Annual Travel Report 2025/2026

Contents

Introduction 2
The Travel Plan 2
Travel Survey 3
Usage Data for Travel Initiatives 5
Staff HR Benefits 5
Bus Usage 6
Park and Ride 9
Great Western Railway Discount 10
Co-Wheels Car Club 11
Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) 13
Easit Membership 15
Cycle Safety Project Overview 16
Cycle skills / training sessions 16
Dr Bike – Maintenance and Repairs 17
Reading Bicycle Kitchen (RBK) 18
Bike Stores & Tools 19
Cycling & Active Travel Events 19
Unicycle Bike Hire 19
Business Travel 20
Summary 21

Introduction

This report sets out the travel related activities undertaken throughout the academic year (covering August 2025 to July 2026) by The University of Reading.

The Travel Plan

The University adopted its Five-Year Travel Plan in July 2024 and has now been in active delivery for two years. During 2025–26 it was agreed to extend the Plan to 2030, providing a longer-term framework that better aligns with both the biennial travel survey cycle and the University's Net Zero 2030 carbon ambitions. The Plan sets out the University's commitments to supporting sustainable travel for staff, students and visitors, and is available to view here.

The Travel Plan supports Principle 3 of the University's 2020–2026 Strategic Plan ("play our part in tackling climate change and be recognised as a University that leads on global environmental sustainability"). It also forms a key element of our ISO14001 Environmental Management System, the Carbon Management Plan, and the wider sustainability vision.

Covering the University's three main UK campuses, the Plan addresses:

- Staff and student commuter travel;
- Business travel;
- University fleet and operational travel; and
- Visitors and deliveries (where travel can be managed or influenced).

The Travel Plan includes clear targets for increasing the percentage of journeys made by sustainable modes. These were developed using results from the most recent travel survey, alongside historic trends, available budgets and realistic delivery timescales. The targets are supported by a set of objectives that reflect both the challenges and opportunities identified through our experience of travel at the University and through feedback from the last survey.

These objectives have been translated into a detailed Action Plan, setting out specific measures, timescales, responsibilities and indicative costs. Over the past year, delivery has been actively progressed across a range of initiatives, from infrastructure upgrades to behavioural change campaigns, with measurable progress in some key target areas, as well as challenges identified in others.

Delivery of the Travel Plan is coordinated by the Sustainable Travel Officer with input from colleagues across the University. Progress is reviewed and monitored through biennial travel surveys and ongoing performance tracking to assess the effectiveness of the measures implemented and to inform any necessary adjustments.

Travel Survey

The University conducts staff and student travel surveys on a biennial basis to monitor travel behaviours and inform the delivery of the Travel Plan. The latest surveys were undertaken in December 2025, representing the second survey round within the current Travel Plan period and providing the most up-to-date evidence base for assessing progress.

The surveys are a key mechanism for understanding how travel patterns are changing over time and for ensuring that the measures delivered through the Travel Plan remain relevant, effective and aligned with the needs of staff and students. The aims of the travel surveys are to:

- Establish where staff and students live, how often they travel to campus, and at what times;
- Identify primary and secondary modes of travel used for commuting to and from campus;
- Understand the reasons behind mode choice, including factors outside the University's influence as well as areas where intervention may be possible;
- Gauge openness to changing travel modes and identify measures that would support such a switch;

- Explore views on potential future changes and university ambitions, and;
- Provide an open forum for further feedback on travel-related matters.

As in 2024, the surveys were run for both staff and students. Detailed branching logic allowed questions to be tailored to the different travel patterns and circumstances of each group. This included questions on working-from-home arrangements for staff and term-time travel behaviours for students.

A total of 1,233 staff responses and 524 student responses were received, giving an overall response total of 1,757. The staff response rate remained above 30%, representing another strong level of engagement and providing a robust evidence base for analysis.

The December 2025 results have been used to review progress against the Travel Plan targets, assess awareness and use of sustainable travel initiatives, and identify the barriers that continue to affect travel choices. The findings indicate that, while sustainable modes continue to account for the majority of journeys, progress is currently insufficient to place the University on track to achieve its Travel Plan targets by 2030 without additional intervention.

Key insights from the survey included:

- Single-occupancy car use increased slightly for both staff and students compared with the January 2024 baseline;
- Walking remained the dominant student travel mode, although its share declined compared with 2024;
- Cycling has increased for both staff and students;
- Cost and reliability of public transport continued to be among the most frequently cited barriers; and
- Requests for improved walking and cycling routes, safety and priority measures remained a consistent theme across both staff and student responses.

These findings are informing the ongoing delivery of the Travel Action Plan and the prioritisation of future interventions, ensuring that resources are directed

towards the measures most likely to support sustainable travel behaviour change.

A full report detailing the December 2025 Travel Survey results is available here.

Usage Data for Travel Initiatives

This section provides an update on the use of the University's various travel initiatives over the period 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2026. Where available, usage data has been compared to previous years to identify trends, including, where possible, some pre-COVID benchmarks for longer-term context.

As the 2024–2029 Travel Plan has now been active for two full years, this is the second annual usage dataset that reflects its delivery in practice. The data presented here helps to assess the uptake, effectiveness, and awareness of the measures implemented so far, and will inform future actions and priorities under the Plan.

Staff HR Benefits

The University offers several schemes via salary sacrifice, supporting staff to use low or no-carbon modes of travel to work. Table 1 below shows how many participants have used these schemes each year since 2018.

ACADEMIC YEAR	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

ACADEMIC YEAR	Cycle to Work	Bus to Work	Rail Season Ticket Loan
2022-2023	27	132	0
2023-2024	59	152	3
2024-2025	68	181	4
2025-2026	62	176	5

***Table 1**: HR Benefit Usage*

The above table demonstrates that HR benefit usage has slightly decreased across the board. 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.

The December 2025 Travel Survey data found that 24% of staff would be interested in the reinstatement of an EV salary sacrifice scheme. The Action Plan (formed as part of the Travel Plan) therefore set an objective to explore the feasibility of a new scheme over the next two years.

Bus Usage

The University of Reading Whiteknights campus is served by a number of bus routes, providing staff and students with convenient, sustainable travel options. These include the Reading Buses 19, 20 and 21 services, forming the primary routes used by the University community. These are supported by other services that pass near campus, including the Buzz 9, Lion 3, and the 17, which is within a five-minute walk of some main halls and provides a 24-hour service into the

town centre. The 21 also routes down Kendrick Road, with a pedestrian route connecting to London Road Campus.

Reading Buses continue to provide data on passenger numbers for the 20, 21 and 19 services. Data is refined to focus on journeys originating or ending near Whiteknights campus to best reflect staff and student use.

Figure 1 demonstrates monthly usage on the 19 A, B, and C services since 2019.

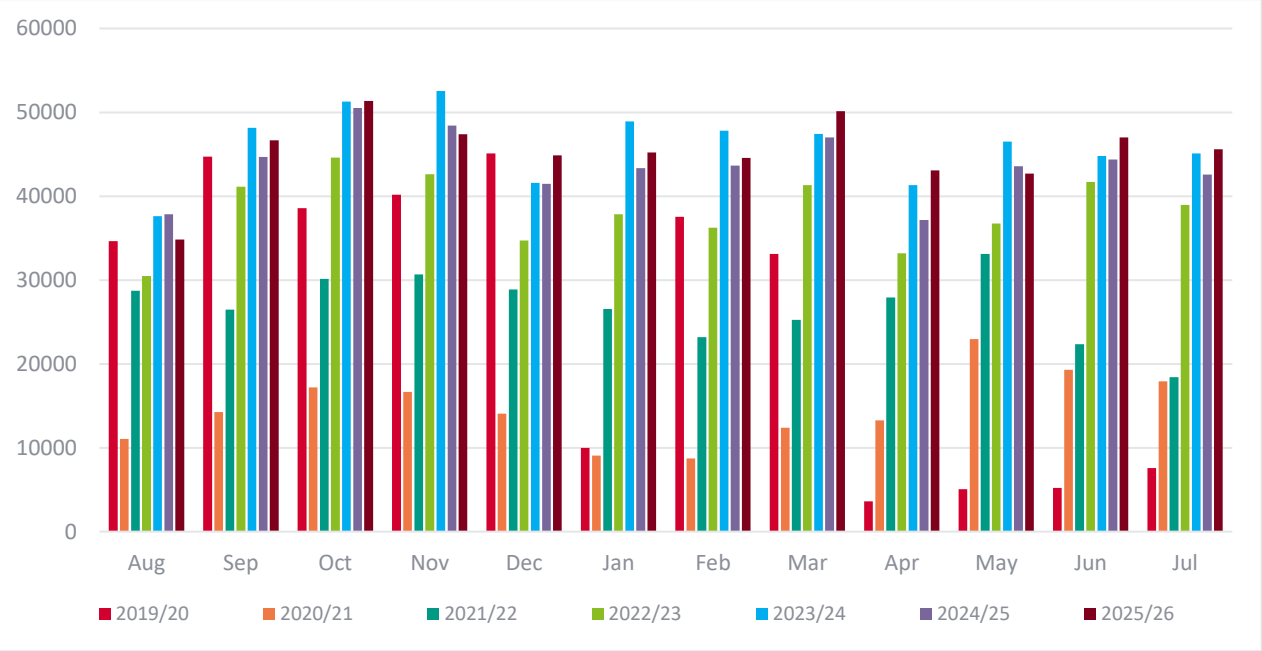


***Figure 1**: Comparison of 19A, 19B & 19C monthly bus usage (2019-2026)*

2025/2026 usage on the 19 services have increased by 4% since the 2024/2025 academic year, noting peak usage during March and October, and lowest usage during August and May.

In September 2024, the University collaborated with Reading Buses to launch the White Knight (No. 20) as a new service, replacing the 21a service. Since its launch, the service has received positive feedback in the 2025 Travel Survey from staff and students, with high engagement and usage recorded by Reading Buses. This route has streamlined travel to the town centre and enhanced the attractiveness of public transport as a sustainable alternative to private car use. This report also demonstrates the first full year of the usage on the White Knight 20. The monthly usage of the White Knight 20 is presented below.

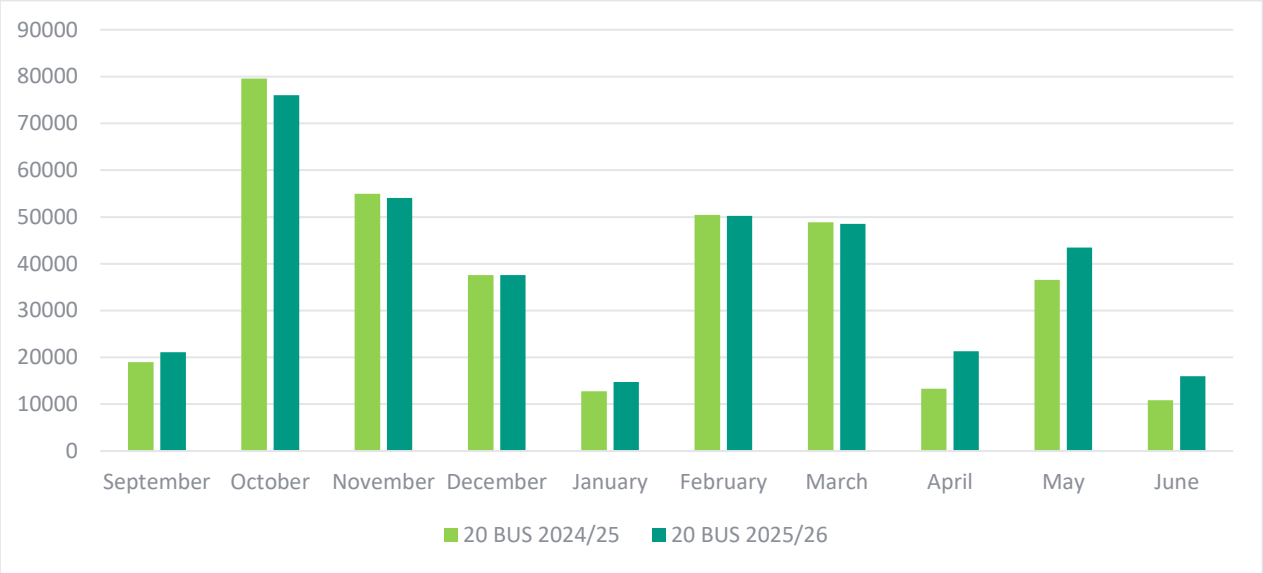


***Figure 2**: Comparison of the White Knight 20 monthly bus usage (2024-2026) (excluding July & August – service does not run outside of semesters)*

The highest level of use for the 20 is consistently during October, which is typically the start of the teaching year. It is worth noting, that across the year, usage has increased by 5% since 2024/25 – further demonstrating it's popularity.

Lastly, the 21 is the year-round bus service that directly serves the campus. It's usage (including the historical usage of the 21a) is presented below.

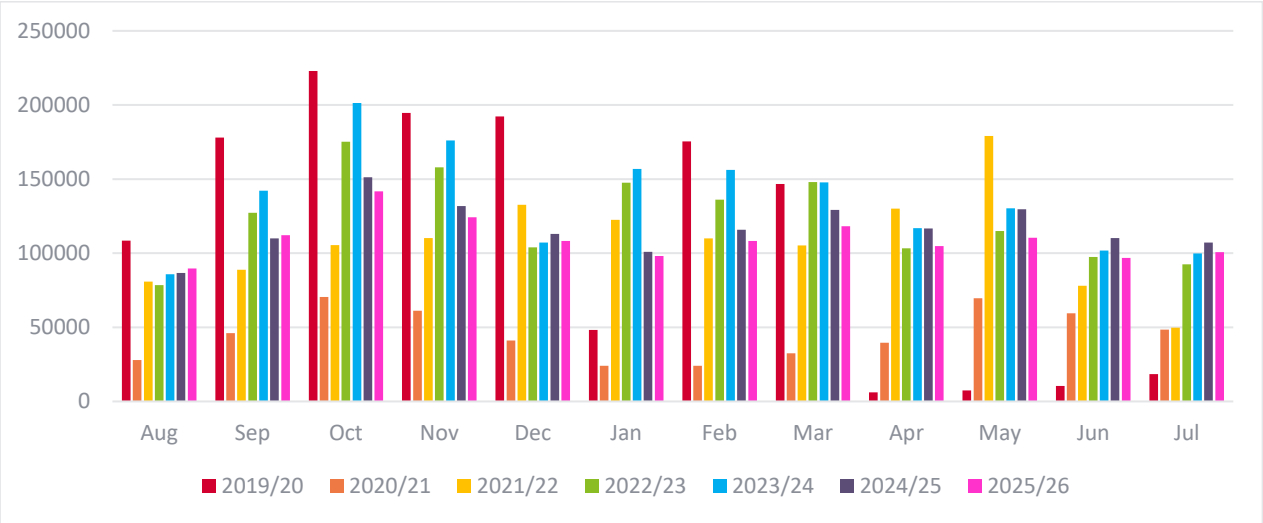


***Figure 3**: Comparison of the Claret 21 monthly bus usage (2019-2026)*

Similarly to the 20, peak usage falls within October and November. However, it is noted that usage has decreased by 6% since 2024/25 (which also saw a 14% decrease since 2023/24). It is worth noting that the downward trend can be credited to the discontinuation of the 21a in 2024 (and subsequent introduction of the Whiteknight 20) as well as a reduction in service frequency in June 2026. It has been agreed that the frequency will be raised during peak hours (following a summer period with very busy services) to better accommodate the demand.

Park and Ride

The University offers free Park and Ride (including both parking and bus travel) from Mereoak (Junction 11 of the M4) and Thames Valley Park (TVP) on the 300 Park & Ride bus service, which is operated by Reading Buses in partnership with the NHS Foundation Trust (with a stop also serving Royal Berkshire Hospital).

A full monthly breakdown of the usage of the Park and Ride service from Mereoak specifically is presented below.

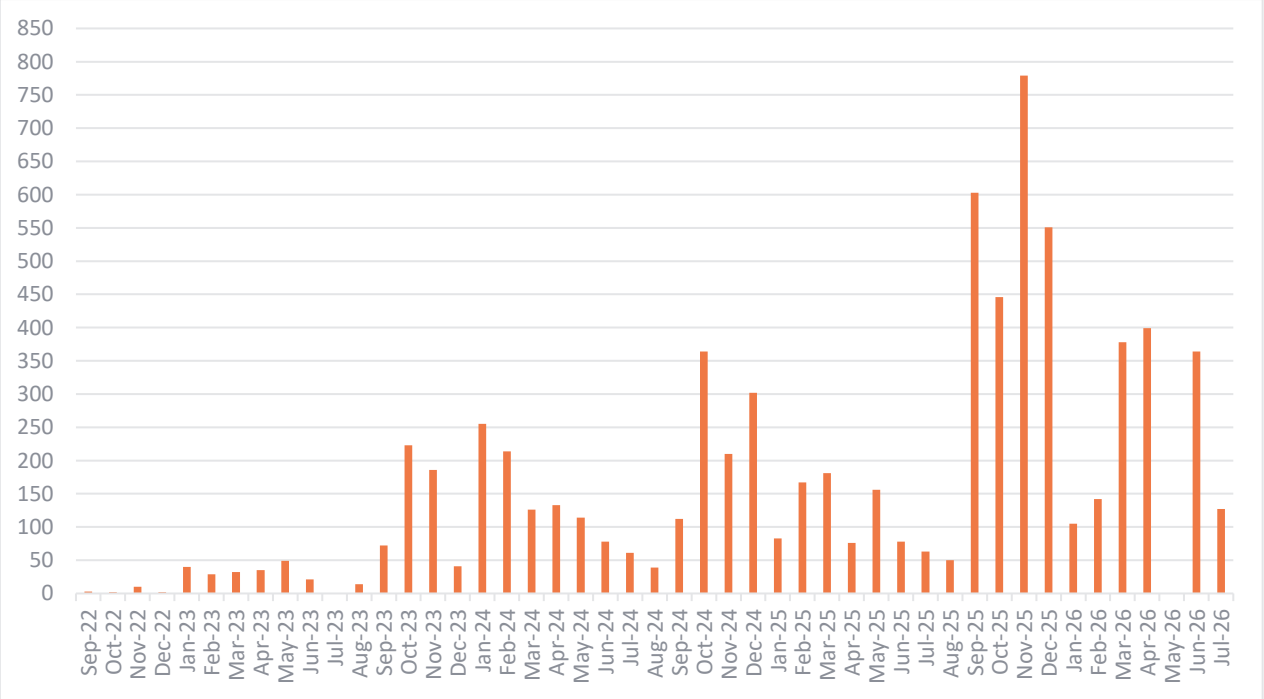


***Figure 4**: Monthly Usage of the Mereoak Park & Ride (Cars Parked per Month)*
(data missing for July 2023 and May 2026)

For Mereoak, this free service launched in September 2022 and has maintained it's popularity, with a significant peak during autumn 2025. Whilst the beginning of the academic year tends to see higher usage numbers, it is unclear why this year experienced an increase to this extent. Perhaps this could be credited to an increase in commuter students over the past few years.

For TVP, this free service was newly launched in November 2025, allowing further opportunities for staff and students to park off-campus and reduce congestion and emissions through the town centre. A monthly breakdown of it's usage to date is shown below.

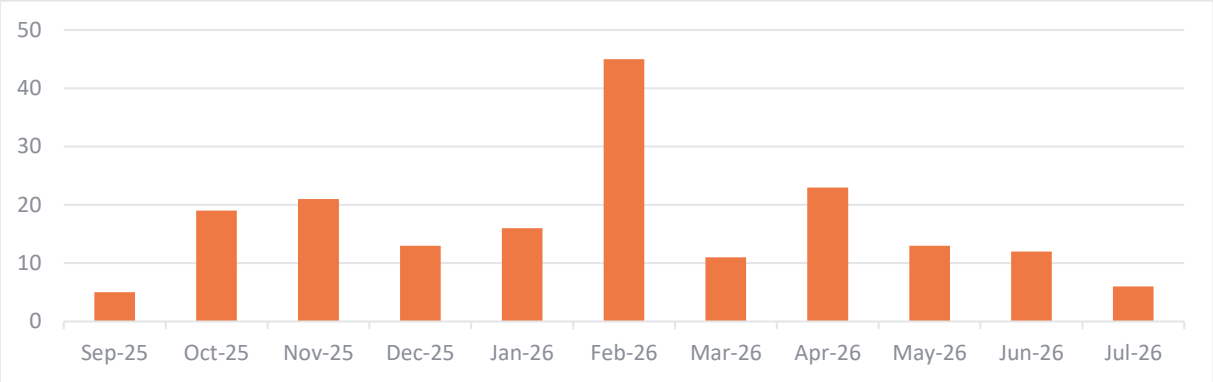


***Figure 5**: Monthly Usage of the TVP Park & Ride (Cars Parked per Month)*

The above table shows that usage peaked in February 2026, likely due to increased communications and awareness campaigns during Spring. During 2026/27, further promotion will be undertaken, and a full year of usage will be recorded.

Great Western Railway Discount

Sustainability Services has worked with Great Western Railway (GWR) since 2022 to develop incentives to encourage greater use of rail services among the University community. GWR provides a dedicated booking portal enabling visitors attending Open Days, Visit Days, Graduation ceremonies and Offer Holder Days to access a 20% discount on advance fares.

The discount can also be combined with a Young Persons Railcard, enabling eligible travellers to save up to 50% on fares. Uptake of the scheme has varied between years, with 85 discounted fares purchased through 33 uses of the portal during 2024/25, compared with 6 uses in 2023/24 and 32 uses in 2022/23. The increase in 2024/25 followed more targeted promotion of the scheme and the introduction of a new discount offer for Offer Holder Days.

For 2025/26, one discounted fare redemption was recorded through GWR's new promotional code system. However, GWR changed its booking and reporting system around March 2026, and redemption data for August 2025 to the end of March 2026 is therefore unavailable. The 2025/26 figure should consequently not be considered a complete measure of uptake for the year.

The new process will provide an opportunity for more consistent monitoring of the scheme going forward. The University will continue to promote the discount to prospective students, visitors and other relevant groups, while exploring opportunities to extend similar rail incentives to additional University events where appropriate. This will support efforts to make rail travel a convenient, cost-effective and attractive option for University-related journeys.

Co-Wheels Car Club

There are currently two Co-Wheels Car Club cars available for hire on-site at the University: one at Sherfield Hall and one at London Road Campus. The cars can be booked for a small charge, providing an alternative to bringing a private car to campus and helping to reduce single-occupancy vehicle journeys.

During 2025/26, the University's Co-Wheels provision changed. A new vehicle was introduced at London Road Campus in November 2025, and was electric – the first electric car hire in Reading. The previous car at Dunsden Crescent was subsequently discontinued in March 2026 due to low utilisation.

Figure 6 shows the combined number of Co-Wheels bookings made each month since 2020/21.

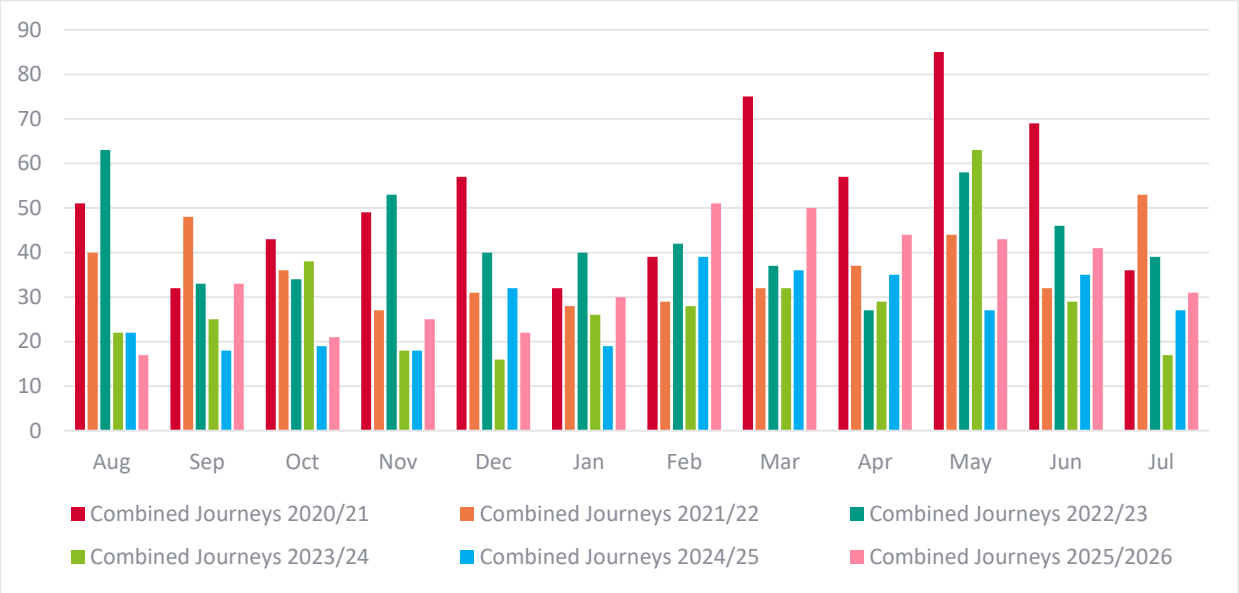


Figure 6: *Total number of Co-Wheels bookings by month (2020-2026)*

2025/2026 saw the greatest number of Co-Wheels car bookings since 2022/23, showing a steady increase. Individually, the car at Dunsden Crescent received 179 bookings (189 in 2024/25, and 197 in 2023/24), at a slight decline. The London Road car received 155 bookings (including when it was temporarily relocated to Whiteknights Campus during graduation weeks).

The utilisation rate (percentage of the total time that each car is in use) of all cars combined during 2025/26 was the highest during March, May and July.

It is noted that during December and July, the car at London Road was temporarily relocated to an alternative space on Whiteknights Campus to accommodate graduation ceremonies. Work to redesign the access to London Road is currently ongoing, including the length of Acacia Road, and a new, permanent location for year-round access to the co-wheels car will be established.

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.

Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs)

2025/26 saw continued progress in expanding and improving the University's electric vehicle (EV) charging provision. As part of the Five-Year Travel Plan, a significant infrastructure project was delivered in Summer 2025 to both expand capacity and consolidate all chargers under a single provider, Amp EV.

In 2024/25, this project provided new chargers at Whiteknights Car Park 1A and London Road Campus, and the replacement of the existing chargers at the SportsPark and Greenlands with upgraded units. In 2025/26, this was continued, with new chargers installed at Whiteknights Car Parks 6 and 8, further expanding capacity.

All public chargers are now operated through Amp EV, offering a more reliable and consistent service. Users can access the chargers via the Amp EV app or by scanning the QR codes displayed on each unit.

This expansion directly responds to feedback received in the January 2024 Staff and Student Travel Survey, which highlighted limited EV charging provision as a key barrier to EV adoption on campus. It also reflects the consistently increasing trend in charger usage over recent years, with demand remaining high even outside of term time. Together, this feedback and usage data demonstrated a clear need to expand capacity and improve reliability. The upgrades aim to make low-emission travel easier and more accessible for staff, students, and visitors. Figure 7 shows the total number of recharges across all public EVCPs since 2018/19, illustrating year-on-year growth.

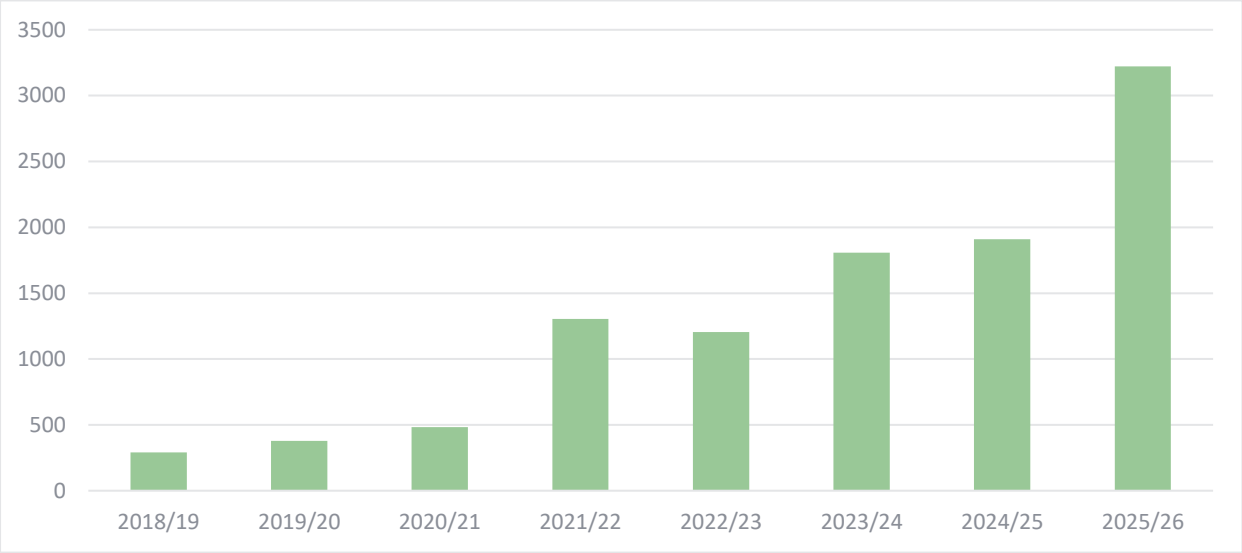


Figure 7: *Total annual number of EV charging sessions at all UoR 'public' EVCPs*

As projected, this academic year saw the highest EV charge session count to date. In 2025/26, there were 3223 sessions completed, an increase from 1909 in 2024/25 and 1807 the previous year.

A monthly breakdown is presented below.

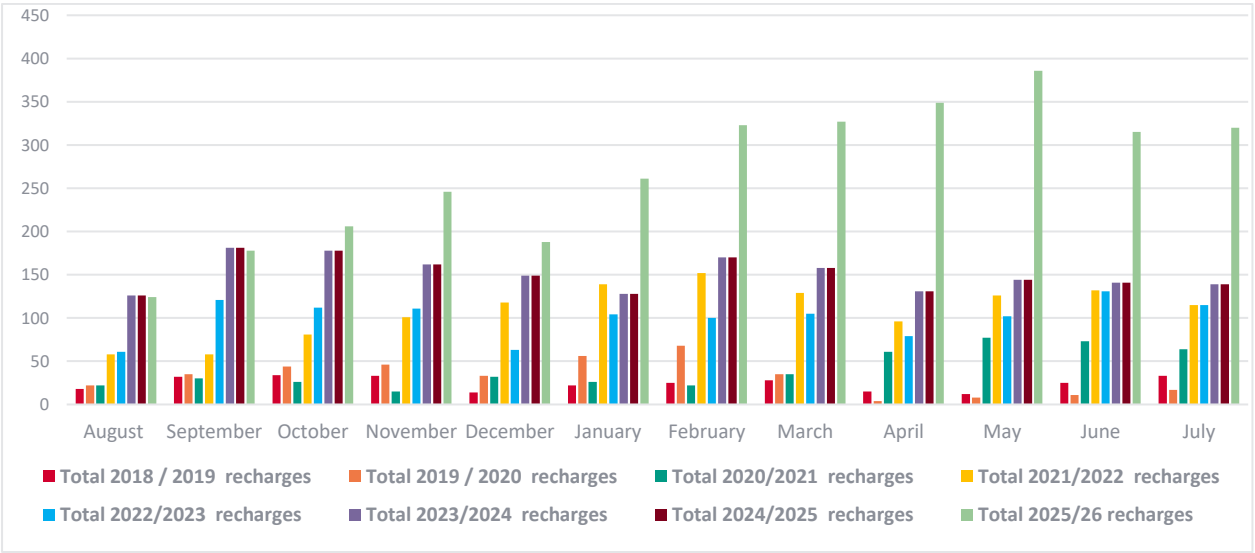


Figure 8: *Total EV charging sessions by month at all UoR 'public' EVCPs*

Figure 8 demonstrates that EV usage was steady between August-December, and the completion of the chargers in Car Parks 6 and 8 in January allowed for a significant upheaval in usage, which remained for the duration of the year

(with a notable peak in May). It is expected that during 2026/27, a similar level of usage will be shown throughout the year.

Easit Membership

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. 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 (car sharing platform)
- 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
- Access to information on walking and cycling routes

The below figure demonstrates the usage of Easit since 2015.

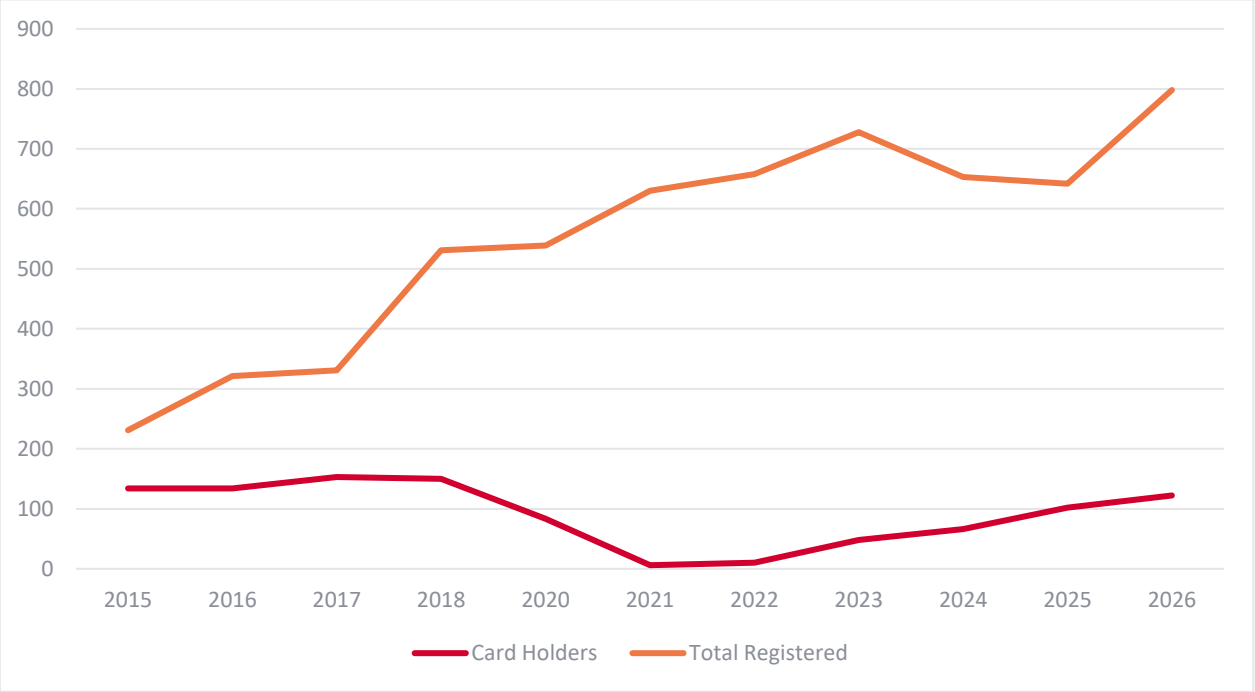


***Figure 9**: Number of Easit card holders & registered staff members from 2015-2026*

The number of card holders and registered members has increased by 20 and 24% respectively since 2024/25. However, the number of registered users to EasitSHARE (the car sharing platform) has reduced from 35 to 28.

Cycle Safety Project Overview

The past academic year (2025/26) has been another success, with good uptake and participation across the various activities.

Cycle skills / training sessions

From September 2025 to the end of June 2026, over 50 training sessions were held (with some additional sessions arranged for the summer holidays), involving 36 individual participants. The average was typically two sessions per individual, although some complete beginners needed upwards of five sessions.

Participants included a mix of students and staff who already cycle but needed support in building confidence and developing techniques for cycling on roads and in busy traffic (including international students and staff needing to learn UK Highway Code rules). There was also a large contingent of people wanting to refresh their cycling skills (e.g. signalling and using gears), alongside many complete beginners, some of whom were attempting cycling for the first time. In addition to the scheduled timetable, various 1:1 sessions were run outside normal hours to fit around people's work schedules and tuition commitments.

The session breakdown for 2025/26 was:

- 12 Road Confidence / Commuting Techniques sessions (mostly in the first term)
- 22 Back on Bike / 'Rusty Rider' sessions
- 18 Learn to Ride / basic beginners' sessions

The below figure summarises the historical uptake of cycle training sessions.

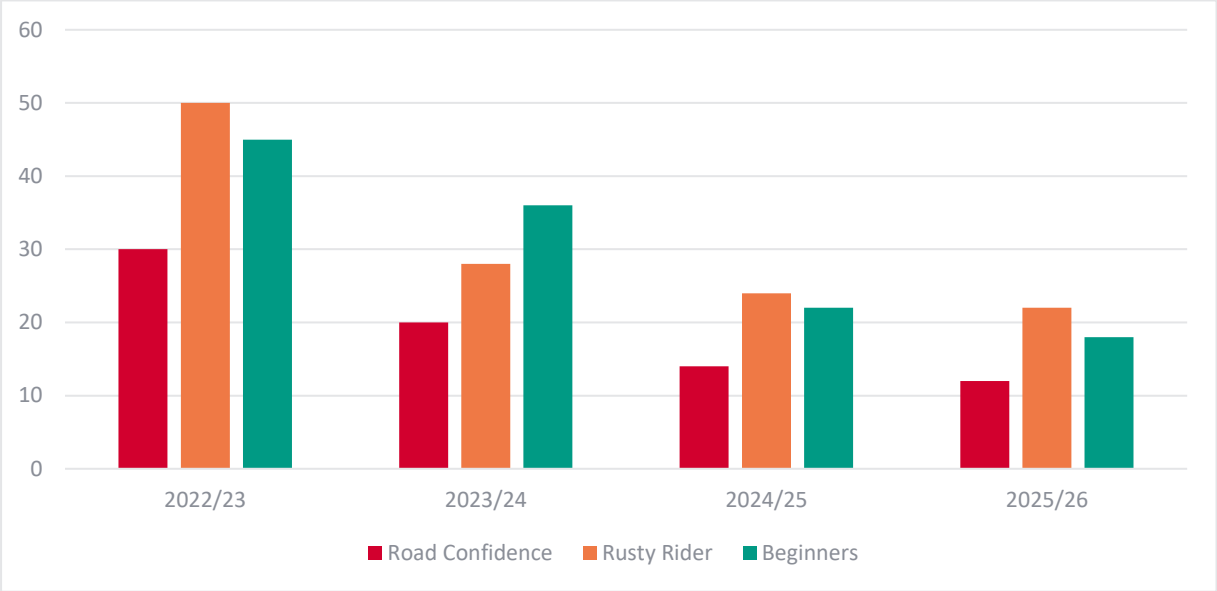


***Figure 10**: Attendance of cycle training sessions (2022-2026)*

Figure 10 shows that there has been a steady decline in attendance of cycle training sessions. This could be attributed to less promotion and awareness but also could be that fewer individuals lack to knowledge / experience necessitating in-person training.

Dr Bike – Maintenance and Repairs

This year, we invested further in Dr Bike services, increasing the number of sessions and now having two experienced bike mechanics working at most events (sometimes three for the OYBD and Green Week events). The service provides free, on-the-spot cycle safety checks, basic maintenance, tips on carrying out work independently and advice on any further repairs needed. Where possible, repairs are also carried out (e.g. replacement brake blocks, cables, gear trains, chains and tyres), with parts charged at cost.

Sessions now begin and end one week into each of the main vacation periods. There is consideration of holding events at other sites next year (including the new Science Park and London Road), as well as providing additional sessions for staff and postgraduate students working on campus over the summer holidays.

Figure 11 summarises Dr Bike attendance since 2022.

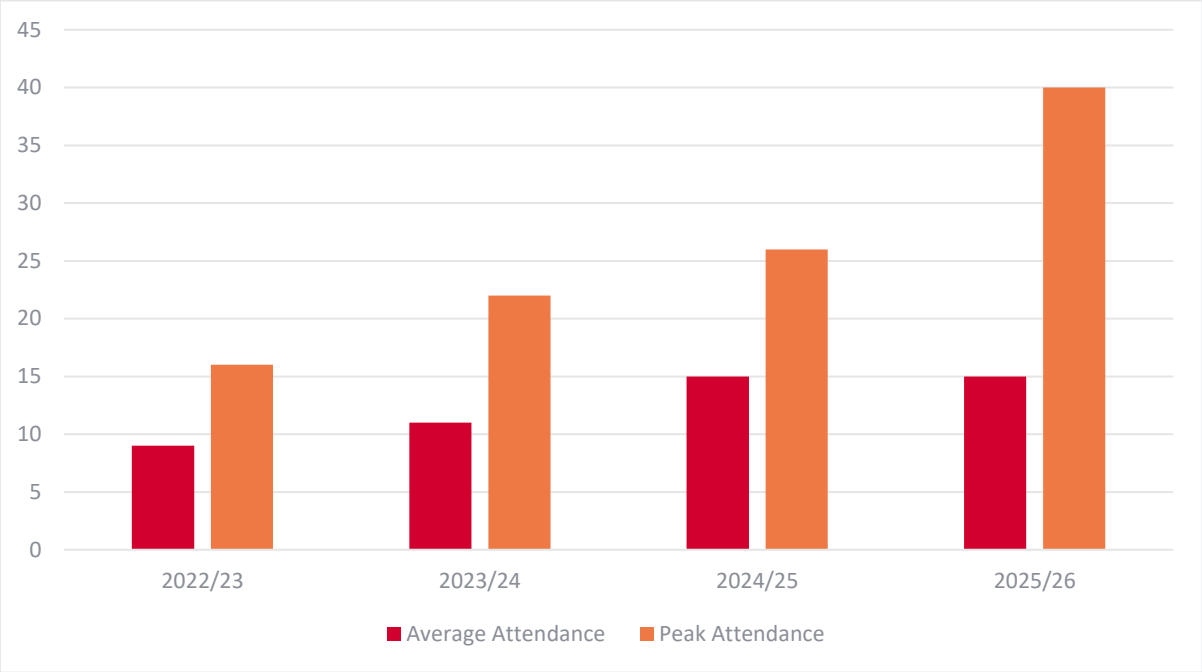


***Figure 11**: Attendance of Dr Bike sessions (2022-2026)*

Typically, 12–18 people attend each session, with the highest attendance being 28 at one of the larger promotional OYBD events (supported by an additional Avanti mechanic and Reading Bicycle Kitchen). Overall, there were 42 sessions, totalling over 200 participants (many people attended more than once).

The increased frequency has led to growing popularity, and all events have been well attended, even on rainy days and those held outside term time.

Reading Bicycle Kitchen (RBK)

We also benefit from the skills and capacity of RBK, who support the Bike Recycling scheme through on and offsite repairs of abandoned bikes for low-cost sale to students and staff. Experienced mechanics and volunteers also delivered six pop-up events, providing safety checks and advice during OYBD, Green Week and other additional events.

RBK also supports the upcycling of abandoned bikes to enable low-cost second-hand bike sales. The project has a strong relationship with RBK, whose 'reduce, reuse, recycle' principles align well with the sustainability goals of the UoR. They also manage much of the second-hand bike recycling and environmentally responsible disposal of bike scrap.

Bike Stores & Tools

The new secure cycle shelters upgraded / installed at the Library, Whiteknights House, Sports Park and Minghella are proving popular. We have received positive feedback on both the storage facilities and the bike equipment provided, including the installed track pump.

Cycling & Active Travel Events

Engaging with our project provider, Avanti Cycling, from early August 2025 meant that we were able to deliver some of the usual pre-term and Welcome Week activities, alongside 'On Your Bike' days in October, November, February and April, with advance notice, preparation, marketing and promotion.

Cycling events on campus typically coincide with the Dr Bike workshop, with expanded activities and engagement aided by the coordinated support of various third parties, including:

- Cycle safety advice and bike marking from security and TVP
- RUSU bike hire
- Second hand bike sales (circa 20 bikes sold in 2025/26 – not including third party sales)
- Equipment sales (locks and lights, etc)
- Bike tagging / marking
- Free training
- Presence of Sustrans / Reading Borough Council to provide information on walking and cycling routes

Unicycle Bike Hire

Demand this year remained high, with all scheme bikes being taken out within the first week of term and a substantial waiting list developing. Therefore, Avanti Cycling was asked to supply additional bikes from its own stock (previously used as good-quality training bikes), allowing more students to benefit from this low-cost, low-risk scheme.

The hire fee (£50 per semester or £80 per year) includes lights and a high-quality D-lock, with a £100 deposit taken as security. All hirers are given a cycle safety briefing and, where necessary, are recommended the appropriate level of additional training based on their existing experience and skills. This is carried out by a qualified Avanti Cycling training instructor.

The number of individual hires was around 40 for the year, with many people extending their hires or requesting part-year hires, which is particularly helpful for visiting staff and students

Figure 12 shows a summary of hire bike usage since 2017.

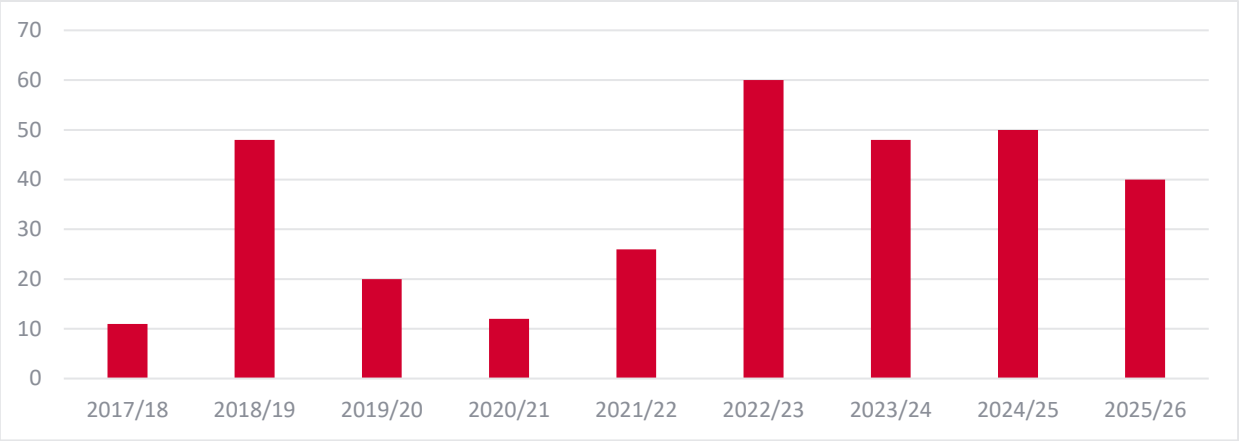


***Figure 12**: Hire Bike Usage (2017-2026)*

Whilst there has been a slight decline in hire bike usage, it is worth noting that many hire bikes are frequently not returned, or have to be scrapped due to damage (only 18 remained in stock at the end of the year, and a further 20 bikes had to be supplied by RBK and Avanti). The scheme receives many enquiries, indicating that the decline in use is not due to lack of interest / appetite for cycling.

Business Travel

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

Summary

The 2025/26 academic year has seen positive progress across a number of the University's sustainable travel initiatives, including increased bus usage on key routes, record uptake of EV charging facilities and strong participation in cycling maintenance activities. However, trends in the December 2025 Travel Survey indicate that the University is not currently on track to meet its sustainable travel targets, with single-occupancy car use increasing slightly among both staff and students.

The extension of the Travel Plan to 2030 provides an ongoing framework for monitoring progress and directing future action. Priorities include increasing awareness and uptake of existing initiatives, improving the accessibility and effectiveness of cycling and public transport options, and exploring additional incentives to encourage sustainable travel. Continued monitoring of usage and travel behaviours will help inform priorities and assess the impact of these measures.

Version control

Version	Keeper	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	Estates -Sustainability	Anna Glue – Head of Sustainable Operations	20/11/2026