

Brighton Area Buswatch

A branch of Bus Users (formerly Bus Users UK)
representing local bus users

Buswatch News – January 2020

Bus fares special – Changes explained

Fares on all bus services within Brighton & Hove changed this month. Most changes mean higher fares but some short distance fares were reduced and a few were unchanged. Stagecoach fares went up first, on 5 January followed by Brighton & Hove and other operators on 14 January. On Stagecoach buses the standard single fare within the Brighton & Hove fare zone is now £2.55. A return costs £4.40, and a day ticket just 10p more, but travel a few stops beyond Shoreham High Street and the fares from Brighton almost double to £4.90 single or £8.20 return. The best value fare is undoubtedly the £2.50 evening ticket valid after 1900, which is unchanged. Spare a thought for bus users in Worthing who pay £6.20 for a Worthing area day ticket, almost £2 more than Stagecoach charges in Brighton & Hove and £1 more than on Brighton & Hove Buses in the City Saver area.

Brighton & Hove Bus Company fares are also adopted by Metrobus and by Compass and The Big Lemon within the city whose services run under contract to Brighton & Hove City Council. The best news is that some short hop fares have been reduced from £2 or £2.20 to £1.90. However, the distance covered by the £1.90 fare varies considerably. From Brighton Marina £1.90 takes you just one stop to Lidl on a 7 or 23, while it covers two miles east to Rottingdean on a 14B or 47 (and also from Marine Gate on a 12, 12A, 14, 14C or 27), or all around Whitehawk on the 21A. Yet the single fare for the short trip from Brighton Marina to the Royal Sussex County Hospital costs £2.70, the highest single fare within the City! This is an anomaly we have highlighted many times in the past. It seems a very unfair burden on those who live or park at the Marina and use the bus to the hospital, avoiding long queues at hospital car parks (which will undoubtedly get worse if hospital parking is made free).

The new fares are more logical in central Brighton where short hops from Brighton Station to Churchill Square or Old Steine now cost £1.90. The best way to guarantee being charged the lowest single fare is to use a Contactless bank card to tap on as you board and tap off on the exit card reader when you leave the bus. Otherwise buy an M ticket by phone or use a Key Card. Buying 30 trips on a Key card costs £62 which works out at £2.07 per trip for travel anywhere in the City Saver area – a big saving on the £2.70 cash or contactless fare.

Good news is that the £9 family ticket is unchanged as are many child fares. The biggest losers are annual ticket holders although these tickets still represent the best value for passengers who use buses every day. A £730 annual Network Saver works out at £2 a day. An annual bus pass in London is over £100 more expensive than a B&H Network Saver and an annual Stagecoach South ticket costs £200 more.

How 2020 bus fares compare with other areas

In our area bus fares on commercial bus services (the vast majority) are set by bus companies. The City Council applies the same fares on subsidised services operated by The Big Lemon and Compass Travel. In London, bus fares are controlled by The Mayor of London and have been frozen for four years. Reading Buses is the nearest Council owned bus company which runs frequent local services and some longer routes. Its profits are lower than most private companies.

Adult fares	Brighton & Hove Buses Metrobus Big Lemon Compass within City Saver area	Brighton & Hove Buses Beyond City Saver area	Stagecoach 17 & 700 to Patcham or Shoreham and beyond	Transport for London (TfL) bus & tram using Oyster or contactless	Council owned Reading Buses urban area and beyond
Single journey	£1.90, £2.20 Centrefare or £2.70 on bus £2.70 One hour M ticket	£1.90 - £5.90 according to distance (highest to Tun.Wells)	£2.55 in City variable beyond	£1.50 free transfers within one hour	£2 one trip or £2.50 for one hour. Variable beyond urban area
One day ticket	£5.20 on bus £4.70 Key/M ticket £5.50 scratch card	£7 on bus £5.20 Key/M £5.50 scratch card	£4.50 in City £4.30 M tkt £9.10 beyond £8.40 M tkt	£4.50 Pay As You Go max £5 in advance	£4 urban area £7 beyond
Weekly ticket	£21.60 Key/M ticket £27.50 scratch card	£23.60 Key/M ticket £27.50 scratch	£14.90 City, £14.30 M £25.30 beyond £23.70 M tkt	£21.20	£16 urban area £20 beyond
4 week/monthly ticket	£79.50 Key/M ticket £77 by direct debit	£83 Key/M ticket £82 direct debit	£50.70 City £88.70 beyond	£81.50	£59 urban area £75 beyond
Annual ticket	£669 Key card	£730 Key card	£528 in City £930 beyond	£848	£575 urban £830 beyond

On bus fares are those paid in cash or Contactless. See bus company and TfL websites for the full range of tickets available.

All bus companies (except The Big Lemon) accept Contactless for on-bus payments. Single fares tend to be highest on Brighton & Hove services but there are cheaper options for under 18s and students and those buying in advance. London has easily the cheapest single 'hopper' ticket at £1.50 which allows unlimited transfer within one hour. However weekly and monthly prices in London are broadly similar to B&H and annual tickets are much higher. Reading Buses fares are generally lower than Brighton & Hove within the town but similar for longer out of town journeys.

Child Fares

Child fare comparisons are difficult because every bus company seems to have a different policy; some charge a flat rate, some half the adult fare and some more than half fare. Obviously, London is the best offering free travel for all under 18s. This is a political decision as fares are controlled by The Mayor of London not TfL.

Brighton & Hove Buses has one of the best deals with its Bus ID scheme and a 50p fare for accompanied travel or half the adult fare. £2.60 for a child day Saver ticket (£2.35 on the mobile app or Key Card) is roughly in line with large city operators around the UK.

Stagecoach charges children much more than half the adult fare, - so a day ticket on routes 17 & 700 within the Brighton – Shoreham area which costs £4.50 for adults (£4.30 on a mobile) is £3.90 for children (£3.50 on the app).

Most bus companies offer family/group tickets for two adults and up to three under 16 or 18 for under £10. Stagecoach charges £9 for two adults and two children or £8.30 on the app, Brighton & Hove £10 on-bus or £9 on the app for up to three children.

It is noticeable that fares tend to be higher in small towns and rural areas than in cities. This reflects the profitability of bus services in large urban areas.

Bus use is increasing

More people use buses in Brighton & Hove than anywhere else in England outside London, according to official statistics released by the Department for Transport. Nearly 50 million bus journeys were made in the Brighton & Hove City Council area in the year to March 2019 that's almost one million every week! This compares with just 11 million bus journeys in Portsmouth and 20 million in Southampton. The number of bus passenger journeys made per head in 2018/19 was 172 whereas the national average is just 45 trips, so more than three times more people use our local buses than in most areas. The total number of bus journeys in Brighton increased by almost one million over the past year, whereas the national trend was downwards, even in London.

This is a tremendous achievement but the Council and bus companies cannot afford to be complacent. The recent fares increases have been partly blamed on the fact that buses becoming slower due to increased traffic congestion. Brighton & Hove Buses says extra buses and drivers are needed to maintain the same frequencies on slower timetables. They use the example of route 7 from Hove to Brighton Marina where the daytime journey time has increased by 30% over the past ten years. All too often buses are being delayed due to congestion, roadworks or other incidents so waiting times are increased and buses are having to be turned short of their destination to get them back on time. This is very frustrating for passengers and it makes people consider other options. If bus users switch to a car it merely exacerbates the problem for others by creating more congestion.

Valley Gardens Phase 3 update

The Brighton & Hove City Council Audit and Standards Committee on 14 January noted the results of an internal report into the Phase 3 proposals, covering the area from Edward Street through Old Steine to the seafront. This follows issues raised by Conservative Councillor Lee Wares. The report concluded that appropriate decision making processes had been followed.

Councillor Wares and members of the Valley Gardens Forum are not satisfied with this outcome. The Forum is concerned about the overall plans and the inadequate consultation process. They will continue to press for the retention of the Aquarium roundabout to enable Madeira Drive to remain two way, reducing the impact at Dukes Mound/Marine Parade. They also believe buses should be routed along the west side of Old Steine in front of the Royal Pavilion which Buswatch supports. The VG Forum wants the Local Enterprise Partnership to defer its £6 million funding for the scheme until changes are made and a more satisfactory outcome is achieved.

The City Council promises a further consultation before final decisions are made. It is likely this consultation will concentrate on detailed aspects of the scheme design rather than providing an opportunity to comment on road layout options.

Brighton Area Buswatch meeting

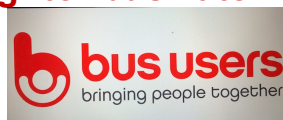
The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 22 January 2020** in Brighton Town Hall, Committee Room 2 (please note that this is not our usual meeting room). Meetings are open to all, but space is limited so please contact Buswatch at the address below if you wish to join us.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. Contributions and suggestions are welcome. The next issue is due mid-February 2020.

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Brighton Area Buswatch is a branch of Bus Users UK www.bususers.org