

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



A branch of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – December 2016



Season's Greetings from Brighton Area Buswatch

Valley Gardens scheme approved

Plans for the first stage of the Valley Gardens project were approved by Brighton & Hove City Council's Environment, Transport & Sustainability (ETS) Committee on 29 November. There will now be a detailed planning stage and the scheme will return for final Council approval next Autumn. Work could begin on site in early 2018. I attended the meeting along with our Committee Secretary to observe the outcome. The public gallery was almost deserted by the time this item was considered, earlier debates on parking and bin collections were clearly of more interest to residents! It is worth recording for future reference that the Valley Gardens plans received enthusiastic support from all political parties and the vote in favour was unanimous. The discussion was relatively short, lasting about fifteen minutes. We found this rather surprising considering the far reaching implications for traffic on the busiest approach to Brighton. Councillors did not challenge the most controversial element of the scheme which would reduce general traffic lanes from two to one in each direction south of St Peter's Church. They all seemed assured by the traffic modelling - which is unable to take account of weekend traffic flows. One Councillor asked what would happen if a vehicle broke down or a delivery van blocked one traffic lane. Another raised our concerns about bus movements in St Peter's Place where buses towards Lewes Road would have to mix with and cross other traffic at a very busy junction.

As reported in Buswatch News last month, our main worry is that this scheme could make bus journeys slower, leading to more congestion and a decline in bus use. Hopefully there will be more discussions with Council Officers over the coming months to try to improve the outcome. We need a scheme which will deliver tangible benefits to bus users and encourage more bus use in the city in the years to come.

Cheaper parking is not the answer - take the bus instead.

There has been much media talk of high parking charges deterring people from visiting Brighton.

Cheaper parking = More cars = Worse congestion
leading to higher emissions and slower journeys for everyone

A double decker bus can carry up to 80 passengers in the space of about three cars. Even if those three cars all had five people in them and the bus was half empty, the bus would be a far more efficient use of road space. So the case for bus lanes and other bus priority measures in our congested city is overwhelming.

A family ticket (two adults and up three children) costs £9 on a smartphone or £10 on bus. It can work out a lot cheaper than parking in some car parks. A £4.20 City Saver day ticket (£4.50 outside the City Saver area) on a Key card or smartphone is also good value. Contrary to public perception we don't have the highest fares in the country; these prices compare well with the cost of a day ticket elsewhere, including London. More details on www.buses.uk. Saver tickets are valid on Compass Travel services and The Big Lemon route 52. Exceptions are Compass route 40 and Stagecoach routes 17 & 700 – but we are hoping to change that in 2017!



New at Brighton Station

This smart new kiosk has recently appeared at Brighton Station to replace the 'temporary' hut on the right of the photo, provided when the One Stop Travel shop closed in 2013. A new kiosk should have been installed long ago as part of the Station Gateway project but it never materialised, so Brighton & Hove Buses have funded this one themselves. Supervisors Marc and Hilary can now shelter from the elements while they assist passengers and keep buses moving through the bus station. They both do a fantastic job and we have been pressing for similarly enthusiastic staff to be employed at other key locations like Churchill Square.

Electric bus to be trialled by Brighton & Hove Buses.

With two single deck electric buses soon to be introduced on Big Lemon services, our main bus company Brighton & Hove Buses has now followed with plans for electric double deckers. A demonstration bus is expected to arrive shortly from London for trials. If these are successful Managing Director Martin Harris says it could lead to an order for a fleet of electric double deck buses for use in the city. Brighton & Hove Buses is also looking at the possibility of converting some existing diesel buses to electric.

Compass Bus changes from January

New timetables will be introduced on some Compass Bus services from 9 January. Route 40 between Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Brighton will be re-timed. Most buses will arrive and leave Brighton half an hour earlier than now, departing Churchill Square at 5 minutes past each hour. There will be two additional peak journeys from Brighton at 1635 & 1735. Some journeys will be extended beyond Cuckfield to Balcombe and Crawley (replacing route 37), with support from West Sussex County Council. Passengers are not carried locally between Brighton and Patcham on the 40.

Improvements to Queens Park and Hanover bus services

Following a campaign by Buswatch, local bus users and ward Councillors, Brighton & Hove Buses have agreed to implement improvements to routes 21 and 23. There is now an extra peak journey to the Universities on route 23 during term time leaving Queens Park at 0815; and extra afternoon buses.

Then from April 2017, route 21 will be revised. Buses will run between Goldstone Valley and Queens Park via Elm Grove every half hour (alternately 21 or 21A) and from Churchill Square to Brighton Marina via Elm Grove, Queens Park and Whitehawk, also every half hour. Timetables will be arranged to provide a 15-minute frequency between Churchill Square and Queens Park. The down side of this arrangement is that Manor Hill and Whitehawk will have a less frequent daytime service, every 30 minutes instead of every 20 minutes. However, it concentrates the most frequent service over the busiest part of the route which is between London Road shops and Queens Park. This should address many complaints about crowded buses.

Later in 2017 the 23 will be improved again with more buses during term time. Our suggestion for specially branded buses on the 23 to highlight the links provided by this service is being taken forward with community groups.

PTP and School Travel Plans team.

I recently attended presentations by the City Council's Personalised Travel Plan team (PTP) and the School Travel Plans team. Both do an excellent job talking to residents by knocking on doors, discussing their travel needs and explaining the options available. The School Travel Plans team achieved an amazing 23% reduction in car use at 14 schools over one year.

Congratulations to B&H, Compass & The Big Lemon.

The Annual Bus Industry awards were held in London on 22 November and once again our local bus companies did well against operators from around the UK. Brighton & Hove and Metrobus won the top 'Gold' award for The Bus and the Community for the 'Helping Hand' initiative. The scheme has been so successful it has been extended to other bus companies and organisations. Metrobus won the runner up Silver award in the best Shire Operator category and Compass Travel won third the place bronze award for Top Independent Operator in the UK.

M ticket problems

Some iPhone users have experienced problems with the B&H bus App. It may not be possible to load new tickets or the App could have disappeared altogether if they are using version 7 software which is no longer being supported by Apple. If you have experienced problems or lost pre-purchased tickets we recommend you contact Brighton & Hove Buses at info@buses.co.uk

Christmas and new year bus services

Bus services will be reduced over the holiday period. In summary there are no buses on Christmas Day and a restricted service on Boxing Day with Saturday or Sunday timetables on other days between Christmas and New Year. For the first time there will be a Boxing Day service to Queens Park, on route 18. Details on www.buses.co.uk and other bus company websites. This year there will be National Express coach services from Brighton Pool Valley to Gatwick Airport and London Victoria on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Details on www.nationalexpress.com

And finally...

As this is the last Buswatch News of 2016 a big thank you to Officers and Councillors at Brighton & Hove City Council, staff at Brighton & Hove Buses, Compass Travel, Stagecoach and The Big Lemon. I would like to add my personal thanks to our four Committee members, Peter, Adrian, David and Jack who attend monthly meetings, adding ideas and suggestions, often challenging my assumptions and ideas. Thank you also to everyone who has corresponded with us on various subjects or liked our Facebook page. Your comments are very welcome.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 18 January 2017** at 5.15pm in Brighton 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 produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. We welcome your contributions and suggestions. Printed A5 copies of this newsletter are available from Hove town hall reception and a pdf or large print versions are available on request. The next issue is due mid January 2017.

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Brighton Area Buswatch is a branch of Bus Users UK bususers.org