

# Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



Part of Bus Users UK

## Buswatch News – August 2016

### Bus service changes from September

The main improvement from Brighton & Hove Buses is an increase in the frequency of route 49 from every 10 minutes to every 8-9 minutes. While this doesn't seem much there will also be measures to improve the reliability of this service. Routes 5/5A/5B will also have new timetables. Frequencies will be the same but an extra five minutes is being added to the overall journey time to reflect current traffic conditions, which should improve timekeeping and reduce bunching.

On the down side, the hourly 14/14C is being withdrawn between Brighton Station and Hangleton. The service will continue to run as now between Brighton and Peacehaven or Newhaven. The Hangleton service on the 14 will be replaced by the 55 at peak times which will have extra journeys and will be diverted to run via Hove Park, Woodruff Avenue and Dyke Road instead of Old Shoreham Road. Between the peaks there will be no replacement service and there will be no service on Saturdays (the Sunday service to Hangleton was withdrawn a few years ago). Brighton & Hove Buses says very few people were using the Hangleton service at these times and they can no longer justify running it. They add that most passengers have an alternative service nearby – although some will lose direct links to Brighton Station and the Royal Sussex County Hospital.

New seafront routes i7 and 7X which have been lightly used will be withdrawn for the winter period. Brighton & Hove says it will be watching the visitor numbers to the i360 and may consider a weekend i7 service if there appears to be a demand. The 77 to Devil's Dyke will revert to a weekend only service. It operated daily last winter as an experiment with special funding.

There will be a few changes to Compass Bus service 37 following representations from local users and from Brighton Area Buswatch. Most of the experimental short journeys between Meadowview and Lewes Road Sainsbury's will be retained except that two afternoon buses will run via Bear Road as 37C to avoid traffic congestion in Lewes Road and the 5.15pm journey from Sainsbury's will no longer run. However, there will be an extra evening journey at 7.30pm from Bristol Estate to Meadowview, passing Brighton Station at 7.50pm, Lewes Road Sainsbury's at 7.59pm and arriving Meadowview at 8.07pm, filling a 75-minute gap between buses. This should help some of those who have complained about the infrequent evening service.

There are minor changes to several other services. The new times start on Sunday 11 September. Timetables should be available on [www.buses.co.uk](http://www.buses.co.uk) a few weeks earlier and will be published in Bus Times.

## Coaster crowds

A sunny Saturday morning brings out the crowds and it looks as though the entire summer student population of Brighton descended on the Sea Life Centre bus stop on 16 July to take a trip to Seven Sisters, Beachy Head or Eastbourne. Brighton & Hove Buses promotes the scenic Coaster service for a lovely day out and it is a fantastic ride. The bus in the picture is nearly full so over a hundred passengers will have had to wait for another bus, not to mention the regular bus passengers who get left behind along the route; some will have waited a very long time.



What can be done? With Brighton & Hove Buses in the middle of a driver shortage there is no chance of providing extra buses. Other local bus companies are already loaning drivers and buses to keep services running. Perhaps local language schools could consider staggering their weekend trips to avoid scenes like this. We don't want to put anyone off travelling by bus but maybe they could start a little earlier? There is usually more room on buses leaving Brighton before 10am. Most foreign students have weekly Saver tickets so they can travel at any time.

If students need to travel in a large group, they could hire a coach which could take them exactly where they want to go and pick them up at the time of their choice. The cost wouldn't be great spread amongst 50 passengers. Some language schools already have contracts with local coach companies.

## Rail strike disruption and threat of bus strikes ahead?

With rail services severely disrupted this week, many rail passengers are switching to local buses and National Express coach services. National Express is reporting an 80% increase in passengers on routes affected by Southern Rail disruption. The company has been running extra coaches to cope with demand and has been placing advertisements in the local press to promote coach services.

Meanwhile the Unite Union which represents Brighton & Hove and Metrobus bus drivers has balloted members for strike action. This is over allegations of bullying and intimidation by managers, by putting pressure on drivers to work overtime. Brighton & Hove Managing Director Martin Harris refutes these claims and says all overtime is voluntary. He has called for more talks to resolve the issues. Brighton & Hove and Metrobus are both owned by the Go Ahead Group which also runs the GTR (Southern) rail franchise although the Southern dispute is not connected. Any announcement of strike action by bus drivers will be posted on our Facebook page.

## A trip on the City Sightseeing tour

After living in Brighton for many years I realised I had never used the City Sightseeing open top bus tour. The bright red bus runs every 30 minutes until October, starting on the seafront by Brighton Pier, shortly to be renamed Brighton Palace Pier. So one sunny morning recently I decided to take a trip on the 10am departure which is first journey of the day. The normal fare for a day ticket is £12 or £15 for travel on all Brighton & Hove bus services. There are concessions for children and over 60s and a 10% discount for BN postcode residents. While these prices are a lot more than a one-day Saver ticket, the guided tour includes a commentary in seven languages and a map and shows you around many attractions with some discounts.



We set off on time with about ten passengers on board. Our first stop was outside the new i360 tower by the West Pier remains, which opened a few days ago. There was an excellent view of the pod as it rose towards the clear blue sky with plenty of visitors on board. Then on towards the Peace Statue and Brunswick Square with its splendid regency architecture before turning right into Grand Avenue. Here the commentary explains how the original buildings were replaced by modern

apartment blocks in the 60s and 70s. Palmeira Square is the next stop where more passengers join us by the floral clock. We miss out the County Cricket Ground, instead heading up Holland Road and on to Furze Hill for St Anne's Well Gardens. From there the bus takes us along suburban roads to Seven Dials. I couldn't help thinking Montpelier Road and Vernon Terrace would have made a more scenic route but maybe there are reasons for not using these roads. After Seven Dials we stop right outside Brighton Station which is unusually quiet due to the five-day rail strike. Our bus creates a bit of congestion here as we are not due out for a few minutes and other buses are queuing to access the same stop. A larger bus station would be a great asset. The present one seems to be even smaller than it was before its recent redesign.

Soon we are heading down Dyke Road, passing St Nicholas Church and the busy clock tower junction where the large Boots store has been purchased by John Lewis. Then back up Queens Road and through North Laine to Brighton Pavilion. We are now in the heart of Brighton's tourist area, passing the Pier again and arriving in Marine Parade, providing superb views out to sea while passing more fine regency architecture towards Kemp Town. At one time the tour went through Sussex Square which contains some of the most expensive properties in Brighton. Unfortunately, some residents objected to tour buses passing their exclusive homes, so these days we stay on the main road.

The bus speeds up as we head east towards Roedean school before turning right to access the Marina. On such a beautiful morning I felt it would have been nice stay on the coast road to Rottingdean or at least to Greenways roundabout. Presumably that would take too long as the A259 becomes very congested in the afternoons. There are of course plenty of regular bus services between Brighton and Rottingdean. At the Marina we stop outside the hotel where quite a few passengers decide to get off. Then we head back into town, descending Dukes Mound to Madeira Drive for a beach level ride along the seafront which is coming alive with attractions such as crazy golf and the Yellowwave volleyball courts. Soon the Palace Pier is upon us and we arrive back where we began, exactly fifty minutes later.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable ride. As an experience aimed mostly at visitors I would say it compares well with other attractions. If you are a resident, it is a much more leisurely experience than travelling on normal buses. You find out more about your home city, appreciating sights usually taken for granted. Your ticket is valid all day so you can use it to travel around without the hassle of crowded buses stopping every few minutes. Definitely recommended!

## Electric Buses are coming to The Big Lemon

Unfortunately, the Government's Office for Low Emission Vehicles did not approve The Big Lemon's application to part fund the purchase of two new fully electric buses. Undeterred, Managing Director Tom Druitt has acquired three used buses. These are diesel powered 'Solo' single decks, similar to the white bus running on route 52. The plan is to convert these to electric power. They will be re-charged each night through solar panels that are being installed at the company depot so they should be entirely carbon neutral and emission free. Hopefully they will start running in a few months.

## Bus ID deal

Throughout August Brighton & Hove Buses is offering a discount on the 7 Day Child Saver ticket so kids can get out and about more easily. The price is reduced from £9.50 to £7 when purchased on line until 31 August.

## Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be on **Wednesday 12 October 2016** 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 comments 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-September 2016.

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