

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – February 2015

Coming soon – new low emission buses for Coaster route 12



In advance of the 24 new buses due shortly, this silver demonstration vehicle has been on loan from the manufacturer. Although visually similar to many existing buses this is in fact a new model. The Wrightbus 'Streetdeck' has a low emission Daimler Euro 6 engine and Brighton & Hove is the first bus operator to use this type in service. Production buses will be painted in a striking green based livery with Coaster branding and they may have a re-styled front.

Sunday evening buses to Worthing please!

We urge Stagecoach South to introduce a Sunday evening service on Coastliner route 700 this summer. At present the last bus from Brighton is 8pm on Sundays, yet there are buses as late as 3.30am on other nights. This does not make sense! The 700 is one of the busiest services in Brighton. All other frequent daytime services run on Sunday evenings and most are well used. Brighton & Hove's Coaster service 12 to Eastbourne runs every 20 minutes and was increased last year following complaints about crowded buses.

It is common to see passengers waiting in vain at the 700 stop in Churchill Square on Sunday evenings, especially in the summer months. Bus companies know that if people cannot get home in the evenings they are less likely to use buses during the daytime. So Stagecoach must be losing passengers, especially younger users who are more likely to travel in the evenings.

North Street works create more delays

Work on widening pavements and relocating bus stops in North Street with one way traffic controlled by temporary signals is creating delays to buses. The effect varies from day to day depending where the contractors are working and two-way traffic flows are usually restored by 4pm. Delays can affect all services, especially during the afternoons. On the worst occasions many bus services are curtailed at Old Steine, missing out North Street and Churchill Square completely. This disruption could last until June.

The 25 is particularly badly affected. Last year it suffered from roadworks in Lewes Road and now it is being delayed again. The advertised 10 minute service along Western Road to Palmeira Square is often cancelled in the afternoons and passengers are told to 'Go to Old Steine' on real time displays. This inconveniences many passengers, including students who choose to live close to Western Road because they use the 25. Later this year work is due to begin on the Valley Gardens scheme between St Peter's Church and Old Steine with the potential for several years of disruption. While some delays are unavoidable we ask Brighton & Hove Buses to improve the 25 timetable so buses can reach Palmeira Square on a more regular basis.

Brighton Area Buswatch has expressed concerns about the impact of the North Street scheme which is being funded by Royal Bank of Scotland, owners of the former Hanningtons department store site. We believe it will reduce the amount of space at bus stops and leave less room for vehicles to pass each other.

Woodingdean services criticised by local users

Around 60 people attended a meeting at Woodingdean Community Centre on 12 February where Brighton & Hove Buses faced strong criticism of local bus services. Amongst the complaints were buses on route 2 running out of service along the coast road (so missing out Woodingdean), poor timekeeping, infrequent services compared with other areas and buses on route 22 being full in the afternoons.

Managing Director Martin Harris apologised and accepted responsibility for the current services. He said many problems were related to worsening traffic congestion and roadworks, but pledged changes would be made behind the scenes to ensure more buses ran on time. These include an extra bus on route 2 from April to provide more recovery time at Rottingdean and ensure buses serve Woodingdean. A public consultation would be held in the spring to collect views from local people.

A further meeting is being held at the Downs Hotel on 16 February, organised by The Big Lemon which operates route 52 between Woodingdean, Ovingdean and Old Steine. Brighton Area Buswatch has suggested this service could be extended from Woodingdean to the Universities at Falmer and improved to run hourly to provide a regular all day service. It could replace the peak hour only service 84 which is under threat of withdrawal. This would require an extra bus which may only be possible with funding from the Universities and possibly the Amex Stadium.

Bus cuts later this year?

Brighton & Hove City Council has identified a number of supported bus services that may have funding withdrawn this autumn if budget cuts are approved. Services and areas at risk of frequency reductions or withdrawal are:

- 21 - Evenings serving Goldstone Valley, Queens Park & Manor Hill
- 21A – Sundays serving Goldstone Valley, Furze Hill, Queens Park & Manor Hill
- 38A - Evenings & Sundays serving Coombe Road and Meadowview
- 84 – Peak hour service Whitehawk and Woodingdean to Universities

If implemented in full they would leave Meadowview and Goldstone Valley without evening bus services and there would be no service at all between Woodingdean and Falmer. Manor Hill could lose its winter Sunday evening service. Brighton Area Buswatch is working with Brighton & Hove City Council and local bus companies to see if there are ways to retain these vital services if funding is withdrawn or reduced. We urge bus users affected areas to seek the support of local Councillors to object to these cuts.

If proposals for a referendum by the Green Party are approved on 26 February and voters agree to a 5.9% increase in Council Tax, the cuts will not be necessary. However similar plans for a referendum last year were defeated, so that outcome seems unlikely.

Bus service improvements from April – 21A & 50 increased

Brighton & Hove Buses plans a number of improvements from the start of the summer timetable in April. Hollingdean passengers will benefit from a more frequent service on route 50 with buses every 12 minutes between Churchill Square and Hollingdean until early afternoon instead of every 15 minutes. The half hourly 50U to Falmer is unchanged but some timings are altered.

The 21A will be doubled to run every 30 minutes between Brighton Marina and Hove Town Hall via Furze Hill all afternoon. This re-instates a half hourly afternoon service for Furze Hill and means all 21s to Goldstone Valley can run direct along Western Road which should improve timekeeping. There will also be an extra 21 journey from London Road to Queens Park to ease overcrowding at school times, which should mean other 21s are less likely get delayed or run late. All 21 & 21A buses will continue to Brighton Marina instead of some journeys finishing at Whitehawk Bus Garage.

A number of services will have adjustments to improve timekeeping with extra journeys at busy times on routes 1, 5, 7 & 12 as well as improvements to late evening services. The popular hourly 13X service from Brighton to Beachy Head and Eastbourne will run every 30 minutes on Sundays from late June. The evening service on routes 28 & 29 to Lewes, Ringmer and Tunbridge Wells is retained at similar frequencies despite the withdrawal of subsidies from East Sussex County Council. In fact there will be a slightly improved service towards Brighton.

Union Road improved

Thank you Brighton & Hove City Council. Following a campaign by Brighton Area Buswatch, Brighton & Hove Buses and Councillor Mo Marsh, the Council has altered the road markings to provide an extra westbound lane towards the Open Market. This means buses heading into the City along Union Road no longer have to wait with general traffic turning right. Now they can take full advantage of the filter light for left turning vehicles. Initial observations show that traffic queues stretching back to Lewes Road and Elm Grove no longer occur. This small but significant improvement should reduce delays to bus routes 21, 21A, 22, 24, 37B, 38, 48 & 49 by 5-10 minutes at busy times. We are now looking for other locations where similar changes can be made to benefit bus users.

Fewer buses in St James's Street?

Brighton & Hove Buses is considering re-routing some buses away from St James's Street. This follows representations from some members of the St James's Street Community Action Group which wants to lower emissions in the area. The bus company has pointed out that buses only account for one seventh of total traffic in the street. The two most frequent services in St James's Street are routes 1 & 7 which account for 18 buses an hour. Buses on route 7 are diesel electric hybrids and it was announced that route 1 will be the next to receive new low emission buses.

Diverted services would use Edward Street instead which is an uphill walk and much further from the shops. This would severely inconvenience many bus users and could have a detrimental effect on local traders who need buses to bring customers into the street. The bus stop outside Morrison's is one of the busiest in the city centre and it is extremely handy for local shoppers. We understand no decisions have been made on which services could be affected and no dates have been agreed when buses routes would change.

Lewes Road scheme wins award

The Lewes Road improvement scheme has won an award at the Smarter Travel Conference in Birmingham for 'Most Improved journey to work'. Bus passengers and cyclists who form the majority of users of Lewes Road appreciate the benefits of dedicated bus and cycle lanes. Councillor Ian Davey accepted the award on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council. Brighton Area Buswatch was involved in planning these improvements along with community and cycle representatives. The Council's 'Journey On' website which provides travel advice and recommends sustainable travel options was also commended.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 15 April 2015** at 5.30pm in Brighton Town Hall (note new location). 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 March 2015.

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