

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – May 2015

Local elections in Brighton & Hove – where next?

Following general and local elections on 7 May the Labour Party became the largest party on Brighton & Hove City Council. As there is no overall majority it will need to form a minority administration, as was the case with the previous Green led Council. We wish the new Council well and hope they will continue to support us and bus users in the city at this critical time.

Congratulations to Tom Druitt, founder and Managing Director of The Big Lemon bus company who is now a Councillor in Regency ward alongside his wife Alex Phillips. To avoid any possible conflict of interests, Tom has made it clear he will not be involved in transport issues.

One of the biggest transport issues facing the ruling Labour Party is the Valley Gardens project between St Peter's Church and the seafront, the main approach to Brighton for many motorists. With funding in place, the first stage of the scheme was approved by the previous administration with help from the Conservatives, but it was not supported by the Labour party. The new Labour Leader Warren Morgan told Latest TV he would undertake a thorough review of the project, including the proposal to reduce the general traffic lanes from two to one in each direction, which Brighton Area Buswatch does not support because of the impact on buses. He added that construction would have to be carefully planned to avoid up to five years of major disruption. This is potentially good news for bus users who have faced considerable delays due to road improvement schemes in recent years. Brighton Area Buswatch has been invited to contribute to project planning meetings and we hope this arrangement will continue under the new administration.

Bus use declines – B&H bus company blames roadworks

One of the impacts of disruption has been the announcement by Go Ahead group which owns Brighton & Hove Buses of a 1% decline in bus use over the past year. This follows a long period where local bus usage increased year on year by 4-5%. Managing Director Martin Harris told The Argus much of this fall was attributable to roadworks around the city which were having an adverse affect on reliability. Some roadworks were connected with improvements which will eventually benefit buses, such as Lewes Road, The Vogue gyratory and Edward Street.

There is a clear perception bus services have become less reliable over the past year or so, especially in the busy afternoon period. In many cases bus frequencies have increased or timetables have been revised to allow more time, but clearly this isn't enough and people are being put off travelling by bus. Listening and talking to passengers on buses and at bus stops, long waits and cancelled buses are a common complaint.

New Coaster buses launched for route 12



These new green and blue Coaster buses have become a familiar sight on routes 12/12A/12X between Brighton and Eastbourne. The buses have several new features including free Wi Fi, air conditioned upper decks and a table seat. They were formally launched on 25 April when events were held along the route in Brighton, Newhaven, Seaford and Eastbourne. Our photo shows the one of the buses in New Road Brighton, outside the Theatre Royal.

I was invited to attend and I was so impressed I stayed with the bus all day. It created a great deal of interest. Most people attending were also impressed and children enjoyed the cardboard buses, stickers and colouring sheets. The free ice creams from a vintage ice cream van were a big hit, especially in Eastbourne where the sun came out. Enthusiastic bus company staff were on hand to answer questions. It was a superb event and Brighton & Hove deserves huge credit for organising it. See the video on You Tube: https://youtube.com/watch?v=O4wpN1I_WBk

Look out for the Brighton & Hove Festival Fringe bus



The White Brighton Festival Fringe bus with quirky artwork inside and out has become a familiar sight over the past few weeks. Designed by Brighton Artist Jason McQuillen, (pictured left with Festival Fringe director Julian Caddy and Brighton & Hove MD Martin Harris) also known as 'iownthisart' the 'Get On and Go Somewhere' strap line celebrates the role of the bus in the City's creative and cultural life. The bus is used on regular services during the week but on Saturdays it becomes part of the Festival Fringe with free performances inside. For the last two Saturdays in May it will be in the Old Steine during the daytime.

PlusBus scheme extended

Good news – Brighton PlusBus tickets bought at rail stations for train and bus travel can now be used on all local buses, not just Brighton & Hove buses. Day tickets cost £3.50 on top of the price of a train ticket for unlimited travel in the most of the City Saver area, but not north of the A27 to Devils Dyke or Ditchling Beacon, or beyond Falmer. Commuters with Southern Key Card season tickets will have to wait until July when all buses should have card readers.

Compass Bus would like your views

In April Compass Bus took over former Brighton & Hove routes 37 & 38 and merged them into one service, numbered 37 between Meadowview, Lewes Road, Brighton Station, North Street, Kemp Town, County Hospital and Bristol Estate. Don't forget you can now use Key Cards and M tickets on the new 37 and existing 37B. The company would like to know what you think of the new service. You can contact Compass at office@compass-travel.co.uk or by calling 01903 690025.

How can we improve our flagging bus service?

We are compiling a list of improvements we would like to see implemented to revive our bus service. Please let us have your views and suggestions too. The list will be included in next month's Buswatch News and we will discuss the issues with bus companies and Councils.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 15 July 2015** at 5.15pm in Brighton Town Hall (note earlier start time). 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 copies of this newsletter are available from Hove town hall reception and a pdf version is available on request. The next issue is due in mid June 2015.

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