

Brighton Area Buswatch



Working in partnership with Bus Users, the national charity representing bus passengers

Buswatch News – December 2021

Season's Greetings



**A big Thank you to all those who kept
our buses running during 2021**

Welcome to Ed Wills

Ed is the new Managing Director at Brighton & Hove Buses and Metrobus. I was invited to meet him at their Conway Street offices earlier this month, along with Commercial Director Nick Hill. He is very enthusiastic about future prospects despite the huge challenge of recovering from the pandemic and restoring services to former levels.

Ed began our meeting by displaying a huge spreadsheet outlining how B&H services had performed over the past couple of years. In general, buses are now carrying over 70% of pre-Covid levels but some routes are doing much better than others. Coaster services between Brighton & Eastbourne are achieving over 80% compared with pre-Covid while the 6 between Downs Park and Brighton Station has suffered from a big drop in rail commuters and is only carrying around 50%.

I made it clear that fares were an important issue for local people and some lower fares were a good way of attracting passengers back onto buses in the short term. One of the first planned improvements will be to introduce multi-day and weekly caps for those who pay on bus using the Tap On Tap Off Contactless facility. This is an increasingly popular way to pay and is available on all buses. Weekly capping will become an easy alternative to buying a weekly ticket.

Another priority should be to have seamless ticketing arrangements across all bus companies in the city area irrespective of the bus operator. This is an objective included in Brighton & Hove City Councils Bus Service Improvement Plan which was submitted to the Government in October. It would effectively bring London style ticketing to our area, meaning a City Saver ticket would become available on Stagecoach buses, at the same price as on a Brighton & Hove bus. Nowhere outside London has achieved this since bus deregulation in 1986. In other cities it has always resulted in at least two prices for either a single company ticket or a more expensive all operator ticket. It would be great if the Brighton & Hove area could take the lead. Brighton & Hove, Metrobus, Compass Travel and The Big Lemon already charge the same fares within the city, but Stagecoach does not.

Ed told me the driver availability situation was tight but improving slowly (although clearly this could change if Omicron based infections become an issue). I was assured that the N12 & N14 Coast Road night services will return as soon as the driver situation allows and night buses will run in service in both directions. They previously carried passengers out of Brighton but returned empty.

We discussed various road schemes including Valley Gardens Phase 3 which is now going through the final planning stages and agreed it was essential to achieve good facilities for buses which would not delay services in this area. We agreed that we would continue to work together to provide better facilities for passengers.

Lewes Bus Station to close in February?

Further to our report in September, The Generator Group which acquired the bus station site last April has now given notice it intends to end its temporary licence for the site to be used for bus stops. It has continued to be used as a bus station under licence from East Sussex County Council since the land was sold by Stagecoach in 2005. If this situation is not resolved quickly buses would have to stop using the bus station from mid-February and would be relegated to surrounding streets.

One local Councillor reacted on social media by claiming that if buses had to stop in nearby streets, they would create gridlock. Not so, if there is gridlock it would be caused by queuing cars! So they are very effective users of road space. A double deck bus can carry 80 people in the space of just two or three cars. East Sussex County Council is responsible for local transport issues. It must ensure that if the bus station site developed, alternative facilities are made available either within the development or nearby – or more people will use their cars - creating more congestion in and around the town and isolating those without access to a car.

Christmas and New Year bus services

Christmas Eve, Friday 24 December: Saturday service with last buses around 22:00

Christmas Day, Saturday 25 December: No service

Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December: Special services on Brighton & Hove routes 1, 1A, 2, 5, 5A, 5B, 6, 7, 12, 12A, 13, 14, 14A, 18, 22B, 25, 26, 27, 28, 48, 49, 50, 77, 78 & 79 finishing by 19:00. No Night services. No service on Stagecoach Coastliner 700, or on services operated by Metrobus, The Big Lemon or Compass Travel in the Brighton and Hove area.

Monday 27 December and Tuesday 28 December: Sunday service

Wednesday 29, Thursday 30 and Friday 31 December: Saturday service, with normal Monday to Friday service on Metrobus routes 271 & 272.

Saturday 1 January and Sunday 2 January 2022: Sunday service

This is a summary, full details on www.buses.co.uk and other company websites. The 'Kids Travel Free' at weekends promotion on Brighton & Hove and Metrobus services finishes on Boxing Day, Sunday 26 December. Hopefully it will return in 2022 and Buswatch has suggested it should continue over the holiday period until New Year's Day.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

Unfortunately, due to the worsening Covid situation, the planned meeting on Wednesday 12th January is cancelled.

Hopefully the following meeting will be on Wednesday 13th April (not 16th as published in error last month) at 4.30pm in rooms 2 & 3, **Brighton Town Hall**. Further planned dates in 2022 are 6 July and 12 October. All are on Wednesdays with a 4.30pm start time. Numbers will be restricted so please e mail Buswatch at the address below if you would like to attend or raise an issue.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch. Contributions and suggestions are welcome.

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