Fix The District
line's Wimbledon branch

BRIEFING FOR COUNCILLORS

A peaceful commuter demonstration — and the case behind it

Thursday 15 October
5pm – 7pm

Outside Southfields station, public pavement

Peaceful and family-friendly. Come for any part of it — people will join and leave throughout. Placards provided. **Group photograph at 6pm** — the best moment to be there. Station staff and the British Transport Police are being informed as a courtesy.

What this is

We are a group of local passengers. The stretch of the District line between East Putney and Wimbledon runs on decades-old signalling, it fails repeatedly, and our branch, along with the line's other western branches, was left out of TfL's multi-billion-pound modernisation. There is **still no funded plan** to replace it. This demonstration is the visible part of a campaign built on TfL's own documents and on delays logged by passengers themselves.

Who this affects

The District line is the Underground's **fifth-busiest**, with over **250 million journeys a year** before the pandemic. On the descoped stretch alone, East Putney, Southfields and Wimbledon Park record **12.4 million** station entries and exits a year; add Wimbledon Underground station — 16.9 million, including National Rail and tram interchange — and the total is **29.3 million**. Nearly every District line train also begins on a western branch, so a fault here delays the modernised core too.

35	48%	~453,000	£0
separate days with a signal failure on this branch since February 2026	of delay reports logged while TfL's own status said "Good Service"	estimated lost customer-hours since February 2026	funded to replace the branch's signalling

Sources: TfL's own published status feed and passenger reports submitted to fixthedistrict.org, 11 February – 17 August 2026 (256 reports). Of the 35 days, TfL's status feed located a signal fault on the branch on 26; passengers logged one on 24; 15 days appear in both. Lost customer-hours is the campaign's own estimate for the period stated — it is not an annual figure. Station usage: TfL, *Usage Statistics for London Stations 2025*. District line ridership: 251.2m journeys, 2019.

The two-minute case

1. **Old signalling, and no plan to replace it.**
   In September 2020 TfL reviewed its Four Lines Modernisation programme and decided the District line's western branches would not be re-signalled — reported to TfL's Programmes and Investment Committee in December 2020, restated in July 2021 and again in June 2024. The new signalling stops at East Putney.

2. **The £500,000 patch is not the fix.**
   Before the 2026 Championships, TfL and Network Rail announced £500,000 to "strengthen signalling on the District line" — track circuits, coatings, fault-detection. It patches life-expired equipment rather than replacing it. Local reporting found it **failed three times inside a fortnight**. The permanent fix costs hundreds of millions and is unfunded.

3. **The old excuse is gone.**
   Upgrading was called too complicated partly because another operator's trains share the track. South Western Railway's operator has been publicly owned since 25 May 2025, so Government now controls both that operator and the funding settlement that pays for Tube signalling.

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In TfL's own words

Every claim above rests on published documents. These are the load-bearing ones — safe to quote and to check.

"…the western branches of the District line **will not be re-signalled**… We will continue to assess whether we can convert this signalling in the future."

TfL Programmes & Investment Committee, *Investment Programme Report Q2 2020/21*, 11 December 2020 (pack p.46) — repeated verbatim in the Committee's Four Lines Modernisation paper of 21 July 2021.
content.tfl.gov.uk/pic-20201211-agenda-and-papers-public.pdf

"The 4LM project is replacing the signalling system **as far as East Putney station.**"

TfL Freedom of Information response FOI-4657-2526, published 7 April 2026.
tfl.gov.uk — FOI-4657-2526

"…a legacy electronic 'Train Describer' system, which includes **life-expired equipment**. The equipment is **prone to faults**…"

TfL FOI-1277-2526, published 29 July 2025 — describing the branch's train-tracking and passenger-information equipment specifically, not the whole signalling system.
tfl.gov.uk — FOI-1277-2526

An automatic-operation overlay for the branches was "viewed as **unjustifiable at the present time** in view of the lower traffic density and the complications arising from joint running with other operators."

Rail Engineer, May 2023, reporting the descope rationale. The "joint running with other operators" it cites now means a publicly-owned operator.
railengineer.co.uk

Network Rail, which maintains the branch's signalling, has confirmed it holds "no funding decisions, budget allocations, or timeline documents for any signalling replacement" (**Putney News, 2 May 2026**). The three failures of the £500,000 package are reported at **Putney News, 12 July 2026**. South Western Railway's transfer into public ownership: **gov.uk**. The full library, with every source quoted in context, is at **fixthedistrict.org/evidence**.

What we're asking of you

- ☐ **Come on the day, even briefly.** Twenty minutes between 5:30pm and 6:30pm, in time for the 6pm photograph. An elected representative present is the single most useful thing for coverage.
- ☐ **Share it with your ward.** Residents' associations, ward newsletters, local WhatsApp and Facebook groups. Most people affected still don't know the branch was descoped.
- ☐ **Write to the Department for Transport and the Mayor's office.** Ask for three things: publish the branch's reliability data and a date for the fault-monitoring rollout; publish the business case for re-signalling; then fund it.
- ☐ **Point constituents at the petition.** It is open now and addressed to TfL, the Mayor and the Secretary of State for Transport.

In passengers' own words — verbatim and unedited; each was logged while TfL's own status said "Good Service"

"No announcements - nothing. It's an absolute shambles"

— passenger report, Southfields, May 2026

TfL said: "Good Service"

"Delayed by 30-40 minutes on my work commute"

— passenger report, East Putney, February 2026

TfL said: "Good Service"

"Now stranded at Parsons Green"

— passenger report, Wimbledon Park, May 2026

TfL said: "Good Service"

Links

Campaign	**fixthedistrict.org**	Sign the petition	**fixthedistrict.org/petition**
Why it keeps failing	**fixthedistrict.org/why**	Evidence library	**fixthedistrict.org/evidence**
Live data	**fixthedistrict.org/dashboard**	Event details	**fixthedistrict.org/demo**
Instagram	**@fixthedistrictline**	Facebook	**facebook.com/groups/fixthedistrict**
Contact	**campaign@fixthedistrict.org**		