

The tube and TfL in a state of disrepair?

It is right and proper that we celebrate the public transport heritage of London this year for the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Metropolitan line between Paddington and Farringdon on May 24 1862. But why has the oldest part of the tube been neglected during the line upgrades being undertaken by London Underground both within the Public Private Partnership and now that is has been brought in-house?

Take, for example, the state of disrepair on Platform 5 in Baker Street tube station where, coincidentally, we have billboards attesting to the history of the line and, as a result, many tourists.

Water penetration can be regularly seen cascading down from the Marylebone Road above the platforms and is clearly causing damage internally to the station.

This will have not escaped the notice of the many passengers of the tube who alight and make their changes in the network at this point.

Indeed, I have seen Japanese and Korean tourists being very amused by the state of it all!

I think the joke is that it would never be allowed to get to this state in their respective capital cities of Tokyo and

Transport for London may be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the tube, but it is neglecting the oldest part of the system during its line upgrades, argues Labour London Assembly Member Murad Qureshi, right



Station 'that need work': Edgware Road and, inset right, Baker Street



Seoul subway systems.

It does raise health and safety concerns which I have always assumed TfL's senior management was comfortable were being managed.

Then we have, of course, the signal box at Edgware Road.

This section of the underground is home to a signal box dating back from 1928 and still using levers to get trains through the station.

The rightful place for this piece of equipment is in a museum and not as a mechanism on a very busy

part of one the busiest networks in the world.

The equipment is several decades older than some of the younger lines – like the Victoria – yet their signals get replaced before these ancient relics of a bygone age.

More recently Edgware Road tube station has drawn the attention of an editorial in *The Guardian* newspaper because of the poor performance of the Circle line there.

It suggests it should not be called the Circle line any more as it appears not to go

west-bound or anti-clockwise from those platforms.

I have suggested it's down to the old signal box and till it gets replaced the line should be renamed the lasso line, as it now makes the dash to Hammersmith as well.

My concern is simply that the oldest part of the tube has been neglected during the line upgrades while work on the much newer lines like the Victoria, opened in 1970, and the Jubilee line extension have had a lot more attention by London Underground.

Surely inventory checks of all the stations would have picked up the conditions of the tracks, signals and platforms on this historic part of the tube system.

Rumour has it that it is deliberately kept this way, to draw funding by TfL from the Department for Transport for other parts of the tube system.

Whether that's true or not it is time now that the oldest part of the tube gets the signal box change and platform improvements it deserves to operate in the 21st century for its many users in central

London and further afield.

In short I do not think the Metropolitan line is, as it approaches its 150 year of existence, getting the respect it deserves and has lagged behind the Victoria, Jubilee and Northern lines for upgrade works.

Getting signal upgrade and platform works completed at critical points would be the best birthday present TfL can give the Met line, ahead of any transport heritage celebrations.

● Murad Qureshi is a Labour London Assembly Member.

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