**Brighton Area Buswatch**

**Representing local bus users**

**Part of Bus Users UK**

**Buswatch News – June 2016**

**New ‘double door’ buses on routes 1 & 1A**

Twelve of these new low emission ‘Streetdeck’ buses hit the streets this month, with a similar number to follow in coming weeks. They will enable all buses on Brighton & Hove routes 1 & 1A to be operated with two door buses, allowing passengers to get on while others leave through the second door. This should help to speed up the service and make it more reliable.

One of the new Route 1 buses has been named after Chris Cooke. Chris was a well-known campaigner in the St James’s Street and Kemp Town areas and in the LGBT community. He died following a fire at the Essex Place tower block in Kemp Town in February, aged 48.



*Photo courtesy of Brighton & Hove Buses*

In the photo at the launch event are Silvio Grasso of Brighton Gay Men’s Chorus, Rev’d Andrew Goodward of St Mary’s Church, James Ledward from G Scene magazine, Steve Parry, Community Activist and Councillor Mo Marsh. It is very appropriate for a route 1 bus to carry his name as it passes through St James’s Street and Kemp Town.

**Mind your head!**

The new buses on route 1 have been praised for having free Wi Fi and USB power sockets but criticised for the height of the upper deck, which is significantly lower than the buses they replaced. Any passenger over 5’9’’ tall has to stoop to avoid banging their head on the ceiling! We are told the reason for this is to save weight and reduce fuel consumption so the buses can be officially categorised as low emission vehicles. It seems that while they are the same type of bus used on Coaster route 12 which are normal height, the extra door adds to the overall weight of the bus. Martin Harris, Managing Director of Brighton & Hove Buses and I were both interviewed about the new buses on BBC Sussex radio on 20 June. I made it clear that as a 6’2” tall man I find the ceiling far too low. Martin said he has asked the manufacturer to see whether the height could be increased on future deliveries. There are plenty of similar two door buses in London built to normal height so this should be possible.

**Bus Services Bill – Brighton shows the way**

The Government has published a Bus Service Bill covering the provision of bus services outside London. It does not propose specific outcomes but seeks to achieve a number of solutions to grow bus use, tackle air quality hot spots and help cities to grow their economies. The Bill highlights the achievements of Brighton and Hove in having three times more bus passenger journeys per head than most parts of the country. It seeks to introduce a number of features taken for granted locally such growing passenger numbers, the provision of timetable information for all bus companies (published in twice a year in Bus Times since the 1980s) and having a smartcard for all bus operators. On the last item, the Key Smartcard is now available on Brighton & Hove and Metrobus, plus Compass Bus and The Big Lemon services operated on behalf of Brighton and Hove City Council and discussions are taking place to extend it to all other services.

The Bus Services Bill makes provision for the introduction of bus franchising, whereby bus services are under the control of one authority with an elected Mayor which tenders all bus services over a defined area. This is the situation in London. There are pros and cons for franchising but given the success of the informal partnership between Brighton and Hove City Council and local bus companies over many years, we can see no value in changing the current arrangements in and around the city. We are not complacent though; our local bus service is good but there is plenty of scope for innovation and further improvements. There is likely to be a Government consultation in the autumn and we welcome your views so we can make an informed response. If it is passed by Parliament, the Bill could become law by spring 2017.

**Bristol Estate residents call for an improved service**

Local people have pointed out that the Bristol Estate in east Brighton once had a bus every 7 minutes during the daytime but now they have to rely on a half hourly service. Last year the evening service was reduced from every half hour to one bus every 75 minutes which makes it much more difficult to for people to go out in the evenings. The estate is hilly with only one small shop so residents feel very isolated. They have launched a petition to Brighton and Hove City Council to provide support for an improved service. Most 37 & 37B services to Bristol Estate are financially supported by the Council although weekday daytime 37s which are run commercially by Compass Travel. The company says it cannot justify running a more frequent service without a bigger subsidy but the Council says this is unlikely as it has had to cut budgets this year.

**Two new seafront services now running**

The 7X is an express service between Brighton Marina and Brighton Station. It runs direct along Marine Parade between the Marina and the Sea Life Centre saving up to 10 minutes compared with the all stops 7 service. The 7X operates every 20 minutes daily, leaving Brighton Marina at 00, 20 & 40 minutes past each hour and leaving Brighton Station at 17, 37 & 57.

The i7 is a half hourly service from Brighton Station and North Laine to Brighton Pier and the i360, returning via Preston Street, Western Road and Queens Road. Buses leave Brighton Station, stop H (by the NHS walk in centre) on the hour and 30 minutes past each hour. Full details in Bus Times and [www.buses.co.uk](http://www.buses.co.uk/) For many years people have said there should be more buses along the seafront so we hope the i7 and 7X will be well used. They are not subsidised so the future of these services will depend entirely on how many passengers travel.

**Stagecoach freezes fares**

Good news - there will be no changes to fares on Stagecoach South buses in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. The company announced a fares freeze last month, a year after the last fares increases.

**West Sussex County Council bus stop consultation**

West Sussex County Council is seeking views on proposals to permanently remove some rural bus stops on main roads. In April the County Council suspended stops on the A24 between Findon and Horsham and the A264 between Horsham and Crawley plus two stops on the A259 where buses were required to stop on the main carriageway. The obvious solution is to provide a bus lay-by at each location but this would be expensive and the bus stops are not heavily used. If you are affected it is important to let the Council know your views. The consultation closes on 6 July. <https://haveyoursay.westsussex.gov.uk/highways-and-transport/bus-stops>.

**Brighton Area Buswatch meetings**

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 13 July 2016** 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 mid-July 2016.**

**E mail:** [**brightonbuswatch@gmail.com**](mailto:brightonbuswatch@gmail.com). Phone: 01273 620215

**brightonbuswatch.org**

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