

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – June 2014



North Street refreshed?

This is how bus stops in North Street could look soon. Plans by the owners of the old Hanningtons department store would see the westbound bus stops moved further up the street where there are wider footpaths. This would enable shelters to be provided so bus passengers would no longer have to wait in shop doorways when it rains. It should also reduce congestion because it would be easier for buses to pass each other as the eastbound bus stops would no longer be directly opposite. New trees would be planted as shown and all work would be privately funded.

Bus use grows again while traffic congestion worsens

The number of people travelling by bus in Brighton & Hove continues to increase, following a trend that began over twenty years ago. A total of 46.4 million journeys were made in 2013/14 compared with just 22 million in 1992/93. Brighton & Hove has the highest level of bus usage outside London. This has been encouraged by frequent bus services, new bus lanes and other bus priority measures; hence along Lewes Road the increase has been nearer 7%.

However traffic congestion is still a problem. The Tom Tom traffic index published recently showed Brighton & Hove to have the fifth worst congestion in the country. Is it really that bad? Apart from a few hotspots I would say rush hour traffic moves quite smoothly in Brighton & Hove compared to other UK cities. Driving along the A27 around Worthing and through Lewes at peak times seems slower to me.

Vogue Gyratory works start soon.

Further measures to assist buses will take place over the summer at the Vogue gyratory in Lewes Road. A new 'floating bus stop' will be built outside Sainsbury's which will enable bendy buses to serve this stop. There will also be a northbound cycle lane and improvements for pedestrians. There will inevitably be traffic delays during the scheme but the City Council hopes to complete much of the work before schools and colleges return in September.

Queens Park – More changes planned

Bus services in Queens Park have been reviewed following the changes implemented in April. These replaced the old 81 with two new one-way circular routes 18 & 20 and a revised 21. Following extensive feedback from bus users, local residents and Brighton Area Buswatch, Brighton & Hove Buses organised meeting with community representatives on 12 June.

Bus users and community representatives raised similar points. The bus company listened and considered these in detail and proposes several changes to address the main issues. These include:

- One stop at the Pepper Pot in Queens Park Terrace served by all buses towards Churchill Square to avoid confusion over where to wait.
- One stop at Churchill Square (stop H) for all buses towards Queens Park
- More buses into town via Edward Street.
- Better spacing between buses on each route

To achieve this the 18 would become a two way service between Queens Park and Brighton Station via Queens Park Road, Egremont Place, Edward Street and North Street, returning via St James's Street as now. Buses would no longer use Trafalgar Street or Frederick Place. The 18 & 21 would both run every 15 minutes for most of the day, which should improve spacing between buses on each route. The 20 would be replaced by changes to the 18 & more buses on the 21 via Elm Grove and London Road. Further details will be announced next month when plans are finalised with implementation due in September.

In the short term Brighton & Hove Buses acknowledged that the 18 has become unreliable recently due to roadworks at the junction of Queens Road and Frederick Place. It agreed to review the temporary diversion via New England Street and Seven Dials which has led to much longer journey times and buses running very late.

Sussex Bus Surgery in Burgess Hill

TheSussexBus.com organised a successful 'bus surgery' in Burgess Hill town centre on 28 May. It was staffed by company officials from SussexBus, Metrobus and Compass Bus and when I visited during the afternoon the venue was very busy with people making enquiries and suggestions. There were plenty of timetables and leaflets available and there is no doubt the event was much appreciated by local bus users.

Managers were keen to listen to ideas and suggestions and even boarded passing buses to seek the views of passengers. I travelled there and back on SussexBus services and I was very impressed. Buses were smart and clean inside and out and both drivers were friendly and helpful.

Old buses start this week! We celebrate the Routemaster bus

Brighton & Hove's new heritage bus service 10 is now operating daily between Brighton Station and Hove via Brighton Pier and the seafront. This is the first regular bus service along the seafront for some years. Buses leave Brighton station hourly at ten minutes past each hour, connecting with fast trains from London and with the City Sightseeing tour buses at Brighton Pier. Normal fares apply so Saver tickets, Key cards and Concessionary passes are all valid.



(Photo by David Grimstone)

The service will normally be operated with this 1965 London Routemaster bus, painted in a special version of the Brighton & Hove livery. It depicts the colours used when Brighton Hove & District services were run by the London based Thomas Tilling company during the 1930s. The bus is named Colin Curtis, after a former Brighton resident who began his career here and went on to be instrumental in the design of the classic Routemaster bus which is 60 years old this year. Over 2,700 of these superb buses were built for London Transport between 1954 & 1968 and some continued in daily use until 2005. Just a dozen or so now remain on part of routes 9 & 15.

Apart from trials in the 1980s Routemasters have never operated regularly in Brighton. Designed for London conditions, they were more expensive to buy than other models and when new most provincial bus companies were moving towards buses with front entrances and rear engines. Southdown developed a bespoke design of the front engined Leyland Titan PD3 which became known as the Queen Mary class. Brighton Corporation also bought PD3s before standardising on the rear engined Leyland Atlantean in the late 60s, while BH&D used the trusty Bristol Lodekka with either front or rear doors. It is possible that examples of these buses will appear on route 10 on days when the Routemaster is not available.

The Routemaster has a special place for me as I spent most of my working life in London and I am the same age as the design (but less well preserved). The official last Routemaster day in December 2005 drew large crowds and world-wide media coverage. For me last day of Routemasters on route 38 (Victoria – Piccadilly Circus – Islington – Hackney – Clapton Pond) a few weeks earlier was much more civilised with a less frenzied atmosphere. The 38 was one of my local routes in the 1990s and I returned to join regular users and enthusiasts, climbing aboard to enjoy a final ride through the West End and Islington. It was lovely to see passengers showing a genuine affection for their old buses, especially young people who weren't born when they were built. Using their new smart phones to take pictures (still a novelty in 2005) and often inviting the conductor to join in, they made the occasion very memorable.

Next Meeting

The next meeting with bus companies and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on Wednesday 9 July at 5.30pm in Hove 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 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. The next issue is due in mid July 2014.

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