

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



A branch of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – September 2017

Major disruption for the next two months: North Street closure and Lewes Road/Elm Grove works

North Street will be closed to all traffic in both directions for two months from Monday 18th September. This is to allow Southern Water to undertake works and improve the road surface. The street carries more buses than other road in Brighton with over 100 buses an hour in each direction during the day. Buses will all be diverted via West Street and the seafront.

Work to replace the traffic lights and provide improved safety measures for cyclists at the Elm Grove/Lewes Road/Union Road junctions began at the end of August. So far there has been very little disruption but from late September temporary traffic lights will be in use and the number of traffic lanes will be reduced.

The City Council has been planning these works for months. It was a really poor decision to implement the Lewes Road scheme now, coinciding directly with school and University terms and the North Street closure. Lewes Road is noticeably quieter during the summer months. That was an ideal time to carry out the works with minimal delays. Lessons from the Vogue gyratory works three years ago have clearly not been learnt despite assurances given at the time that two sets of major roadworks on main bus routes should not happen at the same time.

There is likely to be extensive disruption over a wide area with long and unpredictable waits for buses for some passengers. The Council told us these works have to be carried out now, before the Valley Gardens scheme, due to start next spring and the Brighton University 'Momentum' development in Lewes Road. This could start next January if planning consent is granted.

The Big Lemon celebrates ten years

The first Big Lemon bus service between Brighton Station and the Universities began on 1 September 2007. Many predicted it wouldn't last and that running buses on used cooking oil was just a gimmick. In fact, the company has gone from strength to strength with bus services and coach hire. It has just won a Government grant for £500,000 towards the cost of three electric buses. The company already has one electric bus and a second has recently arrived which should be in service shortly. Congratulations to founder and CEO Tom Druiitt and to all involved.

Brighton – Horsham Sunday service saved?

Sussex Coaches has applied to run the Sunday service on route 17 between Brighton & Horsham via Patcham, Henfield and Partridge Green. All being well the service will begin on Sunday 17th September but the company is awaiting formal approval from the Traffic Commissioner **so we cannot confirm this start date**. The plan is that times will change with slightly fewer journeys overall but there will be a regular service over the whole route. Stagecoach Megarider tickets will not be accepted (Compass offered half price travel with these tickets). While this is disappointing Sussex Coaches clearly needs to maximise its fares revenue as it will not be receiving a subsidy for running this service. Please try to support this service if you can.

Brighton Area Buswatch wrote to several local bus companies after Compass Travel announced its intention to withdraw the Sunday service. Buswatch also asked Stagecoach South (which runs the Monday to Saturday service) to run the service seven days a week service as a trial, but they made it clear they weren't interested. Sussex Coaches (which is not connected to Sussex Bus which sold out last year) already runs the successful N8 weekend night bus from Brighton to Horsham and local services in the Horsham area.

For the latest information and timetable details please contact Sussex Coaches on 01403 741976 <http://www.sussex-coaches.co.uk> They are extremely helpful!

Supported bus services – no news on new contracts

New four-year contracts to operate bus services supported by Brighton & Hove City Council were due to be awarded in mid-July, for services to commence on 17 September. Bus routes involved are the 16/66, 37(evening & Sunday), 47, 52, 56 & 57 plus various school services and Breeze Up to the Downs routes 77, 78 & 79.

With just a few days to go there has been no confirmation that new contracts have been awarded. The Council told us services will continue running to current times for the time being and there should be an announcement within the next few days. While this provides some assurance, passengers face uncertainty over timetable changes and whether there will be any cutbacks. The latest edition of Bus Times, dated 17 September, is only able to show existing times with a warning they could change.

Valley Gardens scheme

Our Committee Secretary has been involved in meetings with Brighton & Hove City Council. We are submitting further ideas to improve conditions for buses and for bus passengers in advance of the scheme being submitted for final approval in November. Buswatch does not support this scheme which will reduce the capacity of the A23/A270 corridor between St Peter's Church and Edward Street/Royal Pavilion traffic lights. Although bus lanes are retained the proposed layouts for general traffic are likely to result in more congestion around the city centre which will lead to longer journey times for bus users. That will make buses less attractive so fewer people will use them. This scenario is already happening in London following similar schemes.

A grand view of the South Downs - hold on to your hat!



As summer comes to an end and schools return here is a reminder of one of the better days, taken from the top of the excellent 124 tourist trail service between Eastbourne and Lewes. As you can see the views are outstanding with Firle Beacon ahead. The service was operated by Seaford & District at weekends using a selection of heritage buses including this open top AEC Regent V, built in 1957 for Devon General. The service has now ceased for the winter but the bus conductor told me it has been a success and he expected it to return next year. Extra buses ran on August Bank Holiday Monday raising over £2,700 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Timetable changes and Bus Times anniversary

Autumn/Winter timetables begin on 17th September. Apart from the changes to the Sunday service on route 17 to Horsham noted above, there will be revised times on many routes and more frequent buses on routes 7, 23, 25 & 25X. The extra buses on route 23 (Brighton Marina – County Hospital - Queens Park – Lewes Road – Universities) are particularly welcome. They are the result of campaigns by Brighton Area Buswatch and local community groups in the Queens Park and Hanover areas. The Palace Pier to Devil's Dyke service 77 is reverts to running at weekends only, every 75 minutes.

Full details are included on www.buses.co.uk and in Bus Times which has been published twice a year for the past 30 years. Congratulations are due to Brighton & Hove Bus Company Marketing Manager Mike Cheesman, who has edited every edition of the publication during his 43-year career with the company. The front cover of the latest edition is an updated drawing of the first cover in 1987. We tend to take this excellent publication for granted but in many areas of the country there are no printed bus timetables or maps. Just one request from us – please reinstate the bus fares chart which has been missing from the last few issues.

Dogs are welcome!

A very unusual Press Release from Brighton & Hove buses emphasises that dogs are welcome to travel by bus. One Bendy bus on route 25 has been given new vinyls on the outside showing different breeds of dog – illustrated by local artist Mike Dicks – sitting in the window seat. A couple of doggy outlines have been left blank for customers to send in pictures of their pet pooches as part of a competition to win an illustration of their dog to fill the spaces.

Buswatch News

Following a summer break, Buswatch News will now be monthly again, so the next issue will be in Mid-October. I am grateful to those who have responded to the request to get involved with Buswatch.

Brighton Area Buswatch meeting

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 11 October 2017 at 5pm** in Brighton Town Hall, Bartholomew Square. Note earlier start time, 15 minutes earlier.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. We welcome your contributions and suggestions.

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