

Eastbourne Area Bus user Group EABUG

Meeting 10th February 2026, held in Eastbourne Town Hall

10:30-12:30

1 In Attendance:

Bus Providers: Ben Garcia (Brighton & Hove Buses), Katherine Jones, Paul Robertson, David Rouse, Mark Slater, Reggie Goodwin (Stagecoach), Nick Price (Cuckmere Buses)

EEAN/ EABUG: David Everson, Jill Shacklock, Derrick Coffee, Christopher Ralls, Paul Humphreys

ESCC Bus Team: Donnalyn Morris

Local councillors: Tom Neville (Eastbourne), Andy Collins (Eastbourne), Jane Trott (Horam), Nigel Goodyear (Eastbourne), Malcolm Cunningham (Polegate)

Community Groups: M Simmons & David Barclay (Eastbourne Blind Society), Alec Horner (Brighton Bus Watch), Christopher Collins (Civil Service Pensioners Alliance)

Bus users: Christopher Collins, David Roberts, David Rowan, Liz Trethewey, Keith Trott, Norman Rae, Deborah Bristow

1.1 Apologies:

Cllr Brett Wright (ESCC), Monika Farkas, (University of Sussex) Lucy Lisle (University of Brighton), Cllr Christina Ewbank (EBC), Kate Richardson (EBC) Cllr Swansborough (EBC & ESCC), Councillor Shore (EBC), Councillor Ali Dehdashty (EBC)

1.2 Acronyms explained:

BSIP- Bus Service Improvement Plan, **DfT** – Department for Transport, **EEAN** -Eastbourne Eco Action Network, **EABUG**- Eastbourne Area Bus User Group, **EBC**-Eastbourne Borough Council, **ESCC**- East Sussex County Council, **RTI** -Real time information

1.3 Presentations

[The presentation slides used during the meeting are available here.](#)

2 Matters arising

Matters arising from our last meeting and questions sent in advance by members were discussed:

2.1 Progress on bus lanes in Eastbourne;

Seaside bus lane, work was expected to start in Autumn 2026 and it was hoped the work would be finished later in the year- see agenda item 3 for further details. The Station Parade Bus Lane has been approved and details for the start of the work are awaited.

2.2 Progress on Exceat Bridge:

Preparatory work has started on the bridge and further works are due to start in the Spring of 2026. For further details please visit [Timeline of activities to date | The Exceat Bridge | live.eastsussexhighways.com](#)

2.3 Audible Announcements on Buses:

The volume of the announcements on the buses is not something the driver can control; it was set centrally. If passengers have concerns, they should mention the problem to a driver who can report it. Mark Simmons to contact Katherine Jones to discuss issues reported to him.

2.4 Bus 701:

A bus service (Stagecoach 701) from Brighton to Eastbourne via Falmer had been trialled, but had since been withdrawn due to poor usage. Is there any news on this service? Could it be funded through BSIP?

Donnalyn Morris (ESCC) responded that the 701 was a commercially run route. ESCC were not involved in route design or providing any funding support, nor have we been asked to do so. This would be for the bus operator(s) to consider.

Katherine Jones responded that they continue to look at the 701 option but don't have any news at the moment.

2.5 Eastbourne bus shelter maintenance:

A maintenance contract had just gone out to tender. The tender included proposals to repair and replace shelters, including the wooden shelters at Willingdon Church Street and Wish Hill.

2.6 Congestion on the Birling Gap Road-Summer 2025:

The road gets very busy leading to unacceptable delays for buses, as happened during August 2025. (Derrick's photos from August 2025 shown below). Cars parked on the grass verges add to the congestion. Birling Gap needs easy access for emergency vehicles as well as buses services, this is not possible if this level of congestion is a regular event. What can be done to address this frequent event happening?



ACTION: EABUG would consider writing to ESCC and South Downs National Park about this and the need for traffic control on this busy scenic route.

Cuckmere Buses added that their services along Littlington Road and Exceat had been delayed by similar severe congestion.

Brighton and Hove buses had liaised with the National Trust to place bus information in the visitor Centre to encourage greater use of buses along this route.

2.7 The STOP café

The STOP café on Gildredge Road, between bus stop G1 and G2 has a real time information screen with live updates for both the G1 and G2 and is a useful place to obtain information about buses, to shelter and to get a coffee.

2.8 Roll out of talking buses

All B & H buses already have audio and visual announcements. Stagecoach buses will be compliant by October 2026.

2.9 Digital display systems at Gildredge Road

Question: When will the digital display on Gildredge Road be replaced? It has been out of action for many weeks.

Donnalyn: The damage to Gildredge road display meant significant repair was required or replacement. Replacement has been agreed, but we do not have timescales for when this will be with our RTI provider and then deployed to the street. Screen replacement lead times have lengthened over the last few years due to parts becoming hard to obtain due to increasing demand for them in other industries.

There is a catch-up call with the supplier and engineer this week and we shall ask. Lead times for screens are up to 16 weeks. If two engineers are required for a replacement, then this needs to be co-ordinated across a number of locations.

3 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – Update:

Donnalyn Morris ESCC Bus Team

[\(Please see presentation slides nos. 9-23 for details\)](#)

The meeting was informed of the funding that had been made available to ESCC for improving bus services and infrastructure and that the amount awarded was considerably less than previous funding rounds. The funding came in 2 pots, one for capital investments and one for revenue.

DfT have advised that at present the capital and revenue allocations are not interchangeable, so capital funds can't be used for bus services and fares for example. Nor can DfT funding be used to subsidise concessionary fares.

Details were given as to what had been achieved with the BSIP monies, such as an increase in passenger numbers of 1.5% between 2024 and 2025. QR codes had been placed at all bus stops. Real time information (RTI) boards were now available at many bus stops, disability bus passes were now available to be used over extended hours (at any time of day). Bus stop infrastructure had been improved and the planned bus lanes in Eastbourne were getting close to construction.

The Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) and the BSIP funding had now been combined into one funding stream called the Bus Grant. Unfortunately, the Bus Grant allocation was smaller than the previous funding streams and this has already resulted in the removal of some bus fare subsidies.

However, despite the reduction in funding it was expected that the ESCC Bus Team would continue to operate, two parking enforcement officers would be engaged through the parking team, and the bus lane projects would be completed.

Point Nick Price from Cuckmere Buses was concerned about the effect of congestion on bus services along the A2270 into Eastbourne and in particular at Huggett's Lane traffic lights.

ESCC meetings relevant to buses are being held on 16th Feb and 16th March.

Question: Could EEAN give feedback and make suggestions on where we believe Bus Grant monies could be spent?

There is nothing to stop us.

4 Bus Operator's Update

4.1 Brighton & Hove Buses (Ben Garcia)

(Please see [presentation slides nos. 25-31](#) for details)

Brighton & Hove Buses and Metro buses are different brands and have livery unique to that brand, images of each of the brandings were shown in the presentation.

Eastbourne sightseeing bus has a new design and will start to run on 28th February 2026.

On Christmas Day the No 12 coastal route had operated. There had been a 15% increase of passenger numbers for Brighton & Hove Christmas Day services compared to the previous year. On Boxing Day, the 11,13, and 28 services had also operated . 34,000 passengers travelled on Brighton & Hove Buses on Boxing day 2025.

5 buses serving Eastbourne had been named after people with a connection with Eastbourne.

- 595 Lewis Carroll
- 596 George Orwell
- 597 Alice Hudson
- 598 Raymond Francis
- 599 Sir Lyndsay Bryson

Question: Can we suggest names for buses?

Yes, there is a form to use to nominate names for buses. [Nominate a name on a bus. #BusNameNomination – Fill out form](#)

Jill suggested Friedrich Engels and Paul Robeson.

B&H buses would be offering a special Valentine's Day Duo Ticket, for a romantic trip for two at 50% the normal cost.

1. 15 increase on Christmas day services on Brighton & Hove Buses compared to the previous year (not the Coaster 12 specifically).
2. Boxing day operated with over 34,000 passengers for Brighton & Hove Buses. (not just on 11, 13 & 28).
3. For any suggested names, we have a form to use.

4.2 Cuckmere Buses (Nick Price)

[\(Please see slides nos 33-36 for pictures of new buses\)](#)

On New Year Cuckmere buses had operated a service from Hailsham to Polegate and on to Langley Shopping Centre. It was not well used, but then the shopping centre was closed on New Year's Day!

Next year an alternative route will be investigated.

Bus passenger numbers in 2025 were up on those of 2024 and had carried 85,000 passengers.

In October, Cuckmere buses will be celebrating their 50th anniversary and their buses will have alterations to their livery to mark the occasion.

Cuckmere buses had taken delivery of a new bus and it was hoped to have this in service by 1st March once it has been painted.

In response to a question about the recent heavy and persistent rain, Nick said that bus services are frequently affected by flooding and that services to Alfriston were suspended for a week, with buses diverted due to flooding.

Question: Councillor Tom Neville asked whether the subsidised 25 and 125 bus services would continue to run.

Donnaly Morris responded that services would be reviewed when the tenders are looked at.

(Update for info– at the ESCC Lead member for Transport meeting on 16th February, Cuckmere Buses were asked to take over the route. From 14th April they will be running the 25 service on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays between Eastbourne and Lewes.)

Liz Trethewey noted that the papers for the ESCC Lead Transport meeting on Monday 16th February suggest cuts to the 125 and also evening services including 5b, 5a and no. 3 buses. See also section 5.2 Cuts to bus services

Question Derrick asked the bus operators whether they were aware of the Downlander ticket. This was an intermodal (bus/rail) area wide ticket including a version with a London Victoria leg. This type of ticket could help to persuade more visitors to come to Eastbourne without needing a car.

It was suggested that the Downlander ticket has been replaced by the [PlusBus](#) scheme.

4.3 Stagecoach (Katherine Jones and Paul Robertson)

[\(Please see presentation slide nos. 38-42 for details\)](#)

The Stagecoach App had had some improvements made to it and allowed users to Plan, Track and Buy. It is available in 130 countries! One important change is a colour coding to show users how up to date the bus tracking information is, with **green** for recently updated, **orange** for not up to the minute information and **red** for not up to date, or not live.

The improved journey planner was now linked to Google Maps rather than bus stop codes which should make it easier for users.

The App. also showed other bus operator vehicles.

There had been a decrease in bus user numbers, not just in East Sussex but more widely and Stagecoach are investigating the reasons for this.

It was hoped that soon slightly newer buses would be available to allocate to routes in the area, as they became available from other areas.

There was discussion about Cornfield Road 'hump', a slope on the road designed to slow down traffic. This hump causes damages to buses and is preventing Stagecoach from introducing new single-decker electric buses. EABUG and bus users need to contact their ESCC councillors and ask them to raise this issue.

ACTION: EABUG to write to East Sussex Highways about the issue.

Bus driver retention is better than it was and Stagecoach are currently recruiting new drivers.

Congestion in Eastbourne remains the major problem. (Eastbourne is the worst area for congestion according to bus operators.)

Question: Where is the new central control team that tracks buses?

There are two teams for southeast. One in Kent and one in Eastbourne. The Eastbourne team looks after buses serving Eastbourne, Hastings and Ashford.

Question from Jane Trott commented on the reduction in the 51 bus service. It was running every 30 minutes but it now runs every 75 minutes. The timing is confusing for passengers.

Jane had also witnessed issues with ticket machines not working on buses. On one occasion no fares could be taken. Is this because the buses on this route are older? Stagecoach response: all buses are serviced every 28 days and are checked before going out.

Jane was additionally concerned about the major housing developments in Horam as they will require more buses, not less.

Jane had experienced 'white knuckle rides' on occasions when bus drivers were trying to make up time. Katherine explained that telematic systems on buses track driving, including breaking, cornering and steering. These records can be checked.

Question: does the Stagecoach app tie up with the RTI display boards as the information is often different with buses disappearing from the RTI screens?

There is currently an issue when Stagecoach buses are cancelled and then reinstated. The reinstated buses don't appear on the RTI boards but do appear in the Stagecoach app. Following an upgrade to the system Stagecoach hope that this synchronisation issue will be fixed.

EABUG will follow this development. Any improvement in the accuracy of information will be welcomed.

5 Discussion groups

5.1 World Public Transport Day Event

The vision was to use the material provided by the Urban Transport Group (UTG) to promote public transport on local social media. The UTG had provided social media friendly resources such as video clips and posts for Facebook, Instagram and the like.

Brighton & Hove said it would not be possible to accommodate any special fare rates on the day.

Discussion followed:

Should we have a stall giving information about buses?

Could we organise a tour of the Stagecoach Depot?

Could the Dotto train be rerouted for the day to go into town?

Could we get celebrities to promote public transport? (Josh B, Rev Coles, Alex Polizzi, Joe Marler)

Could we engage with schools and have a competition to build a cardboard bus with reason why one should use buses or have a public transport poetry competition. Perhaps EBC could be persuaded to provide tickets to the theatre as a prize? Maybe Josh Babarinde could be a judge?

5.2 Cuts to bus services

The Lead Member for Transport & the Environment committee is meeting on 16th February and will consider proposed reductions in bus services. The services to be cut were subsidised through BSIP. Subsidies are to end following the reduced bus grant funding to ESCC. The services are not in a position to run commercially..

Most of the cuts were to evening services, including the 5b to Sovereign Harbour and the 3 to Meads. It is not clear from the papers online, but it also looks like the daytime 125 service will be cut. Buses serving the Eastbourne DGH are being reduced in the evening.

[The full list of cuts and changes can be found here on the ESCC website: Bus Revenue Allocation Report.pdf](#)

The group was concerned about the impact on the nighttime economy and to residents. People that would have used buses earlier in the day won't do so if there are no buses to take them home.

The Meads buses serve the hotels and pubs in Meads and Devonshire and may be used by customers as well as staff. People working in hospitality often work antisocial hours and travel in the dark. They are also often in low paid work and can't afford to run a car, or take taxis. Removing bus services may make it impractical for them to work – fear of not being able to get home safely, or spending their earnings on taxis. Has ESCC found out who is using these services and why? Do they know the likely impact of removing them? Would it make more sense to cut some daytime services rather than nighttime services?

Who will be affected by removing nighttime services (5B) to Sovereign harbour?

Action: EABUG to raise these questions with local councillors

5.3 Stagecoach app

Katherine demonstrated the Stagecoach app to show recent changes.