

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



A branch of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – March 2018

Going electric (2)

Continuing the electric theme from last month, The Big Lemon ran Om Shanti, its first solar powered electric bus, all day without re-charging for the first time. It ran a timetabled trip on each of the six routes operated by The Big Lemon on Saturday 10 March. I joined the bus at Brighton Station just before 9am by which time it had already covered a trip on route 52 from Woodingdean. My first journey was to Knoll Estate, Hove, on route 56. At the terminus we were met by a reporter from ITV Meridian News. CEO Tom Druitt, Big Lemon bus driver Ryan and myself were interviewed and the result can be viewed on the Brighton Area Buswatch Facebook page. We then switched routes and set off on route 16 to Portslade via Hangleton and Sainsbury's where the photo is taken. Later the bus covered route 66, then route 56 back to Brighton, Hollingbury and Patcham. In the afternoon we took the 57 to Ovingdean and East Saltdean, returning to Brighton station on route 47.



Passengers on board were interviewed during the event for a Big Lemon video to raise awareness and encourage people to sign up for the bond issue to raise money to buy three brand new electric buses. The Big Lemon needs to raise £405,000 over the next few weeks. The ambitious intention is to run all six Big Lemon bus services with electric vehicles by the end of 2018. Power for the electric buses comes from solar panels on the roof of the depot near Brighton Marina. By the time Om Shanti returned to the depot in late afternoon, there was still 35% of charge left. Battery life is improving rapidly and it is hoped that zero emission buses, recharged just once overnight through solar panels, could soon become a common sight on our streets. To invest in bonds please contact: anna@thebiglemon.com.

Valley Gardens update

Brighton Area Buswatch continues to raise concerns about the impending Valley Gardens road scheme which we fear will have a detrimental effect on bus services all over the city. There is a little good news which is that the start date on site has been put back to August. While August is a very busy month for visitors, many local residents will be on holiday so at least peak hour traffic levels should be lighter.

Our Committee Secretary, Peter Elvidge has studied the scheme in detail over many years. Peter's latest 'March 2018 Alternative' proposal represents the current position of Brighton Area Buswatch. It is available on

www.brightonbuswatch.org Our priorities are:

- 1) The need for signed bus lanes with effective enforcement.
- 2) A new east side bus lane enabling Lewes Road bound buses to avoid the York Place/St Peter's Place junction.
- 3) Improvements to the bus stops at St Peter's Church.
- 4) Adjustments to the Grand Parade/Church Street junction.

We recognise that with the scheme now out to tender, the likelihood of our ideas being implemented is slim. We have simply highlighted the likely problems and suggested a 'Do Minimum' alternative to address what we believe should be the priorities of the City Council to keep buses moving. Time will tell.

Brighton & Hove's clean air plans

Brighton & Hove Buses has published 'Brighton & Hove: The Clean Air City' which articulates the vision of the bus company to improve air quality. Brighton & Hove Managing Director Martin Harris says he hopes the report will help to inform discussions on where the city should go next to build on the progress made since the introduction of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in North Street and Western Road. Almost 90% of Brighton & Hove buses now meet or exceed the LEZ target which has resulted in a significant reduction in emissions. The company pledges to tackle congestion by speeding up its buses. This will be achieved through investing in buses with two doors, encouraging the use of pre-paid tickets, introducing a multi-operator ticket, funding policing and parking enforcement initiatives. A key target is to improve the traffic flows at the Clock Tower junction. The company expects to start running zero emission electric buses by 2020 with hydrogen fuel cell buses following by 2023, leading to a zero emission fleet no later than 2030. These are clearly very ambitious plans which should see Brighton & Hove Buses leading the way. The report is available at www.buses.co.uk

Transport Focus report

The latest annual survey from the Government's consumer watchdog is the result of interviews with 48,000 bus users in England, Wales and Scotland. The Go Ahead Group which owns Brighton & Hove Buses is a clear winner in terms of overall passenger satisfaction and our local bus company scores very highly in most categories. The only area where Brighton & Hove Buses didn't do so well was value for money. However, the company has pointed out that the average fare paid per journey, taking into account all types of ticket, is £1.40 which is 10p less than the single fare in London.

Bus Network Review - will anything happen?

We are currently awaiting the results of a review commissioned by Brighton & Hove City Council, which aims to identify where buses are being held up and what could be done to address delays at specific locations. This is an excellent initiative which Buswatch has contributed to, along with all local bus companies. New priority measures are vital to speed up bus journeys that have become slower due to increased traffic congestion and counter the negative effects of the Valley Gardens scheme.

Our worry is that this review lacks guaranteed funding to implement solutions, so it could remain a paper exercise. Without new bus priority measures, buses will become slower and less attractive so fewer people will use them. That could result in longer waits and higher fares. Congestion and emissions will get worse if people switch to cars.

Buswatch urges Brighton & Hove City Councillors to lobby for schemes to prioritise funding to protect and expand our excellent bus services.

Fiveways Wilf becomes the cat bus

First there was the doggy bus; now there is a feline companion. Brighton & Hove bus No 918 has been named Fiveways Wilf after a well-known local fluffy Persian cat who passed away last year. The bus features cartoon like pictures of various cats on its outside. Bus 918 is normally found on route 46 between Hollingbury and Southwick which passes Fiveways and was used by Wilf when visiting the vet in Hove with his owners.

Two cat spaces on the side have been left vacant, to be filled in July as part of a competition. The winning cats will be announced after a short paws, on 8 August, International Cat Day.



(photo courtesy of Brighton & Hove Buses)

Fiveways Wilf sits in the front window of the 46 passing Fiveways

Brighton Area Buswatch meeting

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be at 5pm on **Wednesday 18 April 2018** in Brighton Town Hall.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch.

We welcome your contributions and suggestions. The next issue is due mid-April 2018.

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