

# Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



A branch of Bus Users UK

## Buswatch News – January 2017

### More 12X buses between Brighton and Eastbourne.

From April Brighton & Hove's limited stop 12X service will run every 20 minutes during the daytime instead of every 30 minutes. This will help to provide more capacity along the busy Coaster route to Eastbourne. The 12 & 12A will continue to provide a 10 minute all stops service between Brighton and Seaford. There are no changes to the Sunday service but the 13X to Birling Gap and Beachy Head will run hourly on Sundays as last summer. Brighton Area Buswatch worked closely with Brighton & Hove Buses to plan the new Coaster timetable. We hope the outcome will lead to a more reliable service this summer with a better chance of being able to get on the first bus.

The i7 and 7X services will not be re-introduced this summer but there will be an improved service on the 77 which links Brighton Pier and the i360 with Brighton Station and Devil's Dyke. The 50U to the Universities will be extended to serve Park Village and Northfield Crescent to replace the 23 which will no longer serve those stops. Exciting news is that two electric buses will be trialled on the 50/50U soon, one single decker and one red double decker on loan from London. These changes, together with those for route 21 serving Queens Park which we outlined last month, have been confirmed for introduction with summer timetables on 23 April.

### Possible bus service cuts ahead?

Brighton & Hove City Council is proposing to reduce the amount available for supported bus services. This could affect services on routes 16/66, 37(evenings), 37B, 47, 52, 56 and 57 (Sundays). The City Council also subsidises school services 72, 74, 75, 76, 76A, 91, 95, 95A, and makes a contribution to Breeze Up to the Downs routes 77, 78 & 79. At the Brighton Area Buswatch meeting on 18 January, Councillor Gill Mitchell explained that the Council has to find £51million for budget savings over the next three years and £190,000 is likely to be removed from the £1.2million transport budget. A final decision will be made at the Budget Committee meeting on 23 February. Following that, tenders would be sought for new bus route contracts to begin in September when any changes to services would be implemented.

Brighton Area Buswatch will work with the Council and with bus operators to minimise the impact of any bus cuts. We believe some savings may be possible by adjusting bus routes or by running some services commercially without subsidy. Supported services now accept Key Cards and M tickets which wasn't the case when the current contracts were introduced in 2012 and that has undoubtedly led to an increase in usage. The 37 has already been taken on commercially by Compass Travel although it needs a subsidy for its evening service. If you are concerned about potential cutbacks we recommend you contact your local ward Councillor.

## Do you use buses in Central London?

If you travel to London regularly you will be familiar with the 73 bus from Victoria Station. It is the main bus link to Oxford Street, Tottenham Court Road, Euston and King's Cross. Transport for London (TfL) is undertaking a major Central London bus service review. It proposes to replace route 73 between Oxford Circus and Victoria with another route (390) running less frequently. With worsening traffic congestion usage of many London bus routes has been falling. Savings are required to help TfL meet its target to remove the bus service subsidy entirely by 2020, while supporting the London Mayor's fares freeze. If implemented in full the number of buses in Oxford Street would be reduced by around 40% with full pedestrianisation the eventual aim.

TfL also proposes to withdraw route C2 (Victoria – Parliament Hill Fields) between Victoria and Oxford Circus so it would no longer be possible to go from Victoria station to Berkeley Square and Regent Street without using two buses. These proposals mean the overall number of buses leaving Victoria Station for Oxford Circus between 8am and 9am would be reduced from 26 buses an hour (every 2-3 minutes) to just 10 buses (every 6 minutes), a reduction of almost two thirds. Every six minutes might look reasonable but in London traffic conditions buses are frequently delayed and turned short of their destination, so actual waiting times could be longer. There is a public consultation at <http://consultations.tfl.gov.uk> until 29 January. Having observed 73s one morning recently through the busiest period, it is clear the reduced frequency will not cope, so I have responded on that basis. I recommend you respond too if you are concerned. Your comments are of value even if you only use London buses occasionally.



A 73 bus leaves Victoria at 9am a few days ago, passing by the Grosvenor Gardens bus stop because it is full.

## Why is London relevant to us?

You might be asking what all this has do to with us here in Brighton and Hove. The London bus cuts are worrying because similar challenges apply in our area – increased congestion is already apparent and if buses become slower fewer people will use them. We do not have a Mayor with powers to freeze fares; our bus fares are likely go up because slower services require more resources to run them. That will deter some people from travelling by bus. So a downward spiral will be established, which will be hard to halt. This is why we need firm action from Brighton & Hove City Council to improve conditions for buses throughout the city.

The Lewes Road and A259 Coast Road schemes have been great but there are no new bus priority schemes in the pipeline. The drop in bus use in London has been greatest in areas where there have been major road schemes creating disruption and narrowing road space. The City Council needs to learn these lessons for the Valley Gardens scheme, which as it stands, will do nothing to reduce bus journey times or improve bus service reliability. Brighton Area Buswatch will be suggesting changes to the Valley Gardens scheme aimed at reducing the negative impact on bus journey times. We want to see evidence of tangible improvements with effective bus priority measures to help buses through the most congested areas.

## Stagecoach excels on the 700

During the recent rail strikes Stagecoach ran lots of extra buses on Coastliner route 700 between Brighton and Worthing. The company made a superb job of it, drafting in drivers and double deckers from around the network and providing a really excellent service. Controllers were based at Old Steine and Churchill Square to make sure the buses ran regularly, so passengers were normally able to get on the first bus. Late evening and N700 night buses were also reported to be busy. In response to a question at our January meeting, Stagecoach Manager Rob Vince said they were considering introducing an express service on the 700 at some stage and were reviewing various options. Brighton & Hove also provided some extra buses on route 12 to provide extra capacity during rail strikes and its 12X buses were particularly busy all day.

## New carers card for Brighton & Hove Buses

Brighton & Hove Buses is now offering holders of Carers Cards discounted fares at student rates. The offer also applied so Compass Cards in West Sussex (Which is a card for carers, not the bus company of the same name). Carers Card holders need to go to One Stop Travel in North Street or the Brighton & Hove Offices in Conway Street, Hove to get a special photo ID that goes with their Key Card. The bus company hopes to introduce a similar scheme in East Sussex later.

## Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 12 April 2017** 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 contributions 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 mid-February 2017.

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