

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment 2022



Version Control

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The well-being assessment is made up of different parts:

- Gwent as a whole (see www.gwentpsb.org/well-being-plan/well-being-assessment for more details of the Gwent well-being assessment)
- Monmouthshire as a whole
- 5 local areas within Monmouthshire centred around Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Chepstow, and Caldicot.

A summary of the Monmouthshire well-being assessment is also available. To see further analysis please visit www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire

Abergavenny and surrounding area

Environmental Well-being

This area includes Abergavenny, an important market town which provides a range of services to its rural hinterland and includes Monmouthshire's only main hospital, a railway station and bus terminus. Its town centre is a conservation area containing many listed buildings, including the ruins of the Norman Abergavenny Castle. Together with the nearby village of Llanfoist, it is overlooked and sheltered by the Blorenge and the Sugar Loaf mountains, located to the southwest and northwest, respectively. Rural areas include the Llantony and Grwyne Fawr valleys, former industrial areas around Clydach and Black Rock, as well as the rolling countryside south and southwest of Abergavenny.

Abergavenny is the gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park and is heavily used for tourism and walking and cycling, contributing to the local economy. Other parts of the area comprise very rural, productive agricultural land with a few villages and scattered settlements. Just under 50% of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site lies in Monmouthshire. The World Heritage Site was designated as it shows evidence of the pre-eminence of South Wales as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th century.

Elsewhere, landscapes range from mountains and moorland to pastoral sheep grazed landscapes, from broadleaved woodlands on steep valley sides to the River Usk, with the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal running parallel.

"Lovely walks, canal and mountains to explore"

In terms of biodiversity, the Abergavenny area has 4 Special Areas of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive – the River Usk due to its exceptionally clean and natural state (although under threat, as previously discussed), with good water flows and the range of important fish species it supports, as well as otter; Cwm Clydach Woodlands, which is mainly beech; Sugar Loaf Woodlands, old sessile oak woodland; and a small part of the Mynydd Llangattock Usk Bat Site.

There are 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, with habitats including river, geological, woodland, bat roosts, meadow and pond, and over 80 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.¹

Threats to habitats in this area include:

- Grazing and recreation pressures result in several areas of exposed peat vulnerable to erosion (Crucorney). Peat is important for slowing down flood water, reducing the effect

Children between 5 and 11 years at Abergavenny's Monmouthshire Games, when asked what was good about where they live, said:

"Nature, because it's pretty. The waterfalls, because I like the noise"

"I have a park near me"

"I like the scenery"

of drought, and supporting good water quality, providing important habitat as well as 'locking in' carbon.²

- Some woodlands are fragmented and would play a more important role if they were linked together.
- Tree disease may cause further fragmentation of woodland parcels.
- Habitat loss due to development.

The Llanelly Hill and Clydach areas have Monmouthshire's only peat deposits, important for storing carbon and slowing down flood water. Soil quality in the area is generally low-quality agricultural land, mainly Grade 4 and 5, with some of the floodplains Grade 3.³

Within Abergavenny itself, there is good access to well used natural green spaces such as Bailey Park, Linda Vista Gardens, Abergavenny Castle, Castle Meadows and Swan Meadows. There are many historic parks and gardens and many recreation areas, school and public playing fields, but many of these do not have a full range of environmental features such as trees, water, and 'wilder' habitats.



Castle Meadows, Abergavenny

The northern residential areas of Abergavenny are particularly poorly served by natural open space, and much of the rural area surrounding Abergavenny does not have sufficient accessible natural green space.⁴

There are many Tree Preservation Orders on individual or groups of trees in Abergavenny, especially along the Gavenny River and in the Castle Ward more generally where older housing stock is concentrated.⁵ Urban tree cover in Abergavenny is 17.5%, higher than the Monmouthshire average of 15%, and the Wales average of 16.3%. However, there has been an overall decrease in urban tree cover in Abergavenny of 3 hectares from 2009 to 2013.⁶

Much of Abergavenny town northern residential area and along the River Usk is prone to flooding. 60 properties and 226 people in Abergavenny town are at High (1 in 30 years) or Medium (1 in 100 years) risk of flooding from surface water, and 1,018 properties and 2,392 people are at risk of flooding by rivers are Low risk (1 in 1,000 years). The figure at low risk from flooding for Abergavenny and the surrounding area as a whole rises to 1,268 properties and 2,980 people.⁷ Rivers also flood several roads in this area, such as the A4042 at Llanellen. In February 2020, nine residential properties, two farms, a church, and a caravan site were flooded in Llanwenarth, and in Pandy one residential and four commercial premises were flooded.⁸

With an increase in winter rainfall in Wales projected in the future, flooding is likely to be a greater threat than ever to these communities.

Watercourses form an important part of the Green Infrastructure in and around Abergavenny, including the River Usk and its floodplain, the River Gavenny which flows through Abergavenny and the Monmouthshire, and Brecon Canal situated to the south of Llanfoist. Water quality varies across this area. The River Usk, although designated as a Special Area of Conservation partly due to its clean state, is assessed as Moderate quality under the Water Framework Directive (based on a combination of ecological and chemical monitoring.) The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal that runs through the area is of Good quality. However, the River Honddu, which runs down the Llanthony Valley, and the River Clydach, are both of Poor quality under the EU Water Framework Directive.⁹ Waterways assessed as bad, poor or moderate are deemed as failing the EU Water Framework Directive standards and need to be improved to at least good by 2027. The Honddu and Clydach are failing due to fish numbers since the steep nature of these streams mean that there are natural barriers blocking access for fish further upstream. Sewage issues contributing to poor water quality also exist in Abergavenny town.

The Abergavenny area has 9 Groundwater Source Protection Zones which seek to protect underground aquifers as an important source of drinking water.

Although none of this area exceeds the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective, although some areas continue to be closely monitored.¹⁰

The Abergavenny area has an extremely vibrant and varied voluntary sector working in the environmental and sustainability field, with an active Transition Town group, Friends of the Earth group, Incredible Edible group, Fairtrade Forum, many 'Friends of' groups working in

local parks and green spaces as well as newer arrivals such as Extinction Rebellion Abergavenny. The strength of the third sector in and around Abergavenny is a great asset.



Abergavenny during the annual Food Festival

There is much work going on at a community level, and with local partnerships, to support and promote local food growing. This ranges from the extremely successful annual Abergavenny Food Festival to the Our Food project. Supported by Monmouthshire County Council, the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Welsh Government, Our Food aims to support and encourage local and sustainable farming and growing and to connect growers with local and

regional markets.¹¹ Our Food works across Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons, but with a particular focus on Abergavenny, Crickhowell and the Brecon Beacons.

Economic Well-being

Although average house prices in this area are above the national average, Abergavenny has the lowest prices of Monmouthshire's 5 areas, with 4 wards among the 10 least expensive in the county.¹²

Abergavenny's vacancy rate of 7.6% in the central shopping area is the highest since 2016, which might be a result of the pandemic. The rise in total vacancy rates has been across primary and secondary frontages, although the most significant increase has been across primary frontages. Despite being relatively high, the 7.6% rate is still below the British high street vacancy rate, and some engagement responses highlighted the town centre providing everything needed, so that residents do not need to leave Abergavenny for anything.¹³

"I would like Abergavenny to continue to be a place where you can eat out healthily and well in independent cafes/restaurants in every price bracket; where there are independent shops, not chain stores"

In this area, 12% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 15% considered to be income deprived. 215 people are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for unemployment, of which 60 are aged 16-24. 16.6% of children are in low-income families. Abergavenny includes Llanover 1, Cantref 2, Lansdown and Croesonen which are in the 30% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. Cantref 2 has the highest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county and the second-highest percentage of working-age people in employment deprivation.¹⁴ Parts of Cantref (Cantref 2) are the most deprived in Monmouthshire, particularly in terms of income: 28% of people in this area are in income deprivation.

Given these figures, Abergavenny has a higher proportion of deprivation than the other four areas of Monmouthshire. 18% of the households in the Abergavenny catchment area are below 50% of the median income for the UK, and 24% are below 60%. This compares to 17% and 22% respectively for Monmouthshire, and 25% and 33% for Wales as a whole.¹⁵

Social Well-being

Abergavenny and the surrounding area has a population of just over 27,000, the most populated of the five areas. Of this population, 15.7% are children aged between 0-15, and 27.6% of residents are aged 65 and over.

Of the five areas, Abergavenny has the highest proportion of areas in the most deprived 20% in Monmouthshire, with 6 out of 11 areas.

Parts of Cantref (Cantref 2) are the most deprived in Monmouthshire. Croesonen and Lansdown are adjoining areas in Abergavenny where income, employment and health are the most evident types of deprivation. Grofield is most deprived in terms of community safety, while more rural Llanover suffers from poor access to services and housing.

Some areas in Abergavenny and surrounding communities are ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales for access to services, as classified by the Wales Index for Multiple Deprivation, particularly for public transport travel times. For example, Crucorney is amongst the top 50 most deprived areas in Wales for access to services as classified by the Wales Index for Multiple Deprivation. In the area, return trips on public transport take over 2.5 hours to reach services such as a library or sports facility.

Flying Start is available to families in parts of Lansdown, Croesonen and Cantref in North Abergavenny on a postcode basis and childcare is provided by three playgroups. A higher percentage of low weight babies are born in parts of Priory and Mardy.

In the Abergavenny area, local indicators for school-age children fare marginally better than Monmouthshire as a whole, although there are proportionately more adults without qualifications. Cantref 2 has poorer educational outcomes; for example, 15% of key stage 4 leavers enter higher education, compared to 33.1% in Monmouthshire overall, while 30.7% of adults have no qualifications, compared to 13.2% across Monmouthshire.¹⁶

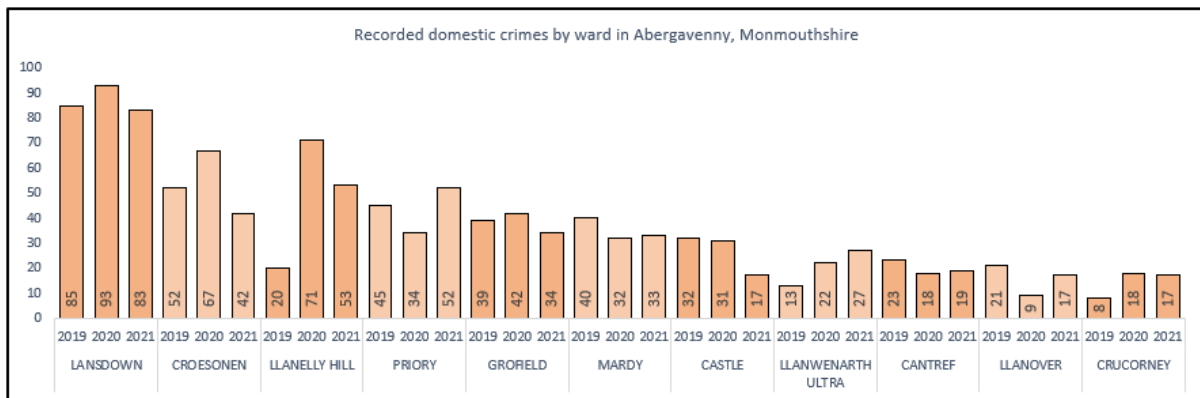
Abergavenny has the fewest residents of the five areas who report that their health is very good or good, with 77%. In each of the other 5 areas, over 80% of people are positive about their health. In the Abergavenny area, the fewest people who felt that their health was very good or good were in the areas of Lansdown (71%), Cantref 1 (74%) and Croesonen (75%). Cantref 2, Lansdown and Croesonen are the areas with high rates of people living with long term limiting illnesses or mental health conditions. Cancer incidences are highest in parts of Grofield.¹⁷

From November 2020 to November 2021, overall crime in Abergavenny decreased from 35.1% to 33.9% of Monmouthshire's total, with a reduction of recorded crimes of Shoplifting, Theft,

and Residential and Commercial Burglaries. This could be due, in part, to the pandemic and lockdown periods. There have been increases in other offences, notably Other Sexual Offences and Criminal Damage.

From April 2020 to March 2021 361 incidents of ASB were recorded, accounting for 31.8% of all reported ASB across Monmouthshire. The wards with the highest prevalence were Priory, Llanfoist Fawr South and Grofield, which are predominantly town centre wards. As of January 2021, there were 91 adults accessing support, 51 for alcohol and 40 for other substances. Violence Without Injury and Order offences have reduced, though the numbers remains relatively high for these wards. Residents in the Abergavenny areas commented that a greater Police presence is needed to deal with ASB, vandalism, crime and speeding.

Lansdown in Abergavenny has recorded the most domestic-related crime over the last three years. From January 2021 to November 2021, Lansdown made up 21% of all recorded crime in the Abergavenny area.



Cultural Well-being

Abergavenny is steeped in history with regards to the Welsh language, with cultural figureheads such as Lady Llanover having resided in the area. The area has hosted the National Eisteddfod twice, most recently in 2016, and is also the home of Cymreigyddion y Fenni – the Abergavenny Welsh Society. The Welsh primary school, Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni, is well established and currently has over 250 pupils. 86% of the population in the area have no skills in Welsh, the second lowest of the 5 areas.¹⁸



National Eisteddfod 2016 in Abergavenny

The Abergavenny area is also the most diverse in terms of ethnicity; although those of white ethnicity make up the vast majority of the population, proportions of mixed race and Asian

ethnicities are the highest in Monmouthshire (0.8% and 1.4%). 62.1% of the population in the area declare themselves as Christian.¹⁹

The area holds a number of festivals and events. The area is internationally recognised for its food, with the annual Abergavenny Food festival attracting thousands of visitors every September. Further regular food and craft markets are also a popular attraction throughout the year.

Pen y Pound stadium hosts high level football, with both men's and women's teams competing with teams across Wales. Abergavenny Cricket Club is one of the oldest clubs in the world and has previously hosted many first class games. There are many other local clubs throughout the area that offer grassroots sport for football, rugby and cricket, in particular.

Abergavenny and surrounding area's main built heritage includes Abergavenny castle, museum, St Mary's Priory church and the market hall. The Borough Theatre in Abergavenny, for which funding has recently been announced for renovations, hosts drama, music and comedy shows.

The average public travel time to a sports facility in Abergavenny and the surrounding area is much higher than that of the Welsh average, at 92 minutes (55 minutes for Wales), and for private travel is slightly higher than the Wales average, at 15 minutes. Travel time to a public library is the 3rd highest in Monmouthshire at 64 minutes (45 in Wales) for public transport and 12 minutes for private travel (10 minutes in Wales). With a bus station and a train station in its town centre, Abergavenny is better connected than its more rural surrounding wards.

What would make the area better?

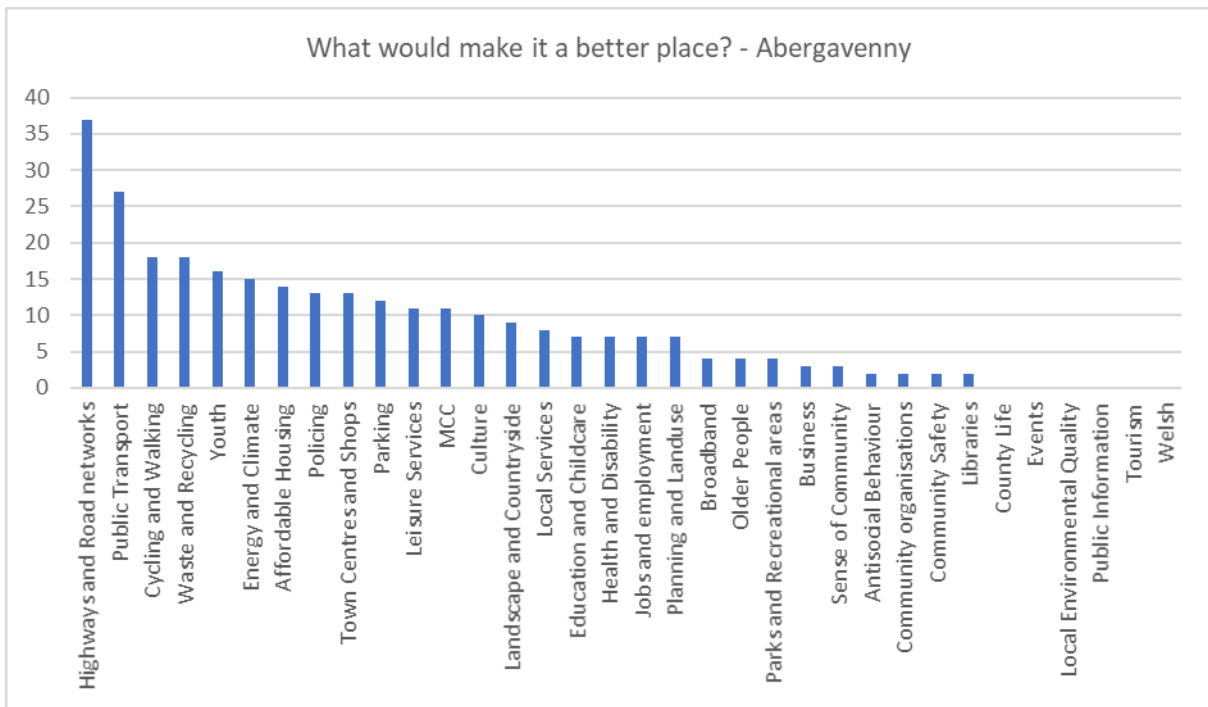
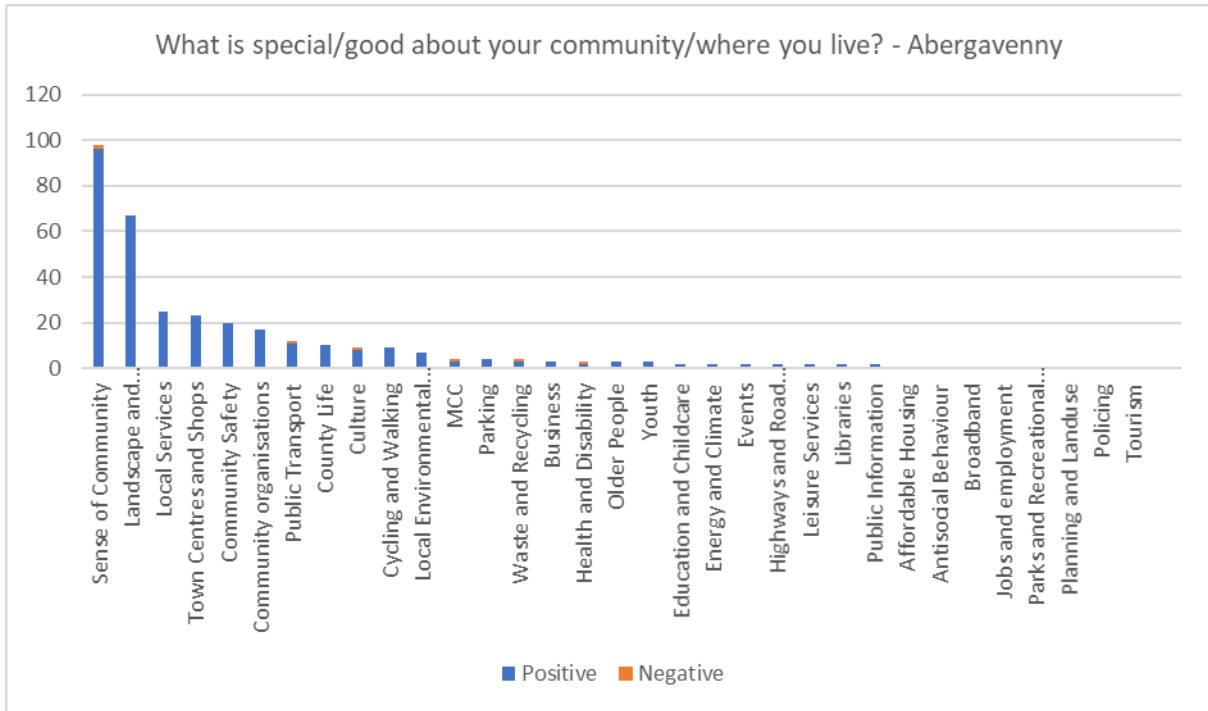
"Buses to more locations and express buses to some e.g. Abergavenny to Monmouth"

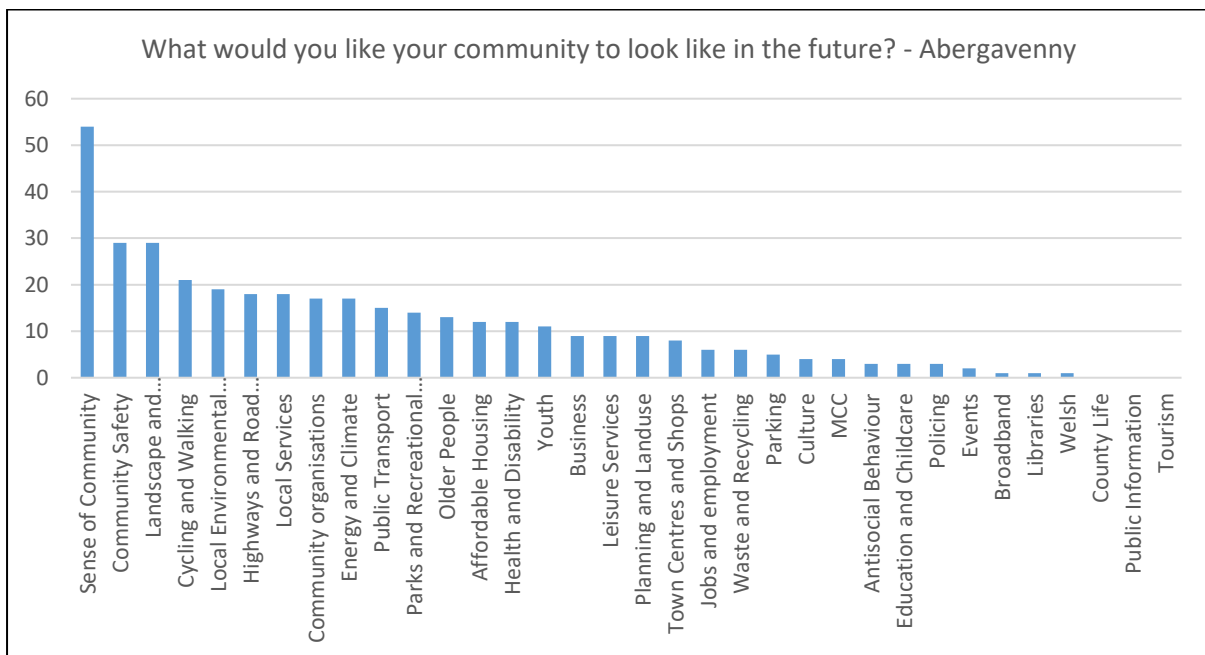
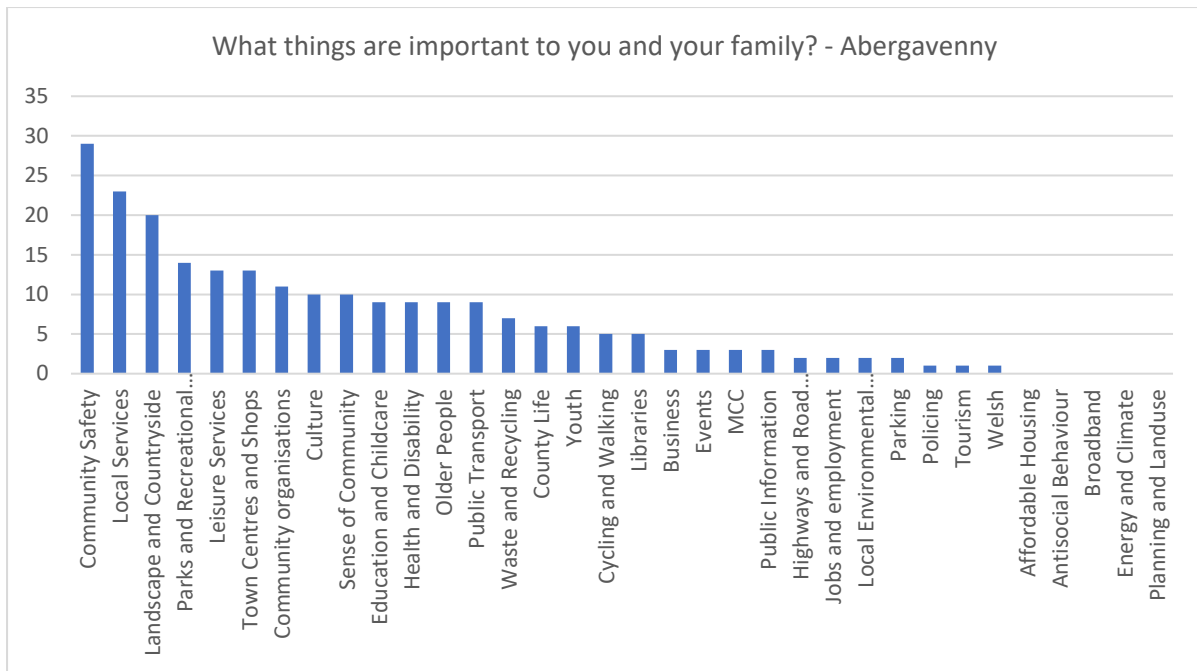
"Minibus transport that helps link villages together, especially people who can't drive"

Engagement responses

A summary of the responses from the area to some of the engagement exercise questions is provided. To make it easier to analyse the many diverse comments that were received to the open-ended questions that were asked, comments were grouped into categories or themes. This allows us to identify some of the most common themes that respondents in the area mentioned.

The following graphs show the themes that were used to categorise the comments, and where appropriate, whether these were more positive or negative in response is provided.





¹ All figures from Monmaps Countryside Layer

² How peat could protect the planet
www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00355-3

³ Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW, 2016

⁴ MCC Open Space Study, Ashley Godfrey Associates, 2008
www.planningpolicy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MonmouthshireOpenSpace-Dec08.pdf

⁵ Monmaps Countryside Layer

⁶ Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities, NRW, 2016
<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/679615/eng-urban-tree-summary-2016.pdf?mode=pad>

⁷ Monmouthshire Flood Risk Management Plan

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- ⁸ Section 19 Flood Investigation Report, Llanwenarth, February 2020
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/07/Llanwenarth-S19-Report-Feb-2020-FINAL.pdf;
Winter Flooding 2019/2020 Summary of Main Impacts and Actions
- ⁹ Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW, 2016
- ¹⁰ MCC 2021 Air Quality Progress Report
- ¹¹ <https://our-food.org>
- ¹² UK House Price Index summary: July 2021
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-summary-july-2021
- ¹³ MCC Adopted Local Development Plan 2011-2021 Annual Monitoring Report
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2020/12/AMR-2019-2020.pdf
- ¹⁴ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019
<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation/?lang=en>
- ¹⁵ MCC 2020 Retail Background Paper – March 2021
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf
- ¹⁶ WIMD Education Domain
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-Indicator-data-2019/indicatordata-by-lowerlayersuperoutputarea-educationdomain>
- ¹⁷ WIMD Health Domain
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-Indicator-data-2019/indicatordata-by-lowerlayersuperoutputarea-healthdomain>
- ¹⁸ Welsh Language Skills, Census 2011
www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks207wa
- ¹⁹ Ethnic Group, Census 2011
www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks201uk