

Brighton Area Buswatch



We are a branch of Bus Users, the national charity representing bus passengers

Buswatch News – March 2021

One Stop Travel stops selling rail tickets

From Easter Sunday, 4 April it will no longer be possible to buy train tickets from the One Stop Travel shop in North Street. With more and more people buying their tickets on line or with a mobile, the number of tickets sold over the counter has declined substantially. Brighton & Hove Buses, which runs One Stop Travel told us it took the decision “with a heavy heart” but the commission it receives on ticket sales no longer covers the cost of providing the facility and keeping staff trained on the products available. This will be a blow to people who are not internet savvy or who rely on advice from knowledgeable staff on the best ticket to buy, especially when they are making complicated journeys. The full range of train tickets can still be bought at the Brighton Station Travel Centre and other staffed ticket offices.

Above and Beyond

Brighton & Hove Buses is recognising 24 community champions on the side of its new buses on routes 1 & 1A between Mile Oak and Whitehawk. Managing Director Martin Harris said “these are people who buoy up those around them with their life changing work. Some are involved supporting disabled families, running football sessions, connecting isolated people or battling homelessness. There are sixteen women included, from school teachers to gardeners to hospice nurses and cooks”.



National Bus Strategy launched

The Government has published a [national strategy](#) called 'Bus Back Better' aimed at making buses more attractive to use and getting people to back on buses as Covid restrictions are eased. The £3Billion strategy is very ambitious and if implemented in full it could result in a big improvement to bus services all over the country. Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) like Brighton & Hove will have more say in how buses are run through enhanced partnerships with local bus companies. LTAs can apply for franchising powers to provide bus services if they feel partnerships will not work. That is unlikely to be the case in our area where successful partnership arrangements have been in place for many years. Our bus services already meet many of the aspirations in the strategy; in fact, Brighton & Hove is featured as an example of best practice.

The strategy recognises the value of bus service improvements and makes the rather obvious statement that buses should be frequent and easy to use. It points out bus service improvements can be implemented much quicker than building new roads or railways and are important for levelling up, helping those from disadvantaged social groups and places. Fares should be simple including daily capping and there should not be a wide variation in prices between operators. Our local fares are complicated and quite high so it will be interesting to see how this is tackled. Interestingly it is exactly twenty years since Brighton & Hove Buses introduced a £1 flat fare. Twenty years on we have a bewildering range of ticket types and payment options. Good news is that the Government is committed to retain free off-peak bus travel for pensioners and disabled people.

Buses should be modern and greener, with plans for 4,000 new zero emission vehicles over the next five years, which sounds a lot but remember this figure is for the whole country. Bus companies will almost certainly be required to part-fund these.

Most notably, the strategy makes it clear there must be more priority measures for buses. There should be continuous bus lanes along main bus corridors - where there is space to provide them. This could prove difficult as Councils are separately being asked to improve active travel by providing cycle lanes and have been told combined cycle and bus lanes should be avoided. This could be a problem in Old Shoreham Road and along the A23 at Patcham. To protect buses the strategy makes it clear that new bus lanes will not be available to electric cars or vans.

There is also hope funding could be available for new bus services to provide much needed links. In our area that could include a regular link between Woodingdean and the Universities or a better service into Brighton along Old Shoreham Road.

The strategy also recommends the development of new Park & Ride schemes which should include bike to bus as well as car to bus. Buswatch has been pressing for this and met with strong resistance from some local politicians and environmentalists despite the obvious benefits, so we are particularly pleased to see P&R included.

Brighton Area Buswatch welcomes new supporters

Buses are very important to people in Brighton & Hove. More people use our buses per head than anywhere else in the country apart from London. Our local bus services are generally very good but could be even better. Fares are regarded as high but lower fares would require subsidies. More bus priority measures like bus lanes would help to speed up buses helping to prevent fares from rising further.

In the past few years we have:

- Achieved a one hour single M ticket with free transfers – since copied in London.
- Campaigned for a new Park & Ride to reduce car journeys in the city centre, explaining how to avoid mistakes made in P&R schemes elsewhere.
- Responded to consultations by Brighton & Hove City Council, commenting on various road and cycle schemes to try to ensure the needs of bus users are taken into account.
- Opposed elements of the Valley Gardens scheme which worsen facilities for bus users, such as pedestrianising Old Steine in front of the Royal Pavilion.
- Campaigned for a northbound bus lane in York Place between Trafalgar Street and London Road to strengthen the visibility of restrictions and penalise drivers who continue to ignore 'Bus Gate' signs, creating delays for buses.
- Opposed the closure of St James's Street to buses. Working closely with B&H Buses we identified the Morrisons bus stop as the fifth busiest in Brighton which is used by more disabled bus pass holders than any other bus stop.
- Opposed the temporary A259 seafront cycle lane between Marine Parade, Palace Pier and West Street last summer which created gridlock – giving interviews on BBC Radio Sussex and South East Today.
- Worked closely with bus companies and are represented at the Council's Quality Bus Partnership and Transport Partnership.
- Made numerous suggestions for timetable improvements, including new all-day limited stop services 12X to Eastbourne and 25X to Sussex University.
- Opposed cuts to night buses, resulting in improvements to the N1 & N5
- Contributed to the Brighton & Hove Climate Assembly.
- Opposed plans to shorten concessionary bus pass times for Brighton & Hove residents from 09:00 to 09:30.
- Highlighted anomalies in the distances covered by 'short hop' bus fares.
- Opposed cuts to bus services on routes funded by Brighton & Hove City Council.
- Questioned why reduced services on some Council funded bus services continued long after the first lockdown ended, leading to the reinstatement of full pre-lockdown timetables in October.

If you use buses or know someone who might be interested to become involved with Brighton Area Buswatch please get in touch. Our current supporters are mostly male and over 40. We are very keen to change this profile by increasing diversity and representing all types of bus users. Women, young people and those with a BAME background are very welcome. Our work is entirely voluntary and non-political. We are not a protest group; our aim is to achieve improvements for bus users by working together with bus companies, local authorities and Bus Users UK, our national group.

Correction – Old Shoreham Road plans

Our review of the Old Shoreham Road proposals last month included an error regarding route 16. The service towards Portslade does not turn right out of Stapley Road, it turns left into Old Shoreham Road and then right down Olive Road. We understand routes 16 & 47 buses towards Hangleton and Sainsbury's will be given an exemption from the proposed right turn ban from Old Shoreham Road into Stapley Road. The 16 & 47 will therefore be able to continue as now in both directions.

Brighton Area Buswatch meetings

In normal circumstances, meetings with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council are held four times a year. Meetings will resume when restrictions are lifted and we are able to use Brighton Town Hall again. In the meantime, please send in your comments and we will take them up with the operators or the Council.

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

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