

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – July 2015

Summer has arrived!

With the summer holidays now here there are lots of places to go by bus. Brighton & Hove 13X runs daily to Beachy Head and Eastbourne with Coaster 12/12A/12X every 10 minutes to Seven Sisters and Eastbourne. Breeze up to the Downs routes 77 (Devil's Dyke) & 78 (Stanmer Park) now run daily with the 79 (Ditchling Beacon) running on Saturdays and Sundays. Other ideas include the Stagecoach Coastliner 700 to Worthing or Arundel and Metrobus 270 to Ashdown Forest or the Bluebell Railway at East Grinstead or Horsted Keynes (Saturdays). Our photo shows a healthy crowd about to return to Brighton on a 77 at Devil's Dyke. Full details in Bus Times.



(Photo courtesy of John Nicholas)

Key Cards extended from 3 August

From Monday 3 August buses on supported services in Brighton and Hove operated by Compass Bus and The Big Lemon will all be able to accept Key Cards and M tickets. New ticket machines and card readers are being fitted so accurate data on tickets and passes used can be recorded and revenue apportioned. This has taken years to achieve but having established the technology, it can be extended fairly easily to commercial services in our area operated by Stagecoach and Sussex Bus. We will be pressing for this will happen soon, through the Brighton & Hove Quality Bus Partnership on which we are now represented.

40X to be operated by Metrobus and Sussex Bus!

From the end of August route 40X which links the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton with the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath will be operated by two competing bus companies. The service is subsidised by the NHS Trust which funds travel for staff and passengers with suitable identification. We understand these arrangements will be available on the new Metrobus service but we are not sure if they will continue to be valid on Sussex Bus. More news next month!

North street accident

As most people will know, two double deck Brighton & Hove buses collided in North Street on 6 July. It was widely reported in the local and national media so there is no need to repeat the details here. We hope the driver of the second bus, who remains in a serious condition in hospital and those passengers injured, all make a speedy recovery. Martin Harris, Managing Director of Brighton & Hove Buses answered questions at our meeting on 15 July. It was particularly reassuring to hear he is investigating technological advances that could help to prevent buses colliding in similar circumstances.

Accessibility day – ‘talking bus’ facility now fitted to all B&H buses

Brighton & Hove buses recently held an Accessibility Day at Churchill Square where a bus fitted with an induction loop was parked. Several disability groups were invited to join in along with the public so see what initiatives are in place or planned to make buses easier to use. All B&H buses now have ‘talking bus’ announcements as well as visual next stop displays and the ‘helping hand’ scheme which involves cards passengers can use to explain particular needs to drivers has been well received. I have invited Victoria Garcia, Brighton & Hove’s Accessibility Officer to attend our meeting in October to explain more and answer questions.

Bus service changes from September

Brighton & Hove plans a number of changes to bus services from the start of the autumn timetable on 13 September. Highlights include more buses on route 22 between Woodingdean and Brighton Station with buses being given extra time, to improve reliability on this service. More controversial is the decision for 1A buses to run via Edward Street towards Whitehawk. This will provide a two way bus service along Edward Street serving the Law Courts and American Express offices but the 1A will no longer serve St James’s Street, missing the busy stop outside Morrisons. The 1 is unchanged and will still stop in St James’s Street. We welcome your views.

There will be faster buses on route 25 to the Universities. On Mondays to Fridays route 25 buses starting or finishing at Palmeira Square or Portslade will run as 25X omitting some stops to provide faster journeys for longer distance passengers. These buses will follow the 50U route through Sussex University, not serving Park Village. To compensate there will be a more frequent stopping service between Old Steine and Universities on the regular 25. In all there will be up to four extra buses an hour along Lewes Road plus extra peak journeys on route 23 serving Queens Park. This should make it easier to travel during term times when buses can become very crowded.

There will be minor timetable changes to several other services and full details will be available on the Brighton & Hove Buses website shortly www.buses.co.uk

New one hour M ticket for group travel in the evenings

Brighton & Hove is planning to introduce a new ‘Share your fare’ M ticket to encourage group travel in the evenings. It will be valid for 60 minutes so passengers travelling together can use any number of buses to complete a single journey in that time. This is something we have campaigned for. We hope 60 minutes will soon be adopted for all single fare M tickets to enable passengers to change buses without having pay twice when there is no direct service. Watch out for publicity.

Electric buses for Brighton?

No, this is not the return of trolleybuses, much lamented by bus enthusiasts of a certain age! However the Big Lemon bus company is considering bidding for a grant for an all-electric bus to operate route 52. The almost silent emission free vehicle would run on 100% renewable-generated energy, contributing to neither climate change or air pollution. It has been announced

that 50 all electric buses will run on two central London bus routes from next year and what happens in London often happens here shortly afterwards!

Two door buses could be coming to route 1 next year

Regular passengers don't need to be told that route 1 is one of the busiest services in Brighton and Hove. Even with a 6-7 minute frequency buses are often full and they can be tediously slow because so many people get on and off at every stop. In an attempt to reduce the time buses spend at stops, Brighton & Hove Buses plans to introduce new two door buses next year. This is of course not a completely new idea. Bendy buses on route 25 have two doors and back in the 1970s and 80s there were several two door buses in our area. But in those days buses were much less busy so two doors were of little value. Two door and even three door buses are common in London and many European cities. It is a bold move and speeding up our buses is important. The down side is that two door buses tend to have several fewer seats downstairs and a smaller area for buggies. Let us know what you think.

Good response to our suggestions from B&H Buses

Last month we published twenty ideas for getting more people to use buses. I'm pleased to say we have received a very impressive response from Brighton & Hove Buses. They have published their own 'Improvement Agenda' incorporating many of our ideas. The Improvement Agenda acknowledges the difficulties experienced by bus users during the recent roadworks in North Street and explains that efforts are being made to minimise disruption during future roadworks. It is available as a leaflet which can be obtained from the bus company. We look forward to working closely with all bus companies and with Brighton & Hove City Council to ensure our suggestions don't get forgotten.

Meadowview bus services

Around 30 people attended a meeting at Meadowview Community Centre on 17 June. Many were critical of the 37 service which has been operated by Compass Bus since April. Chris Chatfield, Managing Director of Compass Bus attended the meeting and apologised for the shortcomings. He then explained the measures he had taken to improve reliability and driver attitudes. Temporary agency drivers had been replaced by permanent staff dedicated to the route and some timetable changes would be considered for September based on passenger feedback. Since this meeting Buswatch has not received any complaints about the service.

With City Council funding due to expire in November there remains a risk of the evening service to Meadowview being withdrawn completely. Based on current usage Chris Chatfield said there was no way the evening service could continue without a subsidy. With the extension of Key Cards and M ticket validity from August there was hope evening usage would improve. Chris suggested the City Council funds a six month extension through the winter to give him more time to develop the service. He could then consider a fully commercial evening service (without subsidy) for next summer. If the evening service is withdrawn Meadowview will be the only area in Brighton & Hove without an evening bus service within a mile and the walk involves a steep hill. This is unacceptable. Our city has a thriving evening economy and many people work late or rely on buses to maintain a social life. We urge local bus users to lobby their ward Councillors, Mo Marsh, Daniel Yates and Anne Meadows who all belong to the ruling Labour group. Buswatch will continue to press for the evening service to be retained through the coming winter months.

In addition to Meadowview, Council funding for the evening and Sunday service on route 21 between Goldstone Valley and Brighton Marina via Queens Park and Whitehawk will also end from November. Brighton & Hove have agreed to continue running the present Sunday timetable without a subsidy, but weekday evening services will be reduced after 9pm unless additional funding is provided.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 14 October 2015** 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 comments 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 in mid August 2015.

E mail: brightonbuswatch@gmail.com. Phone: 01273 323075



brightonbuswatch.org



Brighton Area Buswatch is part of Bus Users UK bususers.org