

# Ledley King on the Bench

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The latest set of public artwork figures, produced by Laser Process of Cannock, have been unveiled in a park in Tower Hamlets, near the Olympic Park in London. The artwork was unveiled in Mile End Park, Bethnal Green on Monday 15 August, with three local icons Ledley King, Sylvia Pankhurst and a canal towpath horse immortalised in steel as part of charity Sustrans' portrait bench initiative.

The characters were all chosen by the local community, and are part of a national project which is adorning new sections of Sustrans' National Cycle Network in communities across the UK. Over 240 characters will be immortalised in steel when the project is completed.

The bench will sit in Mile End Park alongside the new Meath Bridge, which having been installed in 2010 is already making a major difference to how people make their everyday journeys in the Borough. Commuter journeys on foot and by bike have increased fivefold in Meath Gardens since the bridge was lifted into place.

Tim Temple from Sustrans said, "The characters chosen for the portrait bench here in Tower Hamlets are a real mix that showcase different aspects of the community, from industrial heritage to a present day sports star from the heart of East London. The bench will act as a permanent reminder to future generations of the history and diversity of this part of the capital."

Ledley King, Tottenham Hotspur and England international defender, said, "To be recognised for any achievement is always a privilege and is especially welcome when it is something determined by the people of the area from which you were born. I'm proud of my roots in East London and I have fond memories of playing football there as a youngster. I have now seen the portrait bench and hope it will contribute to the overall improvement of the area in which it is situated."

Susan Homewood, of the Sylvia Pankhurst Trust, said, "Sylvia Pankhurst was a selfless and inspiring figure whose fascinating real-life story, set here in Bow during World War I, continues to give young people the confidence to do great things for others. We're sure portrait bench will encourage further generations to learn more about her."

Mark Blackwell, from British Waterways, added, "The canals have played an important part in the history of East London, and we're delighted that local people have chosen to honour the working horse through Sustrans' portrait bench initiative.

"The capital's canals and towpaths are a green route through the city for walkers and cyclists; they are a haven for nature, a place to relax and a link to the past."

Mayor Lutfur Rahman, Tower Hamlets Council, said, "Tower Hamlets boasts a rich and varied history, and it is fantastic that this heritage is represented in the characters selected for the borough's portrait bench."

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