

# Brighton Area Buswatch



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

## Buswatch News – October 2020

### New buses for routes 1 & 1A

Another 24 blue 'Live and Breathe hybrid buses are now being delivered for routes 1 & 1A Mile Oak – Portslade – Hove - Brighton City Centre - Kemp Town - Royal Sussex County Hospital - Whitehawk. These 'extended range' hybrid buses will run in zero emissions electric mode through the City Centre Ultra Low Emission Zone between Palmeira Square and Old Steine. Contrary to some reports, they do not produce higher emissions than other buses when running in diesel mode. Brighton & Hove Managing Director Martin Harris says each bus saves an estimated 31% in greenhouse gas emissions compared with diesel only buses. They are powered by a battery which is charged by an on board generator. In diesel mode they have the latest Euro VI diesel engines which switch off at slow speeds and when the bus is stationary at bus stops. The existing two door buses on route 1 will be transferred to routes 24, 26, 27 & 46.

### Valley Gardens Phases 1 & 2 update

Last month, Buswatch News highlighted the poor signing in North Road, Marlborough Place and York Place in Valley Gardens Phases 1 & 2. This was leading to high numbers of private cars using the west side of Valley Gardens which is supposed to be restricted to buses, taxis and access vehicles. Since then, some improvements have been made in North Road; the incorrect road markings have been altered and a new road sign has been erected. This has encouraged more cars to use the east side although compliance is still not good, especially at weekends when many visitors seem unaware of the new layout and continue to ignore 'bus gate' signs. The vague and unhelpful 'local traffic' description continues to cause confusion. If lots of cars go this way, Google maps and Sat Nav systems will pick up the flow and show it, giving the impression it is an acceptable route.

At long last the bus shelters and real time information signs at St Peter's Church and North Road (southbound) are being installed. The shelters were originally ordered a year ago and were due in March, but they were delayed due to lockdown. Original plans included a new northbound bus stop in Marlborough Place near the King & Queen pub which would be very handy for The Dome, the Jubilee Library and the North Laine area. However, Brighton & Hove Buses has refused to use it due to concerns about an extra stop creating more congestion, leading to increased delays for buses. It would certainly help if the Council enforced the bus gates more effectively. Buswatch suggests a trial, perhaps after Christmas when traffic levels should be quieter.

## Valley Gardens Phase 3

The public consultation closed on 18 September. However consultations with key stakeholders have continued. There was a meeting between the Project Team and bus companies on 14 October which Buswatch was invited to attend. The main points below, included last month were all covered.

To recap, the main issues for us are:

- 1) The space for terminating buses to stand between journeys at Old Steine is totally insufficient.
- 2) Bus stop locations are less spacious than now. This is contrary to one of the main objectives of the scheme which is to improve facilities for bus passengers.
- 3) Some of the proposed bus stop sites look impractical, such as the westbound stop opposite the War Memorial in the short slip road between Castle Square and St James's Street.
- 4) The northbound bus stop on the east side of Old Steine is very close to the cycle lane. This stop is likely to be very busy so there is a high risk of conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.
- 5) Some lane widths are too narrow for buses to pass easily.
- 6) The westbound bus lane in Marine Parade between Rock Gardens and the Aquarium roundabout is not included in plans but a new cycle lane is being considered.

The Council's project team is now considering its response to these and so it would be inappropriate to go into detail, but one well-received suggestion was for buses towards North Street to all go around the south side of Old Steine, passing Albion Hotel and stopping on the south west side by existing bus stop U (currently used by buses going towards Brighton Station). Buses would no longer turn right at St James's Street (point 3) so avoiding the short slip road by War Memorial where a bus stop shown on plans was clearly impractical.



This excellent photo, supplied by Harry Dinnage, illustrates the need for buses to be able to turn and stand at Old Steine (point 1 above). It was taken one Saturday afternoon recently when a demonstration closed some roads. Five double deck buses can be accommodated facing south, but in Phase 3 this area becomes the main northbound traffic lanes so all these spaces will be lost. There is very limited space on the south side in front of the Royal Albion hotel and the YHA, where buses will need to compete with demands for taxi ranks and loading bays. Pool Valley remains a possibility for parking more buses, but it does not form part of the Valley Gardens scheme.

## Old Steine shelters get cleaned



In recent months the three art deco style bus shelters in front of the Royal Pavilion have become victims of tagging style graffiti. The Council didn't react so a group of local volunteers, led by Derek Wright organised a re-painting session on Facebook. The taggers will no doubt return soon, but at least the shelters look smarter for now. It would be even better if the Council could ask its contractor could replace the missing glass panels and clean the other ones.

Sadly, these attractive listed structures will no longer be used as bus shelters under Valley Gardens Phase 3 proposals. Replacement bus stops and shelters will be at Castle Square by the Royal Bank of Scotland and on the east side of the war memorials, on the northbound carriageway. In both cases the replacements will provide significantly less space for bus passengers to wait.

## Big Lemon bus services restored.

Last month Buswatch News highlighted the fact that services 16, 47, 52 & 57 were still running at reduced service levels with big gaps in the middle of the day, while other Council supported services had all returned to normal levels with Government funding. The good news is that from 5 October these services have returned to full pre-lockdown timetables with an hourly frequency during the daytime. Full timetables are available at [www.thebiglemon.com](http://www.thebiglemon.com)

## Travellog Lewes for local transport news

Buswatch News has always tried to cover the Lewes area even though most of our news comes from Brighton and Hove area. However for those living in the Lewes area we recommend Travelog Lewes, [www.travelloglewes.co.uk](http://www.travelloglewes.co.uk) The website is written by 'Travelman' Chris Smith who produces an informative monthly newsletter covering bus, rail, walking and cycling activities in and around Lewes. The October edition includes bus service updates including details of the Lewes Town Day ticket or £3.70 and recommendations for autumn walks which can be accessed by bus.

## **Councillor Pete West stands down**

There are more changes at the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee. This follows the resignation of Pete West who became chair when the Green Party took control from Labour following the resignation of Councillor Anne Pissaridou. He had the task of dealing with protests during the seafront cycle lane debacle and took the decision to abandon the most controversial part of it. The new Green Party Chair of the ETS Committee is Councillor Amy Heley with Councillor Steve Davis taking the lead on Valley Gardens and on bus matters.

## **Brighton Area Buswatch meetings**

In normal circumstances, meetings with bus company managers and Brighton & Hove City Council are held four times a year. We had hoped to resume in October but that will not be possible within current Government restrictions. A further announcement will be made in due course. 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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