

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – March 2015

Spring brings hope – Buswatch Comment



(Photo courtesy of Mike Best)

This spring photo taken from a bus represents a big improvement for services using Union Road by The Level. A couple of months ago buses were being delayed here regularly. Now, with two lanes ahead they can move more freely towards the Ditchling Road traffic lights to turn left.

This month's Buswatch News contains other good news stories which could not have been anticipated a few months back. Firstly it looks as though many bus users will not face any fares increases for a while and secondly there is an agreement to maintain many supported bus services despite City Council funding being cut later this year. Brighton & Hove Buses and Compass Travel have both agreed to run some services without subsidies. This is only possible because we live in an area where buses are well used all day and in the evenings too. In East Sussex the situation is less rosy. Services face cutbacks and large fare increases. The same two bus companies have stepped in to keep some services running without subsidies, but evening services in the County will be reduced to major routes like the 12 or the 28/29.

With both local and national elections approaching, Buswatch hopes the all party agreement on promoting buses in Brighton & Hove will continue. However further improvements are needed to make buses more attractive or usage will begin to decline. Some outer areas like Woodingdean have been suffering from unreliable bus services for some time. All too often buses are delayed due to traffic congestion and by roadworks which need to be planned more carefully, with accurate details conveyed to bus users. Traffic lights need to be re-phased at the Clock Tower and other junctions to speed the flow of buses and reduce waiting times for pedestrians. More staff are needed at Churchill Square to help passengers and keep buses moving through.

North Street roadworks still creating confusion and delays

Since last month the three westbound stops have been moved further up, between One Stop Travel and TK Maxx. At present there are no shelters, no real time information displays and no bus route numbers on these stops. On top of that the stops are sometimes (but not always) suspended during the daytime until around 4pm, creating confusion and hardship, especially for passengers with mobility difficulties. Over the past few days westbound Brighton & Hove buses have been re-routed along the seafront and West Street, while other bus operators have continued to use North Street. Route 25 has been routinely terminated at Old Steine along with other services when conditions are particularly bad.

The 25 has now been reinstated along North Street at all times and they have improved the information given to passengers on a daily basis using Facebook and twitter. The bus company tells us they have been in discussion with the contractors on a regular basis and apologise for the inconvenience when buses are diverted and stops are out of use.

Cash bus fares frozen – Improved Family fare deals

Good news - all cash bus fares on Brighton & Hove buses will be frozen when the summer timetable starts on 19 April. This means they have been unchanged for over a year. However there will be small increases in Key Card and M ticket prices with the one day charge rising by 10p from £4.10 to £4.20. The weekly Key Card price will increase by £1 to £19. The same cash fares will also apply on Compass Bus and The Big Lemon services operated for Brighton & Hove City Council, also on Metrobus services 270/271/273 and SussexBus.com buses 33/40/40X between Brighton & Patcham. Stagecoach buses charge different rates.

A new 'Sibling Saver' has been introduced by Brighton & Hove to help families and is available now. This offers reductions of up to £90 on a second annual ticket for a child, saving one third on the normal price. The £9 Family Day Saver ticket for up to five passengers with a maximum of two adults remains available. This has been unchanged in price since it was introduced two years ago. It can be purchased from the driver or in advance as an M ticket.

£3 Student Day Saver now available on Key Card

Brighton & Hove have introduced a One Day Saver student ticket on Key cards following its earlier launch as an M ticket. Students need to present a valid student registration card at One Stop Travel in North Street for the first ticket, but afterwards they can renew tickets on line. This saves £1.70 compared with the full price ticket bought on bus or 70p for a 23/25 Saver. The bus company no doubt hopes this will increase the number of Key Card users and speed up buses. It may also discourage people from buying full price day tickets and re-selling them on Facebook later in the day which appears to be a current trend. Bus tickets are marked 'Not Transferable' but obviously this is difficult to enforce.

Stagecoach Coastliner 700 to run later on Sundays

Stagecoach has listened to our pleas and agreed to run the 700 on Sunday evenings. It is only a partial victory though. From Sunday 3 May the last departure from Brighton Old Steine will be 9.25pm, 90 minutes later than now – but still two hours earlier than most other evening bus services in Brighton!

Most bus cuts avoided - B&H gives commitment

Following the announcement last month that certain supported bus services may be cut later this year, Brighton & Hove Buses announced that they will continue to run peak hour route 84 between Woodingdean and Universities plus the full Sunday daytime service on routes 21/21A between Goldstone Valley, Queens Park and Brighton Marina. These services will be run without subsidies from Brighton & Hove City Council. However late evening services on route 21 will be reduced to hourly between Churchill Square and Brighton Marina corresponding with the existing Sunday evening service which is also retained. Goldstone Valley will lose its evening service after 8pm apart from one late journey from the City Centre.

Compass Bus takes over routes 37 & 38 from April.

From 19 April Compass Bus will take over routes 37 & 38 from Brighton & Hove Buses and will combine the two services into one route running between Meadowview and Bristol Estate. Compass already operates route 37B between the same points. The revised 37 will follow the existing 38 route from Meadowview to London Road, then via Cheapside and Seven Dials to Brighton Station (front), Churchill Square (Imperial Arcade) continuing through Kemp Town, Royal Sussex County Hospital to Bristol Estate as now.

An hourly service will be provided for most of the day with a half hourly evening service to Meadowview when the 37B doesn't run. While this represents a reduction of one bus an hour for Coombe Road and Meadowview, timings will be co-ordinated with the 37B where possible to provide a half hourly daytime service. It also means Meadowview will have an all day service direct to the City Centre for the first time in many years. The half hourly daytime service on the existing 38 had been supported by the Governments Better Bus Areas Fund which expires in April 2015.

This is an excellent outcome which is the result of successful negotiations between Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton & Hove Buses and Compass Travel. It will maintain the best possible services to Meadowview and Bristol Estate given the reduction in Council and Government funding. We commend Compass Bus for taking on much of the financial risk by running the daytime 37 without a subsidy. The company is investing in brand new buses and has ensured that Key Cards and M tickets will continue to be valid.

Compass Bus changes in East Sussex confirmed

Compass Bus has negotiated with East Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park and will operate most of its existing services without subsidies when County Council funding is withdrawn next month. While frequencies will have to be reduced on some services, others which were to be reduced to two days a week will continue to run on five or six days. New links will be provided from East Grinstead to Barcombe and Lewes and from Lewes to Alfriston and Eastbourne. These services will be marketed as 'The Downsman' as they improve access to the South Downs National Park as well as serving local communities.

Fares will have to be increased because these services were running at a loss, but the company assures us not all increases will be as high as 30% which had been predicted. As in Brighton, Compass Bus is taking the financial risk in running these services. They have built up an excellent reputation and have worked hard to avoid communities being left without a service.

Lewes Town Council has organised a public meeting in Lewes Town Hall at 7pm on Tuesday 24 March where people can make their views on the changes known.

Improved Breeze Up to the Downs services

From Sunday 19 April there will be a more frequent service on route 77 from Brighton Pier and Brighton Station to Devil's Dyke each weekend and a new Monday to Friday service. From 14 June the 77 will be further increased to half hourly every day with open top buses on most journeys. This will provide a regular daily service along the seafront replacing route 10 which ran last summer. Route 78 to Stanmer Park will also be improved from 19 April with a daily service for the first time which will help residents as well as making it easier for visitors to the Park and to Stanmer Village. Along with route 79 to Ditchling Beacon these two services will be operated with double deck buses so passengers can enjoy the views.

Compass Bus will again be operating special service 769 from Brighton to Haywards Heath and Sheffield Park Garden on Sundays and Bank holidays. Starting on Good Friday, 3 April the bus will leave Brighton Station at 9.40am, returning from Sheffield Park at 4.45pm.

Name that bus!

Brighton & Hove is giving the public an opportunity to choose names for some of its new buses. Four shortlists have been prepared for nine of the 24 buses which will shortly enter service on route 12 between Brighton & Eastbourne. The first poll is available on Friday 20 March using www.buses.co.uk or by using the company's Facebook and twitter pages. The shortlist names all refer to deceased people with a local connection who died at least a year ago.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 15 April 2015** at 5.30pm in Brighton Town Hall (note new location). 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 copies of this newsletter are available from Hove town hall reception and a pdf version is available on request. The next issue is due in mid April 2015.

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



brightonbuswatch.org



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