

Meldreth to Melbourn has a 'Wonderpass' thanks to community action

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Magical murals and improved lighting have transformed the Meldreth to Melbourn underpass, thanks to community action.

The vibrant murals have the feel of a giant art gallery and include artwork from 40 community groups, painted by volunteers of all ages over the Easter break. More than 100 volunteers helped in the first week alone.

The underpass was treated to a makeover after South Cambridgeshire District Council's Community Rail Partnership Project Officer coordinated a survey, which showed that seven in 10 people avoided the area after dark and that residents wanted a vibrant art space created by the community.

The makeover includes new reflective paint throughout the underpass to naturally enhance light, new electric lights that come on earlier and stay on later, and murals painted along the length of the underpass. In addition, vegetation outside has been cut back to improve sight lines.

The project was funded by grants from Melbourn and Meldreth Parish Councils, South Cambridgeshire

District Council, Govia Thameslink Railway, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Community Rail Development Fund, and SDC contractors; and with support from Cambridgeshire County Council and the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership.

Cllr Susan van de Ven, Chair of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership, said: "People of all ages, from babies and toddlers to grandparents, have come together to create this wonderful place in a short window of time. Seeing grassroots community action like this is truly heart-warming. Moreover, we are really pleased to make this area feel safe in response to a call from local people. Months of preparation have included indispensable advice and support from SDC, who have been on site at Melbourn Science Park for the past couple of years and wanted to contribute to a lasting community project. The Meldreth-Melbourn underpass is a great example of partnership at work."

The murals serve as a living art gallery along the whole length of the underpass, with frames of different sizes and shapes painted on the walls. Each of these frames contains artwork representing 40 different groups and organisations including schools, youth groups, places of worship and community groups. .

South Cambridgeshire District Council hosted two "meet the artist" sessions at the Warm Hub in Melbourn for people to explore and refine their ideas for the wall resulting in a colourful border stretching the length of the underpass which includes plants, flowers, mushrooms and creatures.

The painting was completed over six days during the Easter Holidays, working with local artist Bec Barnes who transposed sketches and chalked out outlines leaving volunteers to fill in with paint. The Council provided paint and paintbrushes for people to come and take part as much or as little as they wanted.

Cllr SallyAnn Hart, ward member for Melbourn, said: "It has been an absolute joy to witness the coming together of community groups over the Easter holidays and see the underpass transformed so quickly. Vibrant designs have been lovingly transferred to the blank wall space and frames added. At one point, the raised painting walkway was full of enthusiastic artists! I took this opportunity to stand back and admire people from all ages and stages of life, working together to help create a safer space full of wonder for passers-by at any time of day.

Cllr Jose Hales, ward member for Melbourn, said: "A huge thank you to everyone for their input into the project including the dozens of local artists who have contributed such wonderful pieces of artwork, SDC for their continued support of the project without whom we wouldn't have been able to do this in the first place. Also, local lead artist Bec Barnes, who led the actual painting of the underpass and the design. It is truly magnificent. The repaint of the underpass has totally changed the underpass from a dark, damp, unwelcoming space, to a bright, beautifully decorated safe space."

Angie Palmer, Head of Stations for Great Northern and Thameslink, said: "We're delighted and proud to have been a part of this magical community art project. It's a phenomenal achievement to have involved so many local people in this wonderful transformation. It really has brightened up the walk to the station and made it a more pleasurable and memorable experience."

Photo credit: South Cambridgeshire District Council