

Travel Plan Evolution at Leeds Trinity University

The Leeds Trinity University Travel Plan has been in place since 2002 with the remit of encouraging the use of sustainable means of transport among staff and students wherever possible while remaining cost neutral. Policy and initiatives are informed by feedback gained through the annual Travel Survey, liaison with external bodies like WYPTE and LCC as well as the terms and conditions of any planning applications. We also employ the services of an external Travel Planning Consultant to ensure all information requirements are presented in the appropriate formats (esp. the intricacies of Scope3 emissions, etc.). Many initiatives have settled into their current format over the last few years and have started to yield results with only minor tweaks necessary.

Location

Leeds Trinity University is situated in a semi-rural location and is served by one direct bus route (97) although several other bus services pass near Horsforth railway station (just over half a mile from the campus).

Who Commutes?

LTU has approximately 3000 students and 300 staff. 500 of the students live on campus while everyone else commutes. We can assess where everyone is travelling from via postcode information from both student and staff records. This enables us to work out which routes should be concentrated on and/or improved as necessary.

Promotion

Concerted efforts have been made over the last 12 years to promote sustainable travel. The 4 main drivers for this have been:

- Subsidised Public Transport
- The Shuttle Bus
- Partnership with the Students' Union and External Agencies
- Promotion of Cycling and Walking

Success of these initiatives is measured through the Annual Travel Survey. Methodology for the survey has involved presenting it in several different media i.e. hard copy, intranet, social networking sites and using student ambassadors to "doorstep" commuters.

Response rate in 2013 was very respectable with a total of 529 completed surveys – amounting to 15% of the college population.

1.0 Subsidies

1.1 Administered through the Student Union Welfare Office, effective publicity via a variety of media has meant greater awareness of offers available within and without the university. The last 2 academic years have seen a surge in take-up of annual bus tickets (subsidy equivalent to 15% discount). Weekly bus vouchers continue to enjoy strong sales and we have just introduced a Leeds-only version.

1.2 This take up is reflected in the modal split with the number of students using public transport rising from 50-60% in 4 years and a reduction in student car use from 36% to 31% over the same period.

Staff also benefit from subsidised transport (in recognition of our travel plan) in the form of offers from WYPTE for the annual Metrocard and from Northern Rail with their “52 weeks for the price of 40 weeks” train ticket. The former offer has been hampered by WYPTE’s long processing times (something which should improve soon) while the latter company is somewhat more efficient – turning round an application in 3 working days!

If considering the university population as a whole, the last 4 years have seen Car use drop from 46% to 35% and public transport use rise from 39% to 53%.

1.3 A striking result from this year’s survey is number of staff and students using concessionary passes of one sort or another. Over half of respondents to the survey held one or more of such passes while many more requested information about travel discounts offered by the university. Credit must go to the Students’ Union for their promotion of this scheme over the last few years – also to WYPTE for helping us revise our travel brochure (and for making our travel plan an example of “best practice” within the HEI sector). Here is the breakdown of student participation in various schemes:

16-25 Railcard	122
Annual Metrocard	7
FirstAllTerm Bus Pass	50
FirstAllTerm Bus Pass, 16-25 Railcard	11
Student Plus Metrocard (monthly)	47
Student Plus Metrocard (monthly), 16-25 Railcard	6
Student Plus Metrocard (weekly)	10
Misc	18

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2.0 Shuttle Bus

2.1 The shuttle bus cannot be seen in isolation as it has played a large part in persuading people to switch to public transport. The bus connects the university to local transport links that terminate nearby – most importantly Horsforth Station. The bus has (in the last 2 years) grown in capacity and is fully DDA compliant. It travels a circular route taking in the station, Horsforth’s main commercial areas, the station again and back to the university. The bus appears to have been the key to making public transport viable and the service has given many students and staff the confidence to switch to bus and train.

2.2 Following feedback from users concerning the large volume of passengers first thing in the morning, we are currently trialling a revised timetable at peak periods that increases the frequency of service between the station and the campus, reverting to the circular route at all other times. Feedback so far has been very positive. We shall continue to modify the service as required.

2.3 In the interests of maintaining good links with the community we have extended use of the bus to local residents – many of whom use the bus to reach the main shopping areas of Horsforth.

3.0 Car Use

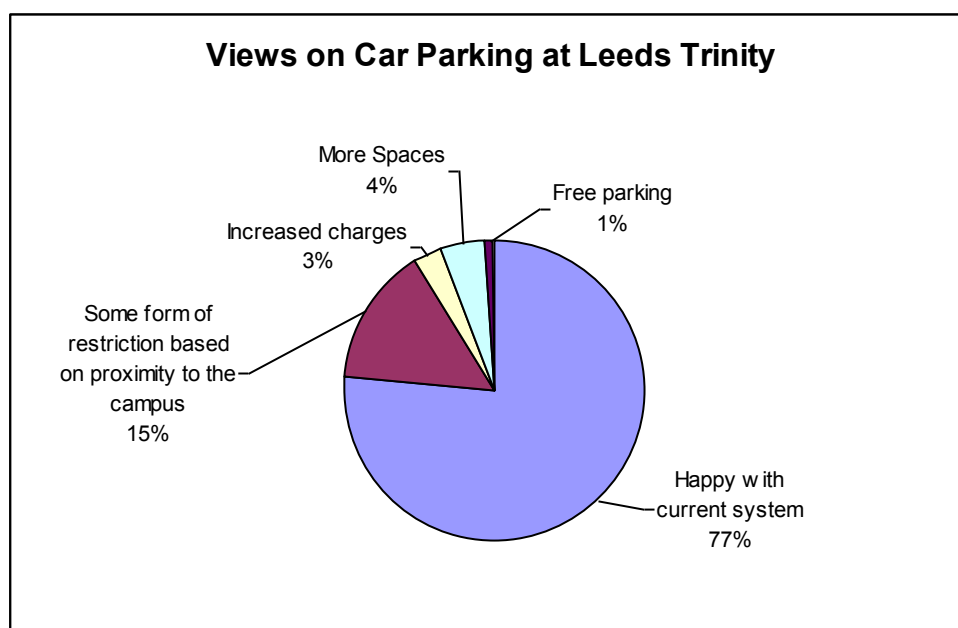
3.1 As mentioned earlier, car use has declined overall and, of those that drive, the ratio of those who car share and those who drive alone has remained pretty static over this period at about a 30/70 split.

3.2 Discount for staff driving greener vehicles is reflected in parking permit policy. Our survey reveals over 60% of car users driving vehicles up to 1.4L in capacity – in the lower end of the emissions spectrum.

3.3 Car parking space is still at a premium but has benefitted from a more even spread of the teaching timetable over the week reducing demand at peak times. This has the knock-on effect of also lessening the pressure on catering and learning facilities making for a much better student experience.

3.4 Relations with residents in the immediate vicinity of the college were strained for a time due to the overspill parking that happened following the introduction of parking charges. Although the vast majority of students and staff parked legally, this did not stop negative publicity whipped up by the local press and opportunist politicians. Following several public meetings (attended by local residents' committee, the University and the Highways agency), we agreed to fund a restricted parking scheme for those residents worst affected by such parking practices. This has calmed the waters and restored good relations between the university and the local populous.

3.5 While charging for car parking is a topic that arouses strong feelings and something that many institutions shy away from introducing, views of the university's policy 8 years down the line are more balanced than one might think:



3.6 Car park monitoring in November revealed spaces available at all peak times – however should this change we may need to revisit the idea of some form of restriction on parking based on proximity to the campus although this is not necessary at the present time.

3.7 Our parking charges are on a 2-tier basis with annual permits available to staff and students using pay-and display facilities. Pay-and-display is more expensive but it serves to dissuade the largest group of potential car-users – who are also the greatest beneficiaries of the subsidies and schemes encouraging use of public transport. Since charging was introduced in 2006, prices are deliberately kept among the lowest in the sector to reflect our location and the fact that many people have no choice but to drive. The outsourced parking patrols ensure that the chaos that used to happen on a daily basis is something of a distant memory.

4.0 Car-Sharing

4.1 Car-sharing is an idea promoted by LCC (and others) but one that has limited application for the university. It works best for businesses located in city centres that operate similar hours for most staff and in areas with high parking/congestion charges. At Leeds Trinity the tremendous difference in working hours (particularly among academic staff and students) makes it difficult to find a match plus our location means that the chances of finding someone travelling in the same direction is limited since the majority of commuters are heading to the city centre. Enough evidence exists to indicate that both staff and students car-share on an informal basis – students more than staff as the latter group (along with more mature students) tend to have more extra-curricular commitments such as childcare, etc.

4.2 Research has found that larger more centrally based institutions have very limited take-up for formally organised shares – not least because many people are mindful of personal safety and are unwilling to travel with a stranger. Despite this, we do operate 12 spaces for car-sharers providing they can prove that their share partner would otherwise have driven on their own (giving your usually bus-commuting neighbour a lift doesn't count!).

5.0 Cycling and Walking

While our location is not (at first glance) the most friendly to either of these forms of transport, inroads are being made to highlight what can be done for those wanting to put on their walking shoes and/or get back in the saddle.

Cycling initiatives have been developed significantly over the last 12 months. These include:

- Securing funding from Sustrans to create 3 cycle parking areas (near Sports centre, by the south entrance and next to the Chapel) and a cover for the area by the Chapel.
- Development of a dedicated cycling web presence on the Leeds Trinity Active zone – resulting in the first bike hired!
- Trip for students to Manchester Velodrome was organised in November 2013

- Regular Cycle Safety events in Reception promoting good cycling, handing out free cycle maps and selling discount locks and lights.
- Regular Dr Bike sessions held and planned for future.

Plans for 2014 include:

- Setting up BUG groups –these are Bike User Groups. Many organisations have them and they create a forum for discussion with regard to cycling to and from University and for on-site cycling issues.
- About to launch a “Try Cycling” campaign to coincide with slightly better weather – this is to encourage new people to cycle by offering free use of a bike for 6 weeks. The scheme only be available to staff and would be free but a required bike deposit of £50. Refundable on the safe return of the bike at the end of the 6 week period
- Cycle festival on Thursday 3rd April

6.0 Ideal Modes of Transport

An interesting category since it shows attitudes to various modes if cost/time was not a consideration:

Bicycle	16
Bus	29
Car share with other adults	81
Car/Van (Alone or with children)	214
Get a lift from someone who then returns home	39
Home working	7
Motorbike	5
Shuttle Bus	26
Taxi	4
Train	26
Walk	61
Misc*	6

While the vast majority of respondents would still (unsurprisingly) opt for private transport, the numbers opting to car share, walk or cycle are starting to rise compared to previous years.

* The Miscellaneous section invariably contains some modes of transport yet to be invented at time of writing (Ask a silly question..) so here they are:

Pony
 Motor Scooter
 Helicopter
 Magic Carpet
 Tardis
 Teleportation

Conclusion

Experience has modified our approach to travel initiatives throughout the evolution of the plan. We aim to balance the use of “carrots and sticks”, be transparent and fair in financial matters (ring-fencing monies raised through charges) and be “Pro-Choice” rather than “Anti-(insert mode of transport of choice here)”. However “green” people appear to be outwardly, privately they will be generally motivated by rather more selfish concerns – such as cost and convenience. As a result we make our appeals for change based primarily on economy and ease of use – with environmental impact listed as a secondary benefit e.g. our parking charges are graduated based on salary and discounts given for low-emission vehicles. It’s also important to stress that none of these initiatives can be implemented in isolation as they are all co-dependent.

This is not to say that we do not monitor our environmental impact carefully. We have delegated our Scope 3 emissions calculations to an external travel plan consultant who draws on information gathered during the travel survey as well as records of staff/student business and placement travel from our Finance department. This is all to be found in our annual review which covers everything in this overview in much more depth.

The Leeds Trinity Travel plan, as mentioned earlier, has been cited by WYPTE in their roadshows and literature as an example of best practice in the HE sector. As part of WYPTE’s 10th anniversary conference in 2011 we gave a presentation outlining the key areas of our strategy as well as taking part in a Q&A session with other delegates.

The main planks are in place internally and we have reached a stage where only occasional tweaking is required – something we can react to with some speed. Externally however we have an extensive wish-list that proceeds at a much slower pace e.g. proper cycle paths, a zebra crossing outside the main entrance, better bus-service from First, etc. We have strong relationships with outside agencies (WYPTE, LCC, Sustrans, etc.) with whom we’ve collaborated in the past and who are keen to support our future plans so watch this space.

Karl Baxter 25/3/14