

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – April 2014



New bus services for Queens Park & Elm Grove

The new network of bus services in Queens Park have been introduced with the spring timetables on 13 April. Our left photo shows one of Brighton & Hove's latest 'talking buses' on new circular route 18 at Imperial Arcade on the first morning. This is now the starting point for buses towards Queens Park via St James's Street. The right photo (courtesy of John Nicholas) shows another 18 in Elm Grove passing a poster advertising the new services. Other changes from the same date include a new all day 12X limited stop service between Brighton & Eastbourne and more buses to Uckfield on route 29. If you have any comments on the changes please let us know.

More fares changes - Buswatch calls for one hour ticket

As hinted last month, Brighton & Hove has increased some bus fares, mostly by 10p or 20p. However the Centrefare remains at £2 per trip and there is a range of new M tickets available on most smartphones. Full details are available on www.buses.co.uk.

Bus users can now buy a single journey M ticket for £2 within the Centrefare area or £2.25 throughout the City Saver area (saving 15p on the new £2.40 cash fare). This is valid for 15 minutes after first activated and the company has confirmed that passengers can change buses within this time without buying another ticket. Users must board another bus before the expiry time displayed on their phone but can complete their journey after it has expired. Brighton Area Buswatch would like to see this time limit extended to 60 minutes to enable bus users from outlying areas to travel into the City Centre and change buses without paying again. Rail users don't have to pay when they change trains so why should bus passengers have to pay for the inconvenience of having to change buses on a single trip?

We continue to press for smartcards to be valid on all buses in our area. Brighton & Hove Buses Managing Director Martin Harris attended our meeting on 9 April where he assured us that progress is being made. Key Cards should soon be valid on Council supported services operated by Compass Bus and The Big Lemon but there is still no date for this to happen. In due course we all hope the benefits of smart cards will be extended to all local bus companies.

Stagecoach to split Coastliner 700 service

Big changes are planned to the Coastliner service from 4 May. Buses will no longer run through from Brighton to Portsmouth and Southsea. Stagecoach says the changes are being made to improve the reliability of the service. Very few people make long journeys on the 700 so it is being split into three main sections, all of which will still carry the number 700. Buses from Brighton will go to Littlehampton or Arundel and will continue to run every 10 minutes during the daytime. Passengers for Chichester will need to change at Littlehampton and those travelling further west will need to change again. There will be more double deckers on the Brighton section of the route which will provide more seats. While some will regret the end of through services after many years, I doubt whether many people could face four and a half hours on one bus from Brighton to Southsea without a break. A comfortable cushion to sit on would certainly be required!

One problem remains with the new timetable. The last bus on Sunday evenings is at 7.55pm from Brighton to Worthing. This is ridiculously early for a major service that continues until after 11pm during the rest of the week. There is even an N700 night service at weekends! Buses can be busy on Sunday evenings, especially in the summer months so we urge Stagecoach to reconsider this.

Free Sunday Parking in Brighton?

Brighton & Hove Liberal Democrats are campaigning for free parking on Sundays. They have presented a petition to the City Council which was supported by opposition Councillors. As a result a report outlining the implications will be prepared by Council Officers and presented to the Council's Policy & Resources Committee for further consideration.

Brighton is a hugely popular destination and Sunday is usually the busiest day of the week for visitors. On sunny Sundays traffic regularly tails back along the A23 beyond Pyecombe. Free parking will make these queues even worse and buses will become slower as they are caught up in congestion all over Brighton & Hove. The City council would lose substantial revenue, resulting in cuts to transport services and road maintenance or higher parking charges on other days.

Some car parks, including those at Churchill Square, are run by private companies over which the City Council has no control. These are unlikely to give up charging on the most lucrative day of the week so there would be considerable confusion amongst motorists roaming around, searching for free spaces. This would be worse in the afternoons as people would tend to park all day in free parking spaces. The likely outcome would be more congestion and more pollution.

We have an excellent Sunday bus service with frequent services on main routes which are far better than in similar UK cities. Most Sunday buses operated by Brighton & Hove are run commercially but their viability could be put at risk if buses are delayed by extra traffic. They would become less reliable and less frequent and there will be higher emissions from stationary vehicles of all types. Benefits of free parking to residents are therefore minimal, especially the 40% of households who don't have access to a car. Those travelling by train and bike won't benefit either. Lib Dems should be encouraging people to use sustainable forms of transport!

MP wants buses banned from St James's Street

Brighton Kemp Town and Peacehaven MP Simon Kirby is calling for St James's Street to be pedestrianised. He claims support from many local businesses but we wonder whether he has thought about the impact on shop customers and local bus users, many of whom live in his constituency. Removing buses from St James's Street would be biting the hand that feeds them! The bus stop outside Morrisons supermarket is one of the busiest in the City and is used by thousands of people living in Kemp Town, Whitehawk and Queens Park.

Closing the street could lead to eastbound buses having to use Edward Street instead, a long uphill walk from the shops. This would create great hardship, especially for those with restricted mobility. As a result many bus users would shop elsewhere, perhaps at the Marina or London Road, taking trade away from St James's Street businesses. Councillor Ian Davey reassured our recent meeting the ruling Green Party has no plans to pedestrianise the street.

Next Meeting

The next meeting with bus companies and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on Wednesday 9 July at 5.30pm in Hove Town Hall. Meetings are open to all members and supporters but please let us know in advance if you wish to attend as space is limited.

Buswatch News is edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Printed copies of this newsletter are available from Hove town hall reception. The next issue is due in mid May 2014.

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