘White Knight’ (no.20) will effectively replace the existing 21a and will run directly between Whiteknights campus and the town centre. The non-stop service will run every 15 minutes between circa 07:30 and 23:30 during term time. The next annual report will analyse the use of this new service alongside any feedback received from staff, students and Reading Buses.

### C. Park and Ride

The University offers free Park and Ride travel between MereOak Park & Ride (Junction 11 of the M4) and Whiteknights campus. The 300 Park & Ride service also travels beyond to Royal Berkshire Hospital, and so also serves the London Road campus.

The free service, launched in September 2022 has increased in popularity this year, particularly from September 2023, accounting for uptake from both staff and students. At the start of the year, the service was heavily promoted with blog posts and flyers, as well as video content published for staff and students to watch and learn about the Park and Ride process. It is noted that the September 2023 presents a ‘peak,’ with the lowest monthly usage in December 2023 and August 2024.

Figure 4 demonstrates Park & Ride uptake in comparison to the 2022/2023 academic year.



**Figure 4** - Comparison of P&R usage by month (2012-2024) \*Note: no data available for July 2023

The 2024 travel survey indicated that bringing the service onto campus would encourage further take up. This has been discussed with Reading Buses, but it is not currently viable to do so as the service heavily serves staff at Royal Berkshire Hospital (who have a similar offer in place for their staff). Re-routing the bus onto campus would increase journey time for these users.

Aside from the MereOak offer, discussions are ongoing surrounding the potential introduction of a Park & Ride service operating between Reading East (Thames Valley Park) and the university.

## D. Great Western Rail Discount

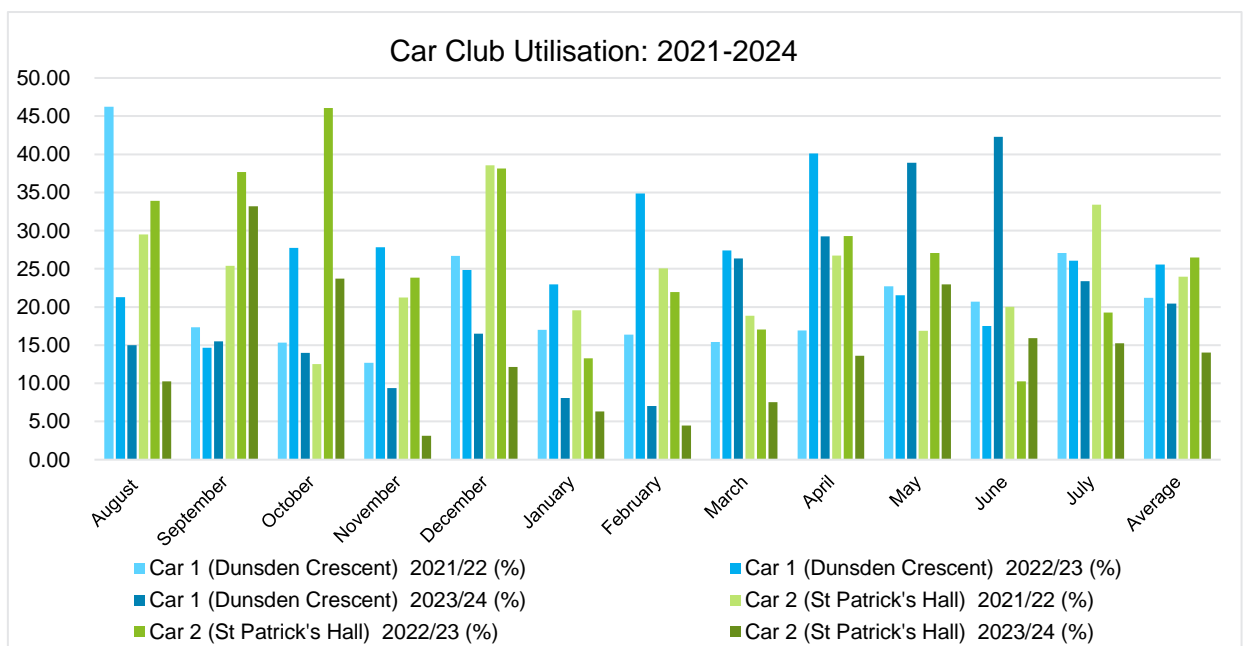
Sustainability Services began working with Great Western Rail (GWR) in 2022 to seek to develop incentives to increase the use of train services for the University community. GWR have developed a specific portal for the University which enables people attending Open, Visit and Graduation days to access a 20% discount on advance fares to encourage them to travel by train. This discount can be combined with a young persons railcard which allows those travelling on eligible routes to access up to a 50% discount on fares.

Between 2023 and 2024, GWR have reported that the platform was used 6 times to obtain rail discounts. This is a decrease from the 32 people that utilised this platform between 2022 and 2023. This indicates that further / targeted promotion would be beneficial to increase awareness of the platform, and the university will continue to work with GWR to potentially improve the incentives for staff and students to travel via rail.

## E. Co-Wheels Car Club

There are currently two Co-Wheels Car Club cars available for hire on-site at the University; one at Dunsden Crescent (Car 1) and one at St. Patricks Halls (Car 2). The cars are available to be booked for a small charge, reducing the number of people bringing their own car to campus.

Figure 5 shows the number of bookings made for both cars since 2021/22.



**Figure 5** – Car Club utilisation between 2021 and 2024

Figure 5 shows that the utilisation rate (percentage of the total time that each car is in use) of both cars combined during 2023-2024 was the highest during May, June and September. Higher utilisation in these months could primarily relate to the start and end of the academic year, indicating that the cars may have been used for outings, or usage has benefitted from promotion undertaken during Welcome Week.



Throughout 2023-2024, the usage rate for Car 1 (Dunsden Crescent) was 20.47%, a decrease from the 2022-2023 usage rate of 25.57%. Similarly, the usage rate for Car 2 (St Patricks Hall) decreased from 26.49% to 14.05% between 2022/23 and 2023/24. Whilst overall usage has decreased in comparison to previous years, it is noted that certain months demonstrate a significant increase in usage, particularly for Car 1 during May and June (this is consistent with the aforementioned “highest use” months).

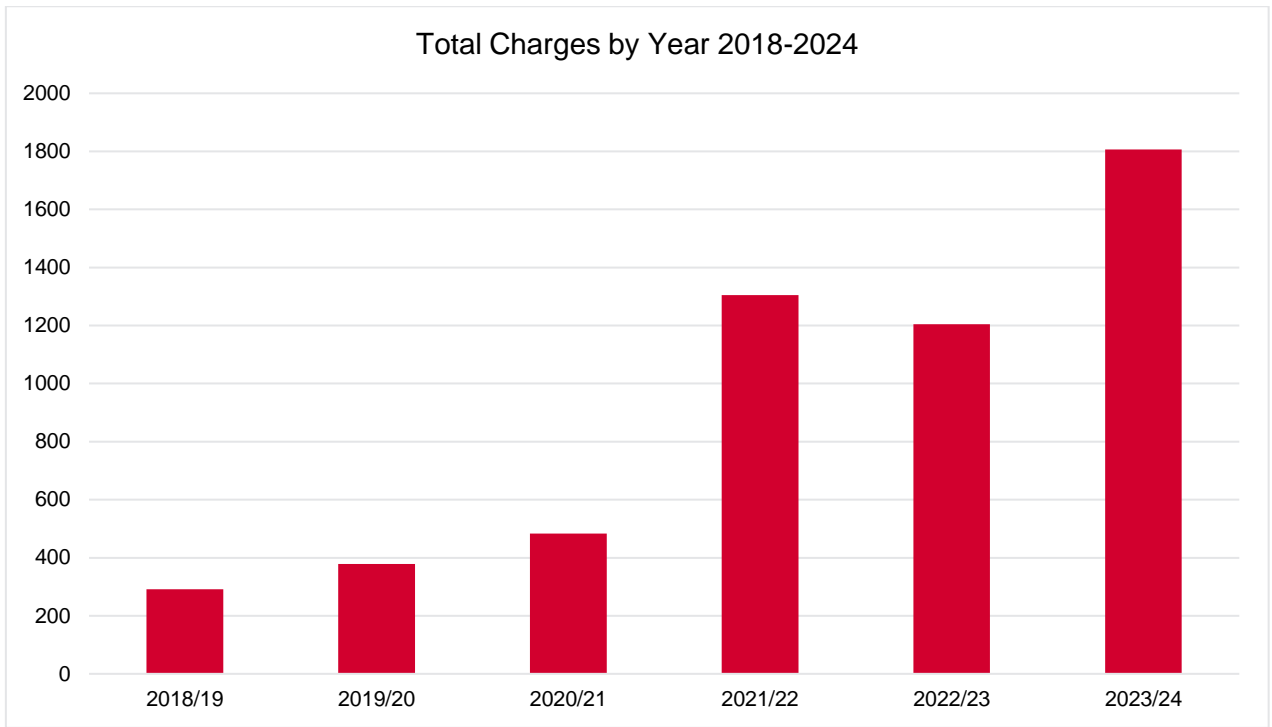
There are currently plans to introduce a further Co-Wheels car club vehicle; at the London Road campus. It is proposed that the vehicle will be electric, in line with the wider aspiration goals to appropriately provide further electric vehicle infrastructure. There is also opportunity to further promote the car club scheme throughout the year, to create a more consistent increase in usage, and reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles that are driven onto campus.

There is also the potential to move the existing vehicles to a more attractive or accessible location on campus, to increase visibility of the cars and improve awareness of the Car Club as a viable alternative to the private car.

## **F. BP Pulse Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs)**

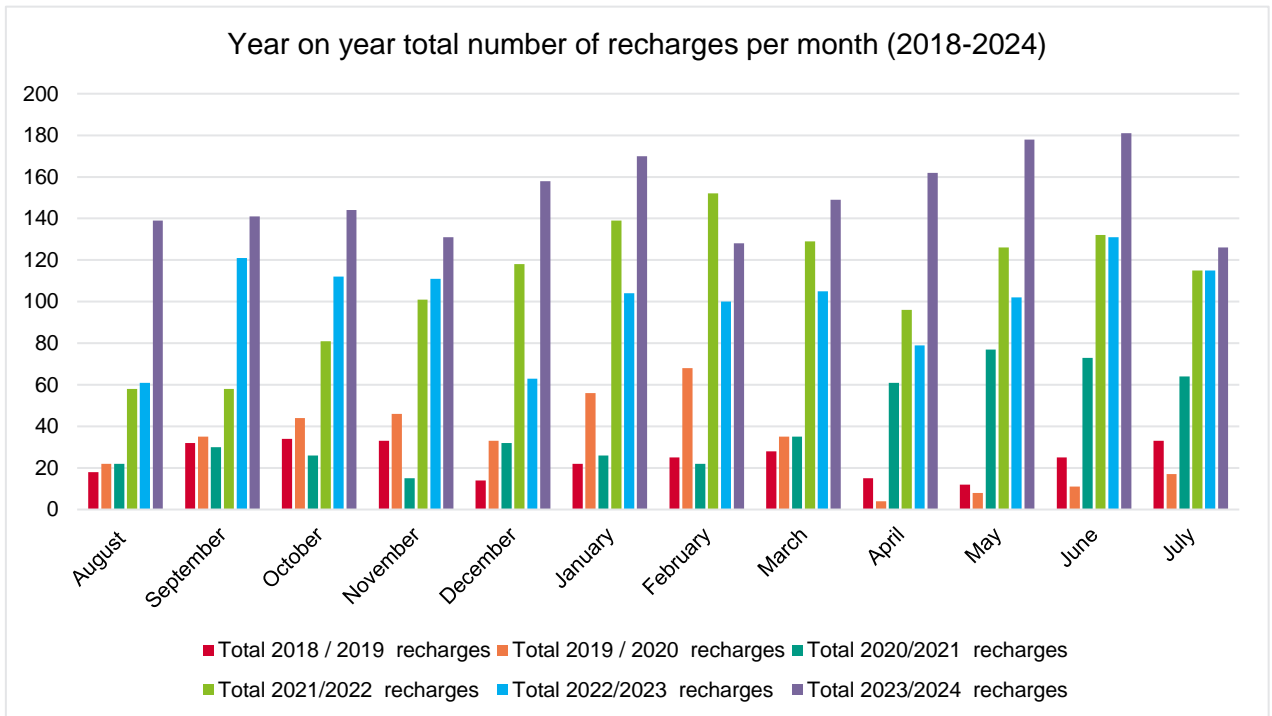
The University has four EVCPs (two double points across four bays) at the Sports Park Pay 7 Display car park, and 1 EVCP installed at Greenlands Campus. Both are currently managed by BP Pulse. Figure 5 shows combined usage since 2018/19.

The University has 2 EVCPs (Electric Vehicle Charging Points) installed at the Sports Park pay and display car park on the Whiteknights campus and 1 EVCP installed at Henley Business School (HBS) on the Greenlands Campus. The EVCP's at the Sports Park have each been used more than twice as much as the Greenlands EVCP in 2023/24.



**Figure 6 – Total number of recharges at all 3 EVCPs, by academic year (August – July) 2018 to 2024**

The total number of recharges in 2023/24 from all sites was 1807, a significant increase from 1204 recharges in 2022/23.



**Figure 7 – Combined total monthly recharges at all EVCPs between 2018/19-2023/24**

The comparison between the monthly data for the past two academic years and the previous years (Figure 7) demonstrates a huge increase in the number of recharges per month. The increase shows that there is a consistently increased demand for electric

vehicle charging. The continuing high figures outside of term time suggest that there may be usage by the general public as well as University staff/students.

### **G. Other Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs)**

Additional chargepoints are also available across Whiteknights campus for the charging of fleet vehicles, including:

- 2 EV charging spaces at Whiteknights Campus Car Park 5 (for Campus Services vehicles only)
- 2 EV charging spaces at the Whiteknights Campus Estates Building ( for Estates maintenance vehicles only)
- 2 EV charging spaces at the Reading Students' Union (RSU) Yard ( for Catering vehicles only)

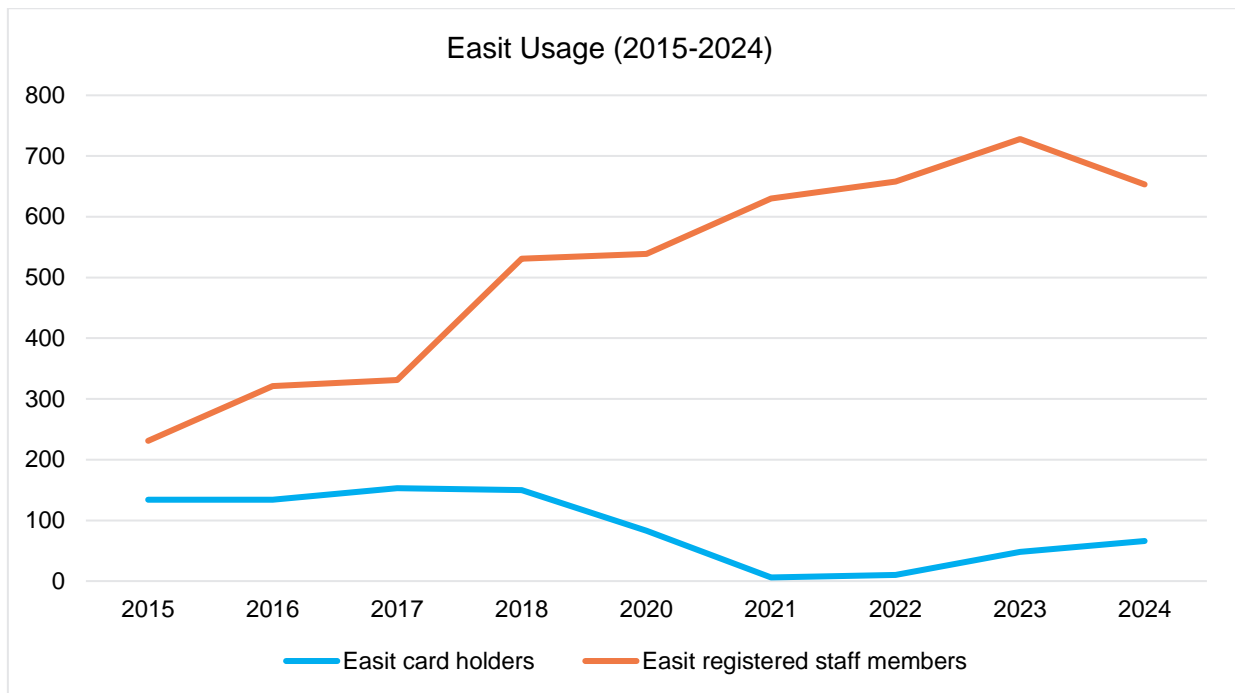
As the fleet vehicle charge points were installed by individual Schools and Directorates, they are managed by various providers and Sustainability Services do not currently receive data from these providers. However, an ongoing project is underway to both add to the University's charging provision, and to (over time) re-organise our current infrastructure to enable a single provider in order to better manage and track EVCPs and their effectiveness.

### **H. Easit Discount Card**

The Easit network provides travel-related discounts, which are available by registering online and purchasing an Easit card at a cost of £5.90 per year (2024 pricing). The Easit card allows access to a range of benefits and discounts including (but not limited to):

- Discounts and rail season tickets
- Access to easitSHARE
- Taster tickets for Arriva and Reading Buses
- Savings and driving credit with Enterprise Car Club
- Free Co-wheels Car Club membership
- Discounts with Halfords, Hovertravel, EcoMove, Chargebase, and more
- Brompton Bike Hire and other cycle loan discounts
- Free Co-wheels Car Club membership
- Access to information on walking and cycling routes

Figure 8 demonstrates the usage of Easit since 2015.



**Figure 8** – Recorded Easit usage between 2015 and 2024

There has been an increase in the number of Easit card holders, with 66 University affiliated members as of 31/07/24, compared to just 48 card holders between 2022-23. There are also 37 members of staff registered on the EasitSHARE scheme, which is a service that allows car sharing journeys to university affiliated sites – this is an increase from the 30 registered staff during 2023. Overall however, there has been a decrease in Easit registered members, with 653 in 2024, and 728 in 2023.

As a result, though there has been a reduction in registered Easit members, there has been a positive increase in the number of users that are active card holders and members of specific initiatives, such as EasitSHARE.

## I. Cycle Safety Project Overview

The University's cycle initiatives managed by our training provider Avanti Cycling are wide ranging and are hugely successful. All the activities to support and encourage cycling have been run throughout the year, along with ad-hoc summer bike hires and training for new starters / International & Post grad students. The full range of activities, initiatives, and projects managed by our training provider Avanti Cycling include:

- Cycle skills sessions
- Dr Bike safety checks and fixes
- Reading Bicycle Kitchen (RBK) Maintenance pop ups
- The Unicycle hire bike scheme
- Managing on-campus bike recycling and resale (with support from RBK).

### Cycle Skills/Training Sessions

From September 2023 to end June 2024 there were **84 training sessions** held (some still being arranged for summer holidays); comprising of 62 individual participants. The average was 2.25 people per session and typically 2 sessions per individual (some

complete beginners needed upwards of 5 sessions). This was a mix of students and staff who already cycle but needed support in building confidence and techniques for roads /in busy traffic (including international students/ staff needing to learn UK Highway code rules). Also, a large contingent of people wanting to refresh bike skills (e.g. signalling, use of gears) and lots of complete beginners, who some were attempting cycling for the first time. In addition to the scheduled timetable various 1:1s / 1:2 were run out of hours to fit around people's work schedule / tuition commitments.

The session breakdown for 2022/23:

- 20 'Road confidence / Commuting techniques' sessions
- 28 'Back on bike / Rusty Rider' sessions
- 36 Learn to Ride/ basic beginners' sessions

Over twenty students and staff took on 'Learn to Ride lessons,' with the majority of these being females who had not ever had the opportunity to learn as a child. Adult beginners can need up to 3-4 sessions before grasping balancing but then move on very rapidly. It is 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 as part of wider Sustainability Department initiatives such as: Green Week in November, Clean Air Day and three "On Your Bike" promotional days.

#### **Attributes 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 Training 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.

#### **Dr Bike free maintenance checks and repairs**

This year we invested further in Dr Bike – checks, maintenance, and size of the project (for a longer duration). The new and even more popular Dr Bike, who is a qualified mechanic and Reading Bike Kitchen (RBK) volunteer, provides free at point of use cycle checks, basic maintenance with tips on own work and advice on further repairs needed. The Dr Bike sessions increased to weekly during term time and have unofficially extended in duration quite regularly working over 3 hours to complete the queue / and or deal with extensive jobs where a travel emergency for the staff / student in question. There is consideration of holding events on other sites in 2024/25 (including the new science park).

The increased frequency has led to ever more popularity and therefore all events have been well attended – even on rainy days / those run before and after term time!

Also, the mechanic has agreed to make more time available for fixes to have been conducted on site (on top of the general puncture repair / brakes and gear adjustments). The improved weekly structure also contributed to attendance and awareness by 'word of mouth'.

Typically, 10-12 people attended each 2–3-hour session with the most populous being 22 at one of the larger promotional OYB event (supported by an additional Avanti Mechanic and Reading Bicycle Kitchen). **Overall, there were 36 sessions and over 200 participants** (many people attended more than once). We didn't have to cancel any sessions due to weather as the covered area by Palmer Building provided sufficient protection.

### **Reading Bike Kitchen (RBK)**

We also welcomed RBK back onto campus with experienced mechanics/ volunteers delivering six 'pop-ups' providing safety checks and advice. These were for basic repairs but with more of an emphasis on giving people guidance and support to help maintain their own bike and additional time. RBK is also supporting the upcycling of abandoned bikes to enable low-cost second-hand bike sales.

These repair sessions continue to be extremely popular and are ran over lunchtime or towards the end of the day to maximise potential for those working and studying to attend. The engagement with RBK has strengthened over the last few years and helps to increase aid to those who need more support and continues to influence self-sufficiency across more cyclists.

The tools bought in 2018 by this project are helpful to have onsite. The tools were securely stored in locations at Whiteknights, in London Road Security offices, and spares / replacements had been replenished when needed, with the addition of several more track pumps. The basic maintenance equipment purchased by RUSU in 2019 (located by the Library & Agriculture) was sadly vandalised quickly, and the pump has been repaired several times but still has limited use. Alternative fixed equipment facilities are under investigation, but they will collectively cost several thousand pounds.

### **Cycle Events**

Engaging with our project provider, Avanti Cycling, from early August 2022 meant we restarted 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 2023, cycle-based events ran as part of the programme including bike repair / recycle events.
- Plans are now in place for 2024/25 year including further active participation in the RUSU organised events during the 2023 Welcome Week.
- A larger 'On Your Bike' day is scheduled for October, which will offer safety and security advice as well as promotion for the entire range of cycle activities and facilities available including a Bike Sales and cross-campus leisure ride.

- Second hand bikes for sale and hire scheme will be attended by third parties (Thames Valley Police / My-Journey Wokingham / The Reading Cycle Campaign / RBK / Cycle 2 Work partners, and others).

A key part of the cycle project expansion has been the ongoing recycling of abandoned bikes on campus being supported the project manager and RBK - ensuring full lifecycle reuse of bikes and spare parts. Some of these were added to the Hire bike fleet (where of sufficiently good quality) and supplemented by third party Charity 'Recycle Your Cycle'. Approx fifty second hand / recycled bikes were sold during 2023/24.

### **Unicycle Bike Hire**

Demand this year remained very high with all the scheme bikes having been taken out in the first week of term with a massive waiting list. Therefore, Avanti Cycling and RBK were asked to supply more bikes which they duly helped with, meaning more students could benefit from this low cost and risk scheme. The hire fee (£40/ term or £80/ year) includes lights and a 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 are recommended when necessary. The Cycle Project Manager now runs the scheme on behalf of RUSU which enables firsthand 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 "Unicycle" Hire bike scheme was expanded significantly in 2021/22 and now requires considerable time and effort to administer. Based on prior years' success and overall benefits, resource / funding support is expected to continue in full momentum. As of the end of June 2023 there are only twenty Raleigh hire bikes available from the original fleet of thirty-six acquired in 2018/19 with twelve stolen and four scrapped or used as parts due to amount of damage. Avanti Cycling and RBK have collectively supplied another twenty bikes which are now part of the available pool. The number of Individual hires is lower for 2023/24 as the majority of bikes were taken out for the full year, plus 12 bikes extended their hire from 2022/23. The scheme is already proving popular with requests for hire over the summer holidays and enquiries for start of next term.

<b>Year</b>	<b>NUMBER OF UNICYCLE HIRES</b>
2017-2018	11
2018-2019	48
2019-2020	20
2020-2021	12

Year	NUMBER OF UNICYCLE HIRES
2021-2022	26
2022-2023	60 (including 24 bikes from Avanti/RBK and re-hires)
2023-2024	48 (including re-hires)

## 6. Business Travel

For business travel discussion, see the monitoring of the University's Carbon Management Programme.

## Version control

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	MCE	Annually	?	?