

Brighton Area Buswatch

A branch of Bus Users (formerly Bus Users UK)
representing local bus users

Buswatch News – November 2019

Bus Network Review published

Brighton & Hove City Council has finally published its Bus Network Review which is dated December 2018. Quite why this review has been kept secret for the past year is a mystery as its contents are not particularly controversial. The report outlines current bus service provision and includes a number of recommendations for minor improvements at junctions to improve bus journey times. The work was carried out by consultants on behalf of the City Council and included consultation with bus companies and Brighton Area Buswatch.

A number of congestion hot spots are identified with recommendations for improvements, which may be simple changes to signal timings and phasings, reviewing lane markings and parking restrictions. The top ten sites for improvements are identified as:

- Blatchington Road/ Sackville Road/Portland Road
- Brighton Station (partly implemented already by moving taxi rank)
- North Street
- Churchill Square to Clock Tower*
- Western Road by Waitrose
- Coldean Lane/Ditchling Road
- Greenways roundabout to Rottingdean
- Downs Hotel, Woodingdean
- Lewes Road, northbound south of the Vogue gyratory*
- Rottingdean White Horse junction

* Feasibility studies have been brought forward to look at the Clock Tower junction and Lower Lewes Road in the current financial year.

The report raises concerns about the numbers of buses using North Street. However, finding alternative routeings for buses is difficult. When North Street was temporarily closed in Autumn 2017 for resurfacing, services used the seafront and West Street. Brighton & Hove Buses told us bus use had fallen during that period.

Our main concern is that these are all fairly small schemes. While they are welcome, we believe there must be radical ideas to improve and expand our bus services with new bus lanes, red routes, more parking restrictions and park and ride schemes. The Council should also consider a workplace parking levy for large employers which has been very successful in Nottingham.

Take the 27 for a scenic ride across Brighton Saltdean – Rottingdean – Kemp Town – Palace Pier – Old Steine – Clock Tower – Brighton Station – Seven Dials – Dyke Road – Westdene - Withdean Park & Ride.

The 27 isn't one of Brighton & Hove's best known bus services but it is certainly one of the most interesting rides, with fine views from the top deck. I decided to take a mid-afternoon journey all the way from Saltdean to Westdene recently. The Saltdean terminus at Coombe Vale is situated in a residential area on the edge of the downs and is a good point to begin a country walk. We are soon passing through suburban Saltdean, an area with lots of bungalows. Car ownership is clearly high, but there is still plenty of custom for the 27. At Lustrells Vale the nearby primary school has just finished, and we pick up several passengers. Then we negotiate the short but steep hill up to Longridge Avenue, passing the art deco style Grand Ocean hotel, recently converted into luxury flats.

Turning right on to the main A259 we join other coast road services towards Brighton, with another art deco building in the form of the partly restored Saltdean Lido on the right and the sea to our left, beneath the cliffs. Spectacular sea views continue as we approach historic Rottingdean, stopping outside the White Horse a well-known landmark. We pick up several passengers here and set off along Marine Drive a busy road with open views out to sea, passing the home of Blind Veterans UK (formerly St Dunstan's) and Roedean school. Our next stop is at Marine Gate where passengers alight for the short walk down to Marina. With the sea still on our left we enter the Kemp Town district on Marine Parade passing Sussex Square and rows of splendid regency architecture on the right.

As we approach central Brighton, we pass the beach zip wire, a relatively new attraction which replaced the Ferris wheel after the i360 opened. Dusk is now falling and there are glimpses of what could have been a spectacular winter sunset over the sea, but as so often dark clouds were in the way! Brighton Palace Pier is brightly lit though, looking very inviting as we pull into the Sea Life Centre bus stop. During the summer months the area in front of the Pier is always buzzing. Turning at the roundabout which the Council wants to replace with traffic lights (creating much controversy amongst local residents) we pass the Old Steine Gardens and are now in the heart of the city centre.

North Street is surprisingly clear so we get a good run to the bus stop and on to the Clock Tower traffic lights. Checking the timetable, I see our bus is now running five minutes late, for no obvious reason. It has been busy though, calling at most stops and by the time we reach Brighton Station the bus is well loaded. As we climb up Terminus Road to Seven Dials there are great views over the station and beyond, with the General Hospital standing out in the distance at the top of Elm Grove. Seven Dials is an attractive local shopping area with an assortment of shops cafes and estate agents. Even more passengers board here and the 27 is almost full as we head up Dyke Road with BHASVIC on the left and the Booth Museum on our right.

Then we hit the only significant congestion of the trip at the Upper Drive traffic lights. There had been roadworks here the previous week creating a diversion and although

they have now finished it still took three attempts to get through the lights. As we waited, I couldn't help noticing the Dyke Tavern on the right. This is an imposing Victorian pub which closed for a while and recently reopened following a campaign by local residents, so it was good to see several people inside.

Dyke Road is one of the most exclusive areas in the city with large houses lining both sides. Don't expect get much of a view inside though, even from the top deck most homes are well protected from onlookers, behind high walls and shutters. Dyke Road becomes Dyke Road Avenue past Woodruff Avenue where an original wooden tram shelter is still in use by bus passengers. Even in this affluent area passengers are dropped off at most stops. In other towns a similar district would be lucky to have an hourly service yet the 27 runs every 15 minutes. There is a 20/30 minute evening and Sunday frequency too, which is undoubtedly a key to its success.

We turn off Dyke Road Avenue into Valley Drive and Glen Rise, just avoiding a slow moving queue of traffic leading to the A27. This queue is often much longer delaying buses and extra time is allowed in the timetable at peak periods. Westdene is more suburban in nature with a mixture of small and large properties. It is on high ground though and there are more spectacular views towards Brighton and the sea. At this point I overheard a couple of passengers wondering how much longer it would take to reach the Park & Ride site, bemoaning the fact that there is no longer an express service. Our bus then descended the narrow estate roads full of parked vehicles to reach its terminus, Withdean Park & Ride. By then the 27 was eight minutes late and the real time information screen was already showing 'due' so the driver would get no recovery time before returning to Saltdean.

The entire journey took just over an hour and our driver was excellent. I was sitting at the front upstairs and I could see him carefully pulling into stops, skilfully negotiating narrow roads lined with parked vehicles and patiently waiting for a delivery van to move in Saltdean. So next time you see a 27 think about what you can see from the top deck and take a ride!

Taxis are now at the back of Brighton Station

On 11th November the main taxi rank at Brighton Station moved to the rear of the station accessed from Stroudley Road. Initial indications are that this move has benefitted buses by reducing congestion around the front of the station.

Congratulations to Victoria Garcia, MBE.

Earlier this month Brighton & Hove Bus Company's superb Accessibility and Communities Manager Victoria Garcia received her MBE from Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge at an investiture in Buckingham Palace. This is in recognition of her work to make public transport more convenient and accessible to disabled users. Victoria is well known to many bus users and community groups for insisting the highest standards are applied to make travel easier for everyone. Victoria has even persuaded bus manufacturers modify vehicle designs. Her work has been recognised by the Department for Transport which has seconded Victoria to advise them on accessibility issues. Well done!

Brighton Area Buswatch meeting

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 22 January 2020** in Brighton Town Hall, Committee Room 2 (please note that this is not our usual meeting room). Meetings are open to all, but space is limited so please contact Buswatch at the address below if you wish to join us.

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-December 2019.

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brightonbuswatch.org



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

The Bus Network Review is available here:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/parking-and-travel/travel-transport-and-road-safety/bus-network-review>