

Brighton Area Buswatch



We are a branch of Bus Users, the national charity representing bus passengers

Buswatch News – January 2021

What will 2021 bring for bus users?

We start the year in lockdown with shops pubs and schools closed so there are few reasons to go out. Buses are running to provide essential services for key workers. They are being subsidised by the Government, something many people would like to see happen permanently. Bus companies are not allowed to increase fares while emergency subsidies are in place - except in London, where the Mayor has been instructed to do the opposite! The 09:00 or 09:30 Bus Pass restrictions have been lifted throughout the country to assist people travelling to vaccination centres.

When the lockdown is lifted and life returns to normal, bus companies and Councils will be faced with the challenge of trying to restore bus use to pre-Covid levels. This won't be easy, especially if social distancing measures remain. Many services will be unprofitable once subsidies are removed and the reduced timetables currently in place could remain for some time to come with the risk of some cuts to services.

There is some potentially good news for buses from Brighton & Hove City Council. It has published the results of its Climate Assembly and introduced plans for a car free city centre (now to be known as Liveable City Centre), both of which emphasise the importance of good, affordable public transport.

Brighton & Hove Climate Assembly

Brighton & Hove City Council declared a climate emergency in 2018 and aims to become a carbon neutral city by 2030. The Council commissioned Ipsos MORI to hold a climate assembly, focussed on reducing carbon emissions from transport. Due to Covid the assembly was held on-line and took place between September and November. A group of 50 people were selected to represent the demographics of the City's population. The assembly members supported strong measures to reduce transport emissions and prioritised ten key recommendations:

1. A car-free city centre
2. The public transport system should be affordable/accessible
3. Creation of healthier low traffic/pedestrianised communities
4. The council should actively consult and engage with the community
5. Introduce mobility hubs (NB: A mobility hub is a recognisable place which provides and connects up different types of travel – for example cycle hire, rail or bus station, parking and transport information)

6. Cyclists should be prioritised over cars through well-designed dedicated cycling networks that are safe and practical for day-to-day use as well as leisure
7. Introduce a Park & Ride to minimise car use in the city
8. Make public transport a more convenient alternative to driving a car
9. Messaging should focus on what people gain rather than lose and educate/expand citizens knowledge
10. There should be a focus on incentives rather than sanctions as interventions

It was recommended that these items should be considered together rather than stand-alone ideas. From a bus user perspective the emphasis on public transport is very welcome. We would all agree that public transport should be affordable and accessible although perceptions of affordability vary and bus operators will tell you that fares levels are only one factor affecting bus usage. Buses must also be reliable, frequent, clean, comfortable and they should convey passengers as directly as possible to their destination. Journey information should be easy to find and to follow and good waiting facilities with real time information screens are important.

The recommendation to introduce a Park & Ride to minimise car use is a welcome surprise, given the objections from the current administration and the difficulties experienced in progressing earlier proposals.

The Brighton & Hove City Council Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee (ETS) on 19 January approved these recommendations with the aim of the city becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Liveable City Centre plans plus ULEZ

In January 2020 the ETS Committee agreed to explore the costs of developing a car-free city centre by 2023 and to detail costs and practicalities of an Ultra-Low Emission Zone for private vehicles in the City Centre to facilitate a car free environment. There is already a Low Emission Zone for buses only, covering Western Road and North Street which was due to become an Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in 2024. An ULEZ requires vehicles to comply with Euro 6 emissions and over half the buses running in the city already comply.

The Council decided that Car Free City Centre scheme will be known as the 'Liveable City Centre' (LCC) although the aim of achieving a car free city centre by 2023 remains. It is the intention that the LCC and ULEZ will:

- support carbon reduction,
- improve health and air quality
- Enhance public realm and place-making
- Facilitate increased equality and access for all, especially disabled people
- Stimulate the visitor economy
- Strengthen active and sustainable transport connectivity
- Increased safety for all

Four options were considered for an LCC, the smallest covering The Lanes and the largest covering areas inside the A23, A259, B2122/A270 Montpelier Road to New England Road, Edward Street and Rock Gardens. Five options for a ULEZ were

considered the largest covering the whole of the city south of the A27 and the smallest covering an area up to around 1.5km north of the seafront from Brighton Marina to the West Sussex boundary. The recommendation is to progress the largest area as the A27 forms a clear boundary.

Further scheme developments will take place over the next 12 months, taking into account recommendations from the Climate Assembly. Early engagement with stakeholders and wider consultation is intended as plans proceed. Further details are available on the City Council [website](#).

The Council appointed transport planning consultants Steer to make an initial assessment of options. Steer are well respected consultants with decades of experience, so it was reassuring to see them recommending Park & Ride as a means of keeping cars out of the city centre. These sites could become mobility hubs located on the edge of the city where multi-modal interchange takes place, such as car to bike or car to walk for exploring the countryside.

Bus service reductions

Bus service levels were slightly reduced again during January, reflecting reduced usage during the third lockdown. Stagecoach Coastliner 700 was reduced from every 10 minutes to every 15 minutes, B&H route 2 (Rottingdean – Woodingdean – City Centre – Hove – Shoreham – Steyning) is reduced from every 20 minutes to every 30 minutes and the Route 5B (Hangleton – Hove – City Centre - Hollingbury) no longer serves the Universities at Falmer. The 25 between Old Steine and the Universities runs every 15 minutes and the 25X remains suspended. Otherwise changes are fairly minor. Council supported services run by The Big Lemon and Compass Travel are unchanged as are Metrobus services 271 & 272 which provide out of town links between the Princess Royal Hospital and the Royal Sussex County Hospital.

Goodbye Mike



Photo courtesy of Brighton & Hove Buses

Mike Cheesman who was Marketing Manager at Brighton & Hove Buses retired in December after 46 years with the company. During that time Mike produced every edition of Bus Times, the free timetable book which has been produced twice a year since 1987. Every effort was made to ensure timetable changes corresponded with the twice yearly publication of Bus Times and it was hailed as an example of good practice all over the country. Sadly there were no editions of Bus Times in 2020 as the pandemic necessitated frequent timetable changes. Mike has always been very helpful to Buswatch, and indeed to everyone he dealt with. We wish him a long and happy retirement.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

In normal circumstances, meetings with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council are held four times a year. Meetings will resume when restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, please send in your comments and we will take them up with the operators or the Council.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. Contributions and suggestions are welcome.

E mail: brightonbuswatch@gmail.com. Phone: 01273 620215



brightonbuswatch.org



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