

# Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

## Buswatch News – July 2014

### **Cheaper Key Cards for young people for the summer.**

As a direct result of a suggestion from one of our younger supporters, Brighton & Hove Buses has agreed to reduce the price of a seven day Bus ID Key card by 25% from £9.50 to just £7 per week. The reduction applies for tickets purchased on line between 24 July and 31 August. This will enable those aged between 5 & 18 to travel around Brighton & Hove cheaply and independently.

### **East Sussex County Council cuts bus service funding**

Supported bus services in East Sussex could be substantially reduced following a decision by the County Council on 1 July to save £1.79 million from the transport budget. The County Council has a statutory duty to provide school transport and to provide concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people and with savings having to be made it says it had little choice but to review bus service costs.

Reductions will mostly affect rural bus routes in East Sussex which are tendered by the County Council because they are not viable. These are generally operated by Compass Bus and small independent companies. Busy commercial services into Brighton along the coast from Eastbourne and Newhaven are unaffected but the evening service on Brighton & Hove routes 28/29 beyond Lewes to Ringmer, Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells will no longer be subsidised.



*Our photo shows the 15:30 journey on route 143 in Lewes Bus Station. Thirteen adult passengers boarded on a Monday afternoon. These would all be stranded if the service is reduced to two days a week. Part of this journey would continue run daily on schooldays – but not for public use.*

If the cuts are implemented in full, the Lewes area would be particularly hard hit with substantial reductions on most bus services. Some routes would be reduced to running just two days a week and others would have their frequency halved. Many evening and Sunday services would disappear altogether. There is also a threat of huge fare increases of up to 30%.

The impact of these proposals would be to make travel very difficult for people without cars, especially in remote rural communities where there are few shops or other facilities. Access to jobs in towns would be almost impossible and young people would be unable to travel independently. Concessionary pass holders would find their tickets are of little value anymore, so old people would become more isolated and lonely. Local businesses could also suffer from a loss of trade. Cutting evening services will mean some people won't be able to use a bus earlier in the day because they cannot get home.

Perhaps the most worrying feature of the proposals is the way they have been developed. Despite a public consultation last year the 'all or nothing' solutions produce some drastic results. As an example, the 143 service from Lewes to Eastbourne is one well used service proposed to become just two days a week. The school journeys serving Ringmer Community College will still run, but they will not be open to the public, so villagers in Laughton will have a daily service which most people cannot use! The 123 from Lewes to Newhaven is another popular service which is proposed to be reduced with its frequency halved to run every two hours. If this leads to the driver and vehicle sitting in Lewes Bus Station for an hour between journeys it won't achieve any significant savings but custom will be lost.

Fortunately there is time to challenge the proposals. East Sussex County Council is now carrying out a consultation and we urge you to respond if you are likely to be affected by the proposals. Their website is [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/haveyoursay) and the closing date for responses is 28 September. Brighton Area Buswatch will be responding so you are welcome to contact us with your views. Final recommendations will be made in December 2014 and changes will be implemented from April 2015.

Instead simply cutting out buses to meet a budget target, we urge the County Council to consider opportunities for improving the viability of existing services by working in partnership with bus companies. They could find out where people want to travel to and from and talk to the users and to people running the services. Bus companies have enormous local knowledge. They get feedback through their drivers and often have innovative ideas about how to provide services more economically. Bus services that both start and finish in busy town centres generally do better than those just serving small villages, so linking routes together can reduce costs and increase income.

Elsewhere there have been some positive developments despite the need for councils to make savings. Bus Users UK has worked with Norfolk County Council to improve bus travel in rural areas through partnerships with several local bus companies. In Surrey the County Council implemented a number of cost saving proposals suggested by bus companies which have been extremely successful. In Kent, Stagecoach has developed a superb network of inter-town services serving small villages en route, giving some communities their best ever bus service. Closer to home, SussexBus.com has introduced a successful network around Burgess Hill with three services into Brighton. Metrobus has increased services between Brighton & Haywards Heath with improved links to Crawley and a through service to East Grinstead.

## **Route 50 to be extended**

Good news for Hollingdean bus users. From September the Brighton & Hove service 50 will be extended to Lewes Road and Falmer. This will provide new links to Sainsbury's and to both Universities as well as providing much needed extra capacity along Lewes Road at peak times. The service will follow a shorter route within the University of Sussex than the 25 and it will terminate at Falmer Station. This is because of traffic congestion on university campus roads at busy times. Within Hollingdean buses will all travel in the same direction around the loop, so passengers will have to make sure they check the destination before getting on the bus!

The new service will run every 15 minutes between Churchill Square and Hollingdean with a half hourly daytime service to Falmer. The section of route 50 to Brighton Station and Seven Dials will be transferred to route 22 to provide a new all day station link from Elm Grove and Woodingdean.

## **Work at Vogue gyratory starts**

The final stage of improvements to bus and cycle lanes along Lewes Road began this week when contractors moved into the Vogue gyratory by Sainsbury's. Over the next few months they will create a continuous northbound cycle lane through the gyratory with a new bus stop island outside Sainsbury's. This will be long enough to accommodate bendy buses, so route 25 will be able to call there again.

To achieve this, the Sainsbury's bus stop will have to close for around two months from mid August to enable the works to be implemented. Bus passengers will need to use stops at Melbourne Street or Lewes Road bus garage. The scheme should be complete by the end of November. These improvements are mainly funded through the Governments Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF).

## **Valley Gardens project gets more funds**

It has just been announced that recently allocated LSTF funding will enable further development work to be carried out on the Valley Gardens project. This will enable the full scheme to be planned along the A23 between St Peter's Church and the Aquarium (Brighton Pier) roundabout. The aim is to move most through traffic to the east side of the gardens with buses only on the west side by the Pavilion. This should make it easier for people to access the little used green spaces in between, creating a linear park effect and a more attractive entrance to the city. Brighton Area Buswatch is working with Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton & Hove Buses and other community groups to ensure the best possible outcome for bus users.

## **Big Lemon walks**

The Big Lemon's Sunday walk programme is under way for the summer months. The next one is coming up this weekend on 20 July and will be to Chanctonbury Ring. The Big Lemon bus will leave from Old Steine south side (Stop S) at 10.30 and returns around 4.30pm. Walks are designed to take 2-3 hours and are followed by a lunch at a country pub. There is a friendly atmosphere so why not give it a try? More details on [www.thebiglemon.com](http://www.thebiglemon.com)

Don't forget there are a number of other opportunities for walks by using regular bus services to the edge of town or the Breeze Up to the Downs services 77, 78 & 79 to Devil's Dyke, Stanmer Park and Ditchling Beacon. Leaflets are available from Hove Town Hall, One Stop Travel in North Street and other locations.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting with bus companies and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on Wednesday 22 October at 5.30pm. The meeting location will be confirmed later as Hove Town Hall, our usual venue will not be available due to building work. Meetings are open to all members and supporters but please let us know in advance if you wish to attend as space is limited. Our last meeting on 9 July was well attended and we welcomed two new supporters from Brighton & Hove Youth Council.

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 August 2014.

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