

Brighton Area Buswatch

Representing local bus users



A branch of Bus Users UK

Buswatch News – January 2018

Looking forward

The City of Brighton & Hove faces huge challenges this year to keep bus services running reliably and to restore the long term trend of increasing bus use. 2018 hasn't started well with a fares increase just nine months after the previous one and cuts to night bus services. Some daytime services have been reduced in frequency too, especially on Saturdays.

On the positive side there are over thirty new low emission two door buses with stop start engines to save fuel. We are told the driver shortage that has been disrupting services over the past two summers, has been overcome. The Big Lemon is aiming for an all-electric bus fleet and we are promised Contactless pay as you go payments later this year. Brighton & Hove Buses is sponsoring a parking attendant to help keep bus routes clear of illegally parked vehicles. The new traffic signals at Elm Grove/Lewes Road seem to regulate traffic flows much more effectively. The City Council has commissioned a Bus Network Study to recommend new bus priority measures and we hope this will include some quick wins already identified by Brighton & Hove Buses which need to happen before the summer.

This month work has begun to renew the traffic lights at the Sackville Road/Old Shoreham Road junction creating more disruption but hopefully the outcome will be positive with fewer delays and better pedestrian crossings. The Preston Barracks development in Lewes Road should start in the spring leading to new disruption in Lewes Road. The Valley Gardens scheme is due to begin in the early summer which has the potential to create massive delays over a wide area if the quick wins identified by Brighton & Hove Buses for new bus lanes have not been implemented.

Day to day disruptions to bus services continue, often completely outside the control of bus operators. They are getting much better at communicating through social media, but that can leave those without modern technology feel left out. Coast road buses along the A259 are particularly prone to disruption. A shuttle bus should be provided between Churchill Square and the Sea Life Centre when services are curtailed there, instead of leaving passengers to find their own way. There is a bus information kiosk at Churchill Square, a prime location where people could go for help but it is hardly ever staffed these days, despite frequent pleas from Buswatch.

If we are to get more people using buses this year these sort of issues need to be addressed - urgently.

Old Steine bus stop changes



Before and after, with a long queue of buses and an 18 passing stop H this week

For a trial period buses on routes 7, N7, 14B, 14C, 18, 22 & 48 do not use stop H at Old Steine, by the War Memorial opposite Sainsbury's Local. These routes all go towards Brighton Station and buses continue right round the Steine to use stop U on the west side, before turning left into North Street. The idea is to reduce congestion at stop H which can see seven or eight buses queueing right back to Edward Street. Passengers at the back of a long line of buses can't get on or off because there is no pavement, so they are left waiting until other buses move forward. This is frustrating for everyone; buses lose time which affects the reliability of bus services.

What do you think? Recent observations show that lot of people leaving buses at stop H head towards St James's Street so they will be faced with a longer walk. Many people change buses here too, especially at peak times, but most can change just as easily in North Street. Brighton & Hove Buses would like your feedback, please let them know at info@buses.co.uk or on Facebook or twitter.

Night bus services

The cuts to night buses announced last month took effect from 14 January resulting in the complete withdrawal of the N1 to Old Steine and Whitehawk and the N5 to Patcham and Hollingbury. There was a lot of public reaction to this announcement with at least two on line petitions, one of which contained 9,000 signatures.

At the Buswatch meeting on 17 January, Brighton & Hove's Commercial Director Mike Best told us the commercial night bus network did not make a profit and it was hard to justify running empty or almost empty buses to some areas. He did not believe night buses would meet the criteria for the Council to provide financial support. In any case this might have resulted in cuts to day services as no extra money was likely to be available. The busiest journey on the N5 to Patcham and Hollingbury had been replaced by an extra 5B leaving Churchill Square at 12.32 am.

Buswatch will continue to press for improvements to the night bus services such as restoring the N1 to Old Steine. A survey by one of our supporters in early January showed reasonable numbers boarding N1 buses at Old Steine.

Brighton & Hove fares

The increased fares came into effect on 16 January. The chart below shows comparison with other areas, which we update each year. In our area bus fares on commercial bus services (the vast majority) are set by bus companies. The City Council applies the same fares on supported services operated by The Big Lemon and Compass Travel. In London fares are controlled by The Mayor of London and have been frozen until 2020. They include Croydon area trams but not Underground or DLR services. Stagecoach fares are the lowest in our area but they only cover a couple of routes and fares for journeys beyond the city to Worthing or Horsham are much higher. Reading Buses is an award winning bus company owned by Reading Council which operates in Reading and surrounding towns.

Adult fares	Brighton & Hove and Council supported services Within City Saver area	Brighton & Hove Outside City Saver area	Stagecoach Routes 17 & 700 within City Saver area and beyond	Transport for London (TfL) bus & tram using Oyster or contactless card	Council owned Reading Buses urban area and beyond
Single journey	£2* £2.20 Centrefare or £2.60 on bus £2.60 One hour M ticket	£2 - £5.50 according to distance (highest to Tun.Wells)	£2.30 in City variable beyond	£1.50 Pay As You Go, one free transfer within one hour	£2 cash, £1.90 M ticket, £2.50 One hour M ticket. Variable Beyond
One day ticket	£5 cash on bus £4.40 Key/M ticket £5 scratch card	£7 on bus £4.90 Key/M £5 scratch card	£4 in City £8.20 beyond	£4.50 Pay As You Go max £5 in advance	£4 urban area £7 beyond
Weekly ticket	£20 Key/M ticket £24 scratch card	£22Key/M £24 scratch	£13.50 in City £23 beyond	£21.20	£17 on bus £15 M ticket £21 beyond
Monthly ticket	£73 Key/M ticket £70 by direct debit	£79 Key/M £73 direct debit	£47 in City £84.50 beyond	£81.50	£61 urban area £81 beyond
Annual ticket	£599 Key card	£655 Key card	£487 in City £885 beyond	£848	£575 urban £830 beyond

* - £2 fare is the 'short hop on-bus cash fare' – see below

Single fares tend to be higher on Brighton & Hove services. London has easily the cheapest single fare 'hopper' ticket at £1.50 which will soon be available for unlimited transfer within one hour. However, London has some of the highest prices for weekly, monthly and annual tickets.

Those confusing short hop fares

There is no obvious logic to the distance covered by short hop single fares which can vary hugely, even from the same bus stop. From Brighton Marina £2 covers just one stop to Lidl on routes 7, 23 & 52 whereas you can travel to any stop in Whitehawk and most of Manor Hill on routes 21/21A (up to 19 stops), and all the way to Rottingdean on the 47, 57 and Sunday 14B or 27. Ideally a short hop should cover any journey within the City Saver area, but outside the Centrefare area.

A particular anomaly is the the single fare from Brighton Marina to the Royal Sussex County Hospital which costs £2.60 for four stops. Buswatch has been pressing for the £2 short hop fare zone to be extended from Lidl to include the Hospital. This would especially help those who park free at the Marina (for up to four hours) and travel by bus to the hospital, reducing queues at hospital car parks. It should be a win win outcome for the bus company by attracting extra passengers between the Marina and the hospital and helping to reduce car traffic in Eastern Road.

Bus Timetables no longer available in buses

The latest edition of Bus Times, the free 100 page A4 size book containing timetables for all local buses will not be available inside buses. Brighton & Hove has confirmed that copies will only be available from One Stop Travel in North Street, other information points and on line. Copies can also be ordered by post.

Farewell Norman

Norman Baker has left his post as Managing Director of The Big Lemon bus company. He joined in March 2017 and led the company through a period of expansion, winning several contracts from Brighton & Hove City Council to run supported bus services. The former Lewes MP and Transport Minister in the Coalition Government became an enthusiastic attendee at Buswatch meetings. We will miss his insights and his witty comments. Good luck Norman!

Brighton Area Buswatch meeting

The next meeting with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council will be at 5pm on **Wednesday 18 April 2018** in Brighton Town Hall.

Buswatch News is produced and edited by Andrew Boag, Chair, Brighton Area Buswatch.

We welcome your contributions and suggestions. The next issue is due mid-February

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Bus Users

Working for passengers

Brighton Area Buswatch is a branch of Bus Users UK www.bususers.org