

Brighton Area Buswatch

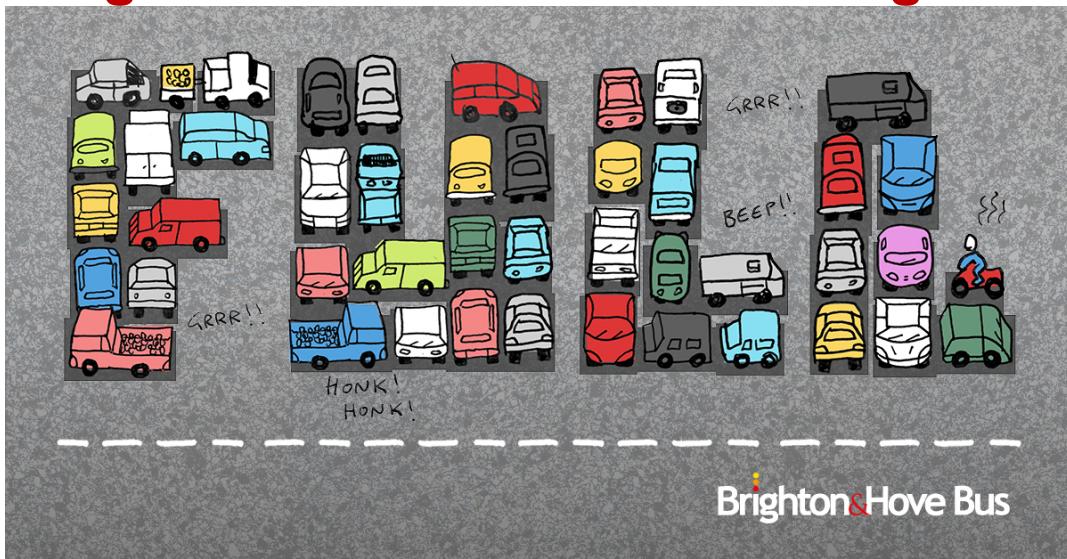
Representing local bus users



A branch of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – July/August 2018

Our greener buses can ease congestion



Brighton & Hove Buses has launched an advertising campaign aimed at drawing attention to the growing problem of congestion on our roads. The adverts show spaces filled by cars and vans that spell out the words Full, Jam and Space with a strapline 'Fill the bus, clear the road'. A full double decker bus can take 75 cars off the road, easing congestion and speeding up journeys for everyone. Congestion leads to high emissions which affects people's health.

Last month, Brighton & Hove City Council has approved plans to introduce an Ultra-Low Emission zone by 2024. This will only apply to buses, between Palmeira Square and Old Steine, so covering Western Road, Churchill Square and North Street. The Council noted that bus companies expected to achieve the Euro V standard for bus emissions in 2019, ahead of the initial 2020 deadline and had been very co-operative about the new Ultra Low Emission Zone. This requires buses to meet tougher Euro VI standards which represent a 95% improvement for NOx emissions compared with Euro V, as tested in real world driving conditions.

People often claim buses have dirty exhausts and blame them for high pollution levels. In fact, our local buses are now some of the cleanest, least polluting vehicles on the roads.

September timetable changes

Brighton & Hove Buses has announced details of changes to bus timetables from Sunday 16 September. The good news is that there are a few more buses on some routes. The 5 & 5A and Coaster 12 gain earlier buses on Sunday mornings. Also on Sundays, the 6 will be increased from every 20 minutes to every 15 minutes during shopping hours. There are also more extra early morning journeys on Mondays to Fridays on route 28 between Malling, Lewes and Brighton.

Routes 22 & 48 will no longer run between the Churchill Square and Brighton Station, except in the morning peak. Brighton & Hove Buses says very few people travel on them to and from the station. Having seen plenty of almost empty buses in Queens Road, it is hard to argue with that. Many people find it quicker to get off at St Peters Church walk up Trafalgar Street. The 7, 18 & 27 provide very frequent alternative services and passengers on routes 22 & 48 can easily change in North Street. However, the 22 provides the only frequent all day service down Dyke Road serving Homelees House. The only alternatives are the 56 which runs every 75 minutes (in both directions) and the 18 which follows the existing 22 route before 0930 and after 1600 and all day Sundays.

Elsewhere, the 21 & 21A suffer further reductions in East Brighton. The last three evening 21A buses from Brighton Marina at 2005, 2030 and 2100 will no longer serve Wilson Avenue or Whitehawk; instead they will run as service 21 from Whitehawk bus garage direct to Manor Hill. This means the last bus from Brighton Marina to Wilson Avenue and Swanborough Drive will be 1935. In the opposite direction the 2020 service 21A from Churchill Square to Brighton Marina will also run as 21 omitting Whitehawk and Wilson Avenue. On Saturday mornings the first bus at 0600 from Whitehawk Bus Garage to Brighton Station will no longer run so the first bus will be over an hour later at 0714.

The 21 & 21A services have suffered cutbacks at every timetable change for the past three years. In 2015 the service ran every 15 minutes during daytime and every 30 minutes to Brighton Marina throughout the evening, with all buses serving the top of Whitehawk and Wilson Avenue. This part of the route is now hourly with no late evening service from September. These further changes will make the service very unattractive for people in Whitehawk, one of the most deprived areas of the city. Yes, they still have the 1 & 1A which are very frequent, but they are not so useful for those who need to reach Elm Grove, London Road or Brighton Marina.

Another disappointment is the Sunday service along the coast road to Eastbourne. This summer the 13X via Beachy Head ran every 30 minutes and with excellent weather buses have been very busy. On at least one Sunday in July Brighton & Hove put an apology on twitter and Facebook because so many buses on the 12, 12A & 13X were running full. Winter buses can be busy too, especially in good weather and the Christmas shopping period, so it is disappointing to see that the winter timetable will be the same as last year with the 13X reduced to just three return journeys on Sundays. The last 13X journey runs after dark in the winter months, so it is unlikely to be much use to visitors returning from Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. There should be at least an hourly 13X throughout the year on Sundays, or a better frequency on the 12 & 12A.

Short hop fares

Buswatch News has often highlighted anomalies with 'short hop' fares which can cover just one stop (Brighton Marina to Lidl on routes 7 & 23) or over a dozen stops. They generally don't exist within the Centrefare area, but website fare charts show there is a £2 fare between Brighton Station, Clock Tower/Churchill Square and Old Steine on all services, and on routes 12, 12A, 14, & 27 there is a £2 fare between North Street and Marine Parade/Bedford Street.

These anomalies date back to the introduction of the £1 flat fare in 2001 when people complained about having to pay £2 for a short there and back trip to their local shops and when Stagecoach ran the 712 between Brighton & Eastbourne with cheaper local fares than Brighton & Hove buses on the same route.

Buswatch and the Brighton & Hove Older People's Council have been pressing for a cheaper fare from Brighton Marina on routes 7 & 23 to the Royal Sussex County Hospital which is just five stops and costs £2.60, the same as the fare all the way to Hove or Falmer. A £2 fare would be particularly helpful to those with early out-patient appointments who cannot use their Concessionary passes before 0900 (or 0930 if they live outside the city), so they could take advantage of four hours free parking at Brighton Marina. It would also eliminate one of the oddest fare anomalies on Brighton & Hove network.

Contactless progress

Compass Travel has introduced Contactless card payments on all its buses. As on Stagecoach buses, passengers buy a ticket from the driver for the normal cash price and pay with their bank card.

At the last Buswatch meeting Brighton & Hove Managing Director Martin Harris informed us that from next January, Brighton & Hove plans to introduce Contactless Pay As You Go (PAYG). Unlike the PAYG system in London, users will be required to touch in when they get on AND touch out when they get off the bus to get the best fare. Otherwise they will be charged the maximum single fare for the route, which could be as high as £4.60 on a long distance service to Eastbourne or Tunbridge Wells. Fortunately, there will be a daily cap so people who make several journeys should never pay more than the daily Saver fare. Only one bus company in the UK uses PAYG with touch in and touch out (Trent Barton in the East Midlands). That company runs mostly inter-town routes so it will be interesting to see whether the system will work on our busy city services where so many passengers travel just a few stops.

It remains to be seen whether Contactless payments will work on a zonal basis (Centrefare, City Saver area or Network Saver area) or whether short hop fares will be available. At present, short hop fares are only available to passengers paying cash who specifically ask for a short hop fare and tell the driver where they are going. If short hops are available in the same areas as now, people will find it hard to understand why some relatively short trips are charged at the higher rate (as highlighted in the previous item). Hopefully B&H will simplify its regime for short distance fares before PAYG is introduced.

Valley Gardens scheme update

Brighton & Hove City Council has appointed a contractor to implement Phases 1 & 2 between St Peter's Place and Church Street/Edward Street. Work could begin on site in early September and is expected to last up to 17 months, which is an improvement on the previous prediction of two years. The Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee has approved initial plans for Phase three (Old Steine to the seafront). The project team will now review three options and recommend one preferred option to the ETS Committee on 9 October. A public consultation will then take place which will include an exhibition of the proposals before final approval is sought from the Council.

Brighton & Hove Bus services are currently running more reliably than for many years. This is reflected in fewer complaints to us or comments on social media than over previous summers. It will be a huge challenge for this reliability to be maintained during the Valley Gardens construction period and beyond.

Brighton Area Buswatch meeting

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be at 5pm on **Wednesday 17 October 2018** in Brighton Town Hall. 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. This issue covers July and August so the next issue is due mid-September 2018.

E mail: brightonbuswatch@gmail.com. Phone: 01273 620215

 Find us on
Facebook

brightonbuswatch.org

 Bus Users
Working for passengers

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