

# Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

## Buswatch News - October 2014

### Pool Valley coach station welcomes you to Brighton!



Our photo shows the current facilities Pool Valley Coach Station in the heart of Brighton. Part of it is fenced off, the shelters are dirty and nowhere near where the coaches load and unload, there are no staff, no toilets and nowhere to obtain information or buy tickets or even to find your way out! It presents an awful impression to visitors. Millions of pounds are about to be spent on nearby Valley Gardens; hopefully some money can be found to do something about this eyesore too.

Pool Valley was once a thriving bus station. For many years it was a hub for out of town services with Southdown buses serving destinations all over Sussex. The last regular bus service, Coastliner 700 moved out a couple of years ago. Only National Express coaches continue to use Pool Valley. Who would choose to go there now anyway?

### More talking buses

Brighton & Hove Buses is fitting audible 'next stop' announcements to all its buses. This will help those with visual impairments and make it much easier for visitors and people making unfamiliar journeys to work out where they are. Until now they have only been available on the latest vehicles but retrofitting the equipment to other buses is now under way and by next spring all buses will have next stop announcements.

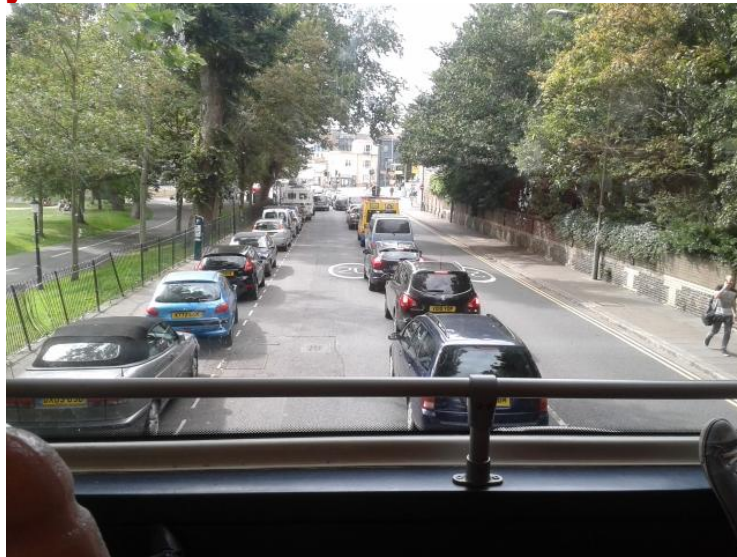
## Bus use at record levels

Bus use in our area continues to grow. According to figures recently issued the Department for Transport 45.8 million journeys were made within the Brighton & Hove City Council area in 2013/14. This compares with just 10 million journeys in Portsmouth which is similar in size and 30 million journeys in Bristol, a far larger city. Bus use per head is now over three times the national average in Brighton & Hove, higher than anywhere else in England outside London.

Perhaps more surprising is that bus use in East Sussex is also rising, having increased by almost 20% over the past five years. Over one million more journeys were made in 2013/14 than the previous year. While no breakdown is available by area much of the increase is likely to have been along the coast on Brighton – Eastbourne – Hastings services. It raises questions as to why East Sussex County Council plans to cut rural services where passenger numbers may be increasing.

While this is good news for our area, more bus users tends to mean more crowded buses. Several bus services are now very busy for much of the day. Brighton Area Buswatch monitors the situation and regularly submits suggestions for improvements to the bus companies. In recent years many of our ideas have been implemented or taken into account. If you have any suggestions concerns or please let us know or write direct to the bus operator.

## Why your bus may be late.



This is Union Road which borders the north side of The Level, where buses on routes 21, 22, 24, 37B, 38, 48 & 49 are being increasingly delayed. The temporary closure of Upper Lewes Road has led to even more general traffic using this road. At busy times westbound queues can stretch back from the Open Market junction to Elm Grove and buses are taking up to ten minutes to get through. The photo is taken from a bus which cannot squeeze past the line of cars to turn left.

There is a simple short term solution. Suspending some parking bays on the south side would allow two westbound lanes, so buses could turn left with the traffic light filter instead of having to queue with traffic turning right. This could be implemented very quickly as a trial and we believe it would make a huge difference. The City Council says it is not a safety issue so it is not a priority. Mike Best, Commercial Director at Brighton & Hove Buses disagrees: “Ten minute delays to buses accumulate through the day making it impossible for buses to keep to time, so passengers face longer waits and full buses. On bad days some journeys have to be cancelled or turned short of their destination to get back on time which is frustrating for passengers” he told us. Keeping buses moving should be a high priority and we urge the City Council to act now.

## Random streets

How does public transport in Brighton compare with cities around the world? This blog by well-travelled transport enthusiast Malc McDonald reviews bus and tram services in a variety of cities including Brighton & Hove. <http://randomstreets.blogspot.com/2014/09/brighton-uk.html>.

## Lewes 'Love Your Bus' rally

Lewes 'Stop the Cuts' campaign is organising a 'Love Your Bus' rally to protest against the cuts to supported bus services in East Sussex. It will take place in the pedestrianised part of Lewes shopping precinct on Saturday 8 November from 11am. The rally will start with speeches and will be followed by a march through the town to the County Council offices.

## Next Buswatch meeting on 22 October

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on Wednesday 22 October at 5.30pm in Hove Town Hall. This is your chance to ask questions and find out what is going on. 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 November 2014.

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