

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – January 2016

The Big Lemon bids to run electric buses



Our locally owned Community Interest Company has submitted a bid for Government funding to buy three battery electric single deck buses. They will look similar to this almost new diesel ‘Solo’ bus now running on route 52 between Brighton and Woodingdean. Big Lemon Managing Director Tom Druitt has launched a campaign to raise £100,000 through a bond issue and is seeking support from local people. This amount is required to meet Government requirements for funding the new zero emission electric buses, which would make a significant contribution towards improving air quality in central Brighton. More details on the bid and opportunities to contribute are available on www.thebiglemon.com/our-future

Improvements needed to Boxing Day services

Did you travel by bus on Boxing Day? The main city services were all running but to special timetables. Some services were frequent but others ran much less often than Sunday timetables and some didn’t run at all, leaving a number of districts with no Boxing Day buses on one of the busiest shopping days of the year. Virtually all City Centre shops were open and doing brisk business, while fine weather attracted crowds to the seafront. Some people experienced a long wait for reduced services, with no timetable information available at bus stops without real time displays. Compared with a normal Sunday service route 6 only ran every 90 minutes instead of every 20 minutes while route 2 only ran between Shoreham and Old Steine with no service to Craven Vale or Woodingdean. The latter was served by an hourly 22B following a different route to the regular 22 in Woodingdean which must have caused confusion. Worst of all was Queens Park which has three Sunday services but none ran on Boxing Day. There was only a token service north of Lewes although many buses on route 28 carried standing passengers. Stagecoach ran a full Sunday service on the 700 for the first time. It would be great if Brighton & Hove and Compass Bus could do the same in 2016.

Bus service improvements

Buses services in the city are at last becoming more reliable which is excellent news. This is confirmed by Brighton & Hove Buses and the observations of some of our members. As reported last month the completion of major roadworks and improvements to timetables means buses now have a better chance of completing each journey on time. January is a quiet month on the roads and the weather has been kind so far with no heavy snowfalls, flooding or high winds to disrupt services. The real challenges will come towards the busier summer months.

At our meeting on 20 January Brighton & Hove Buses confirmed plans to introduce 24 new two door buses on routes 1 & 1A between Mile Oak and Whitehawk from May. The frequency of the service will be slightly increased in April so there will be ten buses an hour overall – that's one every 6 minutes on this busy service. It is hoped the two door buses will mean overall journey times will be cut by a few minutes as time spent at stops should be reduced. A high proportion of route 1 passengers are making short trips between Hove and Brighton or to and from the Royal Sussex County Hospital so there are lots of stops where passengers are both getting on and off. Everyone should benefit, especially passengers making longer journeys across the city. The new buses will be slightly longer than present route 1 buses so the overall number of seats should be about the same, taking into account the space taken up by the second door.

The existing four year old 'Volvo Gemini's' now on route 1 will be refurbished and painted into a striking new colour scheme for Regency routes 28 & 29 between Brighton and Lewes, Ringmer, Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells. The superior Volvo's will replace nine year old Scania buses which have bodywork which is prone to rattle continually on poor road services.

A brand new express service is planned from Brighton Marina to the City Centre. It will run every 20 minutes direct along Marine Parade, so avoiding congestion in Eastern Road and providing a more scenic route for visitors. The new service will run every 20 minutes from June and the route within the city centre will be confirmed later, depending on the effects of long term roadworks on the seafront which began this month. However it should serve the i360. Route 7 will continue to run at the same frequency to and from the Marina via Eastern Road providing a very frequent 24/7 all stops service.

Another change is that Queens Park local service 18 will be standardised to reduce confusion. Between 9am and about 4pm on Mondays to Saturdays, all buses from Brighton Station will run via Seven Dials, Waitrose and Western Road instead of alternate journeys. Outside these times buses will run direct from Brighton Station to Churchill Square and on to Queens Park as now. This follows requests from passengers. Routes 21 & 21A which also serve Queens Park will have a revised timetable with more time for buses to complete their journeys to overcome problems of late running in the afternoons.

We understand consideration is also being given to providing an extra late night 21 from central Brighton to Goldstone Valley. This would be a trial during the summer months when many foreign students are staying in Goldstone Valley and is the result of a suggestion from a local resident to Brighton Area Buswatch.

Full details of the timetable changes which come into effect from 24 April will be published on www.buses.co.uk in due course.

Stagecoach £2 Nightrider ticket.

Stagecoach has introduced a bargain Nightrider ticket priced at just £2 allowing unlimited travel on Stagecoach buses in our area for just £2 after 7pm. Passengers using the N700 night bus service between Brighton & Worthing will need to pay another £2 as there is a flat fare of £4 on that route. The down side of this promotion is that there are very few Stagecoach services running in the

evenings! The 17 from Brighton to Horsham has no evening service and town services in Worthing are almost non-existent after 8pm. Fortunately the Coastliner 700 does run, every half hour between Brighton and Worthing or Goring. Unfortunately the last 700 buses on Sunday evenings leave Worthing at 8.40pm returning from Brighton at 9.25pm which is far too early for an evening out. We have consistently pressed Stagecoach to run a full evening service on Sundays and were told at our January meeting that this is (at last) being seriously considered.

Another piece of good news from Stagecoach is that route 17 will continue to run every half hour during the daytime. The frequency was doubled from hourly in January 2015 as a trial and usage has increased sufficiently to enable it continue. A suggestion that some journeys should omit Partridge Green to provide a faster service between Brighton and Horsham was made at our meeting and Stagecoach agreed to consider this.

Valley Gardens and Terminus Road taxi rank proposals

At our January meeting Councillor Gill Mitchell gave us an update on these two projects. Modelling work on the Valley Gardens scheme was continuing. This process was taking longer than expected as the studies had exposed potential problems at two junctions, St Peter's Place and Edward Street. We were reassured to learn that the scheme would not proceed until these issues are resolved. This could mean a delay which would undoubtedly be better than implementing a road scheme that didn't work! Councillor Mitchell told us the bus company was being kept fully informed during the planning stages and the requirements for bus users would be given high priority.

Following a meeting with local residents it was clear that there was strong opposition to the idea of moving the Brighton Station taxi rank to Terminus Road. Councillor Mitchell said the Council was now looking at other options and was setting up a meeting with Go Via (which runs Brighton Station) and Brighton & Hove Buses to discuss these. She added that the Council had no control over the number of taxis using the station forecourt as it was private land but recognised that increasing taxi numbers were causing problems and delaying buses outside the station.

Potential changes ahead for concessionary pass holders

As reported last month, Brighton & Hove City Council is considering reducing the hours in which concessionary bus passes can be used. At present they are valid from 9am until 4am on Mondays to Fridays and at any time at weekends. To save money these times could be reduced to 9.30am to 11pm. These are the national minimum times that already apply in East Sussex and West Sussex.

Brighton Area Buswatch, Brighton & Hove Older People's Council and Brighton Line Commuters are strongly opposed to the changes. If you are affected and want to object to this change, we urge you to contact your local Councillor. The anticipated cost savings are quite small and are based on the numbers of journeys made. If there the number of trips does not decline, because people simply travel at different times, the Council will save very little, but the inconvenience and cost to pass holders could be substantial.

Julian Osborne

Julian sadly passed away recently. He was a well known supporter of buses in our area and worked for Bus Users UK for the past few years. Born in Worthing, Julian worked as a bus conductor in Brighton while a student in the 1970s and kept in close touch with local bus companies. He published books on Southdown buses and wrote regularly for Buses magazine with an article in the latest edition. Very knowledgeable and extremely wise with a good sense of humour, Julian will be much missed by those of us who knew him and we offer our condolences to his family.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

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

E mail: brightonbuswatch@gmail.com. Phone: 01273 620215 (new number)



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