

Brighton Area Buswatch



Working in partnership with Bus Users, the national charity representing bus passengers

Buswatch News – January 2023

£2 maximum single fare began on 1 January

We start the new year with some really good news for bus users – the predicted £2 single fare cap came into effect on 1st January and will last for three months to 31 March. This is funded by the Government through its ‘Help for Households’ scheme to ease the burden of the cost of living crisis and applies on all local bus companies in our area, but not National Express coaches. The £2 fare applies to most buses throughout England but not in London where there is already single fare of £1.65 which will rise to £1.75 in March.

Most passengers making more than two journeys in one day will still find it cheaper to buy a Saver ticket, but those paying by Contactless Tap On Tap Off will have their daily journeys capped at the one day Saver ticket price, currently £5.50 for a City Saver or £7 for a Network Saver. Full details are available [here](#). Passengers travelling to, from, or within East Sussex can buy an East Sussex £5 day ticket to save £2 on the cost of a Network Saver. Short journeys currently charged at £1.70, such as Brighton Station to North Street will remain at that price. However Brighton to Tunbridge Wells, which was £6.90 drops to just £2. For those travelling further afield, the single fare from Exeter to Plymouth drops from £11.20 and Leeds to Scarborough on the Yorkshire Coastliner 840 service drops from £15, saving a massive £13!

New deals for young people

There are also lower fares for under 19s. **Up to four under 19s can now travel free** with an adult passenger. This applies within the Brighton & Hove City Council area and East Sussex but not West Sussex or Kent. The off peak unaccompanied fare is reduced from £1 to 50p and child fares will apply to all under 19s showing either Bus ID or any reasonable valid ID. Further details [here](#). These reductions are funded through the Council’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) using part of the £27.9 million award from Government announced last year.

37 & 37B Sunday improvements

From 29th January there will be a vastly improved Sunday service on route 37 (Meadowview – Lewes Road – Brighton Station – Kemp Town – RSC Hospital – Bristol Estate) & route 37B (Meadowview – Hartington Road - Queens Park – Brighton Station – Kemp Town – RSC Hospital – Bristol Estate) will run on Sundays for the first time. Each service will run hourly at similar times to the Monday to Saturday service. These services are operated by Compass Travel under contract to Brighton & Hove City Council.

The extra services are funded through the Council’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) using part of the £27.9 million award from Government announced last year.

Further improvements planned for routes 21 & 21A.

From April there are plans for BSIP funding be used to substantially improve the 21 & 21A (currently Goldstone Valley – Hove – Churchill Square – London Road – Elm Grove – Queens Park – Manor Hill – Whitehawk (21A only) - Brighton Marina). The 21 & 21A will be combined into one service between Churchill Square and Brighton Marina via Elm Grove and Whitehawk running every 15 minutes. This is double the current frequency and four times the current 21A frequency around Whitehawk. However a 15 minute frequency applied before the pandemic between Churchill Square and Queens Park so that is merely being restored. Nevertheless the improved 21 links some of the more deprived areas in East Brighton and should help many people. The section of route 21 between Churchill Square and Goldstone Valley will be transferred to route 18. See below.

Big cuts planned for route 18

Brighton Area Buswatch has seen draft timetables for April which include proposals to substantially reduce the service on route 18 (Brighton Station – Seven Dials – Churchill Square – St James’s Street – Queens Park). The 18 would be revised to run from Goldstone Valley – Hove – Furze Hill – Churchill Square – St James’s Street – Queens Park replacing route 21A from Goldstone Valley. **The new 18 would be reduced by 50% to run just half hourly during the daytime instead of every 15 minutes.** The 18 would no longer serve Brighton Station, Seven Dials, Dyke Road or Montpelier Road. Brighton & Hove Buses claims few people use the current service and it makes a loss. They admit buses can be busy in the afternoons between St James’s Street and Queens Park but say all the passengers go one way (up the hill) and buses towards the City Centre are lightly used all day, mainly because people walk down the hill.

Goldstone Valley would get an improved 30 minute service where it is currently hourly (although it was every 30 minutes before the pandemic and the proposal seen by Buswatch would remove buses from Woodland Avenue and King George VI Drive). An hourly evening service would also be restored to Goldstone Valley. While the Churchill Square to Goldstone Valley service will be funded through BSIP, it seems this funding is not available for the Queens Park end of the service which is currently run commercially, without a subsidy.

Buswatch has objected to the cuts to the Queens Park service and has submitted alternative timetables which retain similar frequencies, with options to retain the links to Brighton Station and King George VI Drive in Goldstone Valley. We will continue to press for a better solution. If you are concerned about these changes please contact Brighton & Hove Buses at info@buses.co.uk Brighton & Hove City Council at transport.projects@brighton-hove.gov.uk or your local Councillor.

Valley Gardens works begin in the spring

The delayed third stage of the Valley Gardens scheme covering the Old Steine and the aquarium roundabout in front of the Palace Pier, is due to start this spring. This will remove all traffic except cycles from the west side of Old Steine, in front of the Royal Pavilion. Buswatch objected to buses being removed from the west side but our pleas failed to get enough support. As a result the three listed bus stops will no longer be used, replaced by just two stops for northbound buses, one on the corner by the old RBS Bank and one on the east side, which we believe will result in more congestion and a less attractive environment for bus users. The busy stop H on the corner of St James Street will also go with all buses towards North Street stopping on the south west side of Old Steine where buses towards Brighton Station currently stop. Expect more delays!

Christmas Day & Boxing Day in and around Brighton John Nicholas reports



It was announced at the October Buswatch meeting that services would operate on Christmas Day 2022, having been successfully introduced at other Go Ahead subsidiaries on the south coast. This consisted of routes 1/1A, 5B, 7 & 49. Timetables were advertised on line on four individual downloadable pages. Christmas morning dawned dull as I headed out with my Keycard and timetable printed out on one sheet of paper. There were a few souls waiting at City Centre bus stops that displayed accurate real time information with revolving message advising folk to check online for the special service operating.

My initial intention was to travel to the Marina from the Clock Tower on the first 7. When the real time sign failed to count down as expected I checked open data and found the bus hadn't left Hove garage. With the first parallel 1/A not departing for over 40 minutes I opted to catch a 49 in North Street bound for Moulsecoomb and was pleasantly surprised to see more than a dozen on board. Alighting at Lewes Road garage I walked up Bear Road to catch the half hourly service back from Whitehawk. Bus Apps don't have footpaths so I sought advice from a dog walker to access the estate just missing the expected No 1 bus. Rather than waiting at the terminus I walked down to Whitehawk bus garage passing the first bus from town setting down passengers. This returned and an older bus passed by on the next 1A.

After briefly returning to my hotel I later reached the Marina aboard half hourly route 7 sitting at the upstairs table. While waiting time at the Hospital I looked at the information screen realising it could have been used to personally thank users of Christmas Day services and also seek feedback. On my return more customers boarded en route and there was a queue waiting when I alighted at the Clock Tower.

One final outing was made to capture the 5B bus bound for Hollingbury which is trialling a new high definition destination display (fleet number 827); it was pleasing to see the following 49 bus to Moulsecoomb was full downstairs. Omens bode well for the future as the bus company reported in the media they were thrilled that 3,000 journeys had been made, reflecting my positive observations.



Boxing Day 2022 dawned bright providing excellent conditions to explore the South Downs National Park at its finest. Brighton and Hove usefully published a twenty one page downloadable document for their Boxing Day services.

An attractive hourly service to Birling Gap was provided on service 13. Clutching my Network Keycard and printed Boxing Day timetable cropped to fourteen pages I headed out for sustenance at Greggs before joining a family and several others queuing for the first departure, only to notice it was missing from the real time sign. My concerns were alleviated when the mother checked her App and said the bus was coming in five minutes to her expectant children. We picked up several passengers in North Street and opposite the Pier. It was beautiful day to comfortably appreciate the sights of the Cuckmere Valley while effortlessly scaling the heights of the Downs. Watching buses regularly passing it became apparent there was an integrated fifteen minute service to Seaford which could have been emphasised by both services appearing in the same timetable.

Time flew by and we were soon bouncing down the road to Birling Gap where more than twenty passengers alighted. Most trekked off to view Beachy Head, however I went to the coastline and had sufficient time to photograph surfers paddling out over the waves as the next Brighton bus was conveniently due in 25 minutes.

While waiting at the bus stop on the grass verge a National Trust chap came over and advised me people had told him they had seen thirteen buses today, he wondered whether they were 13 or 13Xs while turning to check the timetable. I replied I hadn't spotted the difference until he mentioned it, commenting the timetable panel only showed the Winter service. He gratefully potted off after being shown the hourly service in my printed timetable. The bus stop panel could easily and usefully be modified to show hourly Boxing Day services as well in future.

I browsed the Eastbourne Sightseeing service timetable that clearly stated the service finished on the 30th October. I've always thought Brighton and Hove have failed to exploit the potential of this part of the Downs especially as day tickets and passes are not valid on the Eastbourne Sightseeing service. A different 13 bus conveyed me punctually back to Brighton in time for an afternoon trip to Ditchling Beacon on the 79.

John Nicholas
Coventry

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next public meeting with Brighton & Hove City Council and bus company managers will be on **Wednesday 19 April 2023**, at 4.30pm in Brighton Town Hall. Numbers are restricted so please e mail Buswatch at the address below if you would like to attend or raise an issue. Further 2023 meetings will be on Wednesday 19 July and Wednesday 18 October.

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

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brightonbuswatch.org



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