

Comic book to celebrate everyday superheroes on Metro

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A stylised comic book is being produced to celebrate the work of frontline staff on the Tyne and Wear Metro.

Local artist Mike Duckett is drawing the 40-page comic in homage to the 'everyday superheroes' who undertake customer service and revenue protection roles on Metro.

Mike, an illustrator from Bardon Mill in Northumberland, will tell the stories of Metro's frontline employees as they look after customers, challenge ticketless travel and provide a reassuring presence on stations and trains – all through the medium of comic book art.

He will be taking inspiration from a range of comics, including the iconic pages of DC and Marvel comics.

The project, which forms part the big Metro Community Takeover, involves Mike travelling across the rail network to meet with and bring to life the stories of some of Metro's 120 customer service advisors as they go about their work.

He said: "Usually you see superheroes like Batman and Spiderman in the pages of comic books, but I want to capture the everyday jobs of frontline Metro workers as they perform their duties – they are the real superheroes."

"The brief I've been set is to bring this vital job, and the challenges that it presents, to life through the medium of comic book art."

"The customer services staff on Metro do a brilliant job. I've already got to know many of them and it's pretty cool to think that they will be immortalised in the finished comic."

"As an artist this is a great project for me to be involved in. I love comic book art and it's fantastic to be able to get out there and start sketching ordinary Metro staff while they're at work."

"They are going to be the stars in their very own comic, whether that is helping a customer use a ticket machine or helping a person with the gatelines. It's all part of the everyday that I aim to capture in my drawings."

"The Metro is an iconic transport system and I don't think it has ever been represented through this type of artwork before. It's a new and very contemporary way of celebrating the Metro and its staff."

"I've already started sketching the comic and I am planning more trips out with my paper and pens before I sit down and get to work on the final draft, which will be published for people to buy and keep."

Mike will produce a final printed 'Metro comic book' which will be available to buy as part of the Metro network's 40th anniversary celebrations.

The Metro Takeover programme involves major regional arts organisations running community projects and commissions which are being showcased at stations across the busy urban transit system by Metro's operator, Nexus.

Customer Services Director at Nexus, Huw Lewis, said: "Metro has a long tradition of promoting public art but this is the first time we have commissioned comic book art. We are really excited to be showcasing the work of staff through this fascinating and iconic medium."

"Our illustrator Mike Duckett will be visiting locations across the Metro system to draw the customer service staff and he is then going to put it all together into a real comic book, which we are going to get published as part of the Metro Community Takeover."

"Over the last year Metro has been turned into a platform for community arts and live performances by creative people from across North East England over the coming year as part of the Metro Takeover, our biggest ever community arts programme."

"Creative arts and the barriers it breaks down are a great way to help people reconnect with Metro in their everyday lives."

Between August 2021 and spring 2022 Metro will be brought to life in new ways through dance, song, music and visual arts projects involving people right across the region and funded by Arts Council England.