

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – November 2015

New bus services will need financial support from the Universities

Our two universities are expanding rapidly, so thousands more students and staff need to get around Brighton & Hove. At present the range of bus routes available to them is very limited, so many travel by car which increases congestion. There is only one bus a day from Falmer to Woodingdean or Rottingdean just a couple of miles away. The 84 service to Woodingdean was saved from withdrawal recently due to low usage but the one evening bus leaves Falmer at 6pm which is too late for most people. Coldean, Hollingbury and Patcham have a very limited service on the 5B. People don't use buses in our area unless they are run regularly. This situation encourages more and more students to live along the Lewes Road corridor where there are excellent bus links but that has impacts for housing and other local services. Bus companies will not take the commercial risk of starting new services without kick start funding and the City Council is struggling to maintain finance for the bus services it already subsidises.

Alternative sources of funding therefore need to be investigated. If the cash strapped NHS can support the 40X to link the Royal Sussex County Hospital and the Princess Royal Hospital, surely our Universities can contribute, as they do in several other cities. A good example is Oxford Brookes University which subsidises an excellent network of bus services in around the city of Oxford. Our photo shows one of the modern buses used on special services which are available to all passengers, supplementing the existing Oxford city bus network.



New deal with East Sussex Credit Union

Members of the East Sussex Credit Union (ESCU) can now apply for a monthly payment plan to purchase a Brighton & Hove Bus company annual ticket on the Key Card. It will enable members to spread the annual ticket price of £540 over twelve monthly payments of £45. The normal rate for a monthly ticket paid for by direct debit is £67. Discounted deals on days out and mini breaks in the UK offered by Brighton & Hove Coaches will also be available to ESCU members.

Changing directions

I have recently moved from the Western Road area to Kemp Town so my bus using habits have changed. It has been an interesting opportunity to experience how other people must feel when they move to a different area or are new in town. I soon realised that working out what bus to catch can be either a simple or a very complicated process depending on where you live. Western Road was so easy. The No 6 provides a frequent all day service from Brighton Station, the bus stops in North Street are sensibly divided between buses towards Brighton Station or Western Road and any bus from Churchill square will do except that the 21A turns off at Waitrose.

Now I am faced with a baffling array of bus services. I've found it very hard to explain to friends and visitors what bus to get to reach me and where to wait for it. The nearest bus stop to my home is now in Marine Parade. It is served by Coaster routes 12, 12A, (but not 12X or 13X - which go past but don't stop), 14 (but not 14B or 14C) and 27 (but not 27C). So no services with a 'C' or an 'X' suffix letter stop – except that the 40X **does** stop, two daytime buses an hour within five minutes and operated by two different bus companies. The 12 & 12A serve Brighton Station in the mornings before 9am and after 7pm but otherwise you have to go to Churchill Square, remembering that the 12s, 12As and 14s **don't** pick up at Churchill Square (the busiest bus stops in Brighton) before 9am or after 7pm. However night services N12 and N14 **do** stop at Churchill Square but **not** at Brighton Station (I hope you are keeping up!). There is no direct service from the Hove end of Western Road, one of our prime shopping areas, so a change of buses is required at Churchill Square (but not after 7pm!) or North Street. This means paying £4 for two single Centrefare tickets. A Day Saver costs more - £4.20 with a Key card or £4.70 bought on bus.

The situation at Brighton station can be hugely confusing. The 27 towards Saltdean stops right outside in the station forecourt at stop A which is perfect. But service 14 buses from Hangleton to Peacehaven which follow the 27 don't stop there, they carry on to Stop D in Queens Road outside the Ibis Hotel which is quite a way beyond the station. The 12s & 12As also leave from stop D, but only in the early mornings and evenings which means you have to choose carefully which stop to go to as you leave the station. This is not helped by the temporary absence of real time departure signs inside the station. I've yet to experience the frustration of walking down to catch a 12 only to see it suddenly disappear down Queens Road, then walking back to wait for a 27 and missing that too. Even with a good knowledge of the timetables I know I will struggle with this arrangement. Many of these customs have been in place for years and regular bus passengers understand them, but they confusing to me as a transport professional so they must be totally bewildering to new or infrequent bus users.

Some issues could easily be addressed. Clearly the 14 towards Peacehaven should stop in the station forecourt at stop A with route 27. Brighton & Hove Buses told me this isn't feasible because two buses could arrive together creating congestion. Yet there are only four buses an hour on route 27 compared with nine an hour on the 7 which uses the adjacent stop – and the 7s are famous for arriving in twos! Then buses could stop again in Queens Road at stop D. That would provide a common stop for all Coast Road bound buses. I have also suggested in the past that some 14s could go to Palmeira Square as they did in the past, to serve Western Road shops.

Perhaps more consideration needs to be given to simplifying the bus network to make it more comprehensible. Most UK city bus networks have achieved this more than Brighton and Hove, often with impressive results. Go to Victoria Station in London and outside you will see the same network of bus services at any time, day or night, using the same stops with no confusing 'A' or 'B' variations.

Norman Baker is new Chair of Bus Users

We welcome Rt Hon Norman Baker, former MP for Lewes and Under Secretary of State for Transport in the Coalition Government as the new chair of Bus Users, our national group. He will undoubtedly be a formidable campaigner on behalf of bus users.

Evening bus service reduced on route 21

The evening bus service on route 21 between Goldstone Valley and Brighton Marina will be less frequent from 30 November. This is a result of the withdrawal of Council funding agreed earlier this year. Brighton & Hove Buses agreed to maintain the current level of service with a few changes until around 9pm commercially. After that time the service is reduced to run once an hour between Churchill Square, Queens Park and Brighton Marina. The last bus to Goldstone Valley will leave Churchill Square at 8.10pm with a late night journey at 10.59pm. An hourly service will run from Churchill Square to Brighton Marina (reduced from half hourly) but buses will no longer serve the top of Whitehawk. Instead they will run direct from Manor Hill to Whitehawk Bus Garage and Brighton Marina as they already do on Sunday evenings. Full details of the new times are included in Bus Times or at www.buses.co.uk

Bus service suggestions

Brighton Area Buswatch has submitted a number of ideas for improvements to bus services in spring 2016 to Brighton & Hove Buses. This time we have asked the bus company to concentrate on improving reliability of services rather than introducing new services or increasing the frequency of others. One exception is to provide a new service to Brighton Marina via the seafront serving new housing developments at the Marina, providing a scenic link and avoiding delays passing the Royal Sussex County Hospital where major building work starts in January. If you wish to send you own suggestions please write to info@buses.co.uk before the end of November.

New phone number

Please note that the phone number for Brighton Area Buswatch has changed to 01273 620215. Unfortunately it was not possible to re-direct calls from the old number which has been disconnected.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 20 January 2016** at 5.15pm in Brighton Town Hall. 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 A5 copies of this newsletter are available from Hove town hall reception and a pdf or large print versions are available on request. The next issue is due in mid December 2015.

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