

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment 2022



Version Control

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Owner	Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny
Approved by	Draft
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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

Monmouth and surrounding area

Environmental Well-being

This area focuses around the historic town of Monmouth, located where the Rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye meet, and includes the southwestern quarter of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is almost continuous tree cover from Monmouth down the Wye Valley towards Chepstow and flower-rich neutral meadows on the plateaux above the Wye. To the north and west of Monmouth, the area is very rural and sparsely populated, with rolling countryside, mixed agriculture and Grade 3 and 4 quality land and very few local communities.

The area is important for tourism, as well as employment in agriculture and forestry. As elsewhere in Monmouthshire, tourism is particularly reliant on maintaining the natural beauty and diverse wildlife in the area.¹

Under the EC Habitats Directive, there are three Special Areas of Conservation in this area: The River Wye for its natural state, clean water and wide range of species, Wye Valley Woodlands, protected because they provide more or less continuous tree cover and the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites. Each of these three areas is important at a European level.

“Beautiful scenery, clean air, nice rivers, freedom to roam, run, walk”

This area also has Monmouthshire’s only two National Nature reserves, both woodland, of UK importance. There are also 39 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, mainly woodland and grassland, and 320 locally important Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation, both the largest number of sites out of any of the 5 areas in this assessment.² The southern part of this area also has the county’s only Local Nature Reserve, Cleddon Bog.

Tree disease is a significant threat that could fragment some of the well-connected woodlands of the Wye Valley. Current threats include Ash Dieback and Larch disease which all have the potential to affect dramatically the landscape character of the AONB.³ In 2013, Natural Resources Wales felled approximately 80 hectares of infected Larch trees in the Wye Valley area, but further surveys have identified approximately 300,000 newly infected Larch trees, covering 270 hectares of the forest.⁴ In 2021, substantial areas of larch were felled in Trellech Common, for example.⁵

The Wye Valley, and its importance for tourism, has been covered in the section in Chepstow and the Lower Wye. The importance of the Wye Valley for landscape is reflected by its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and it features the meandering River Wye, wooded scarps and limestone cliffs, together with castles at Monmouth and dotted throughout the rolling hills and valleys. The Wye Valley Walk and Offa’s Dyke path take in Monmouth and parts of this area, too. Monmouth and the surrounding area has 603km of public rights of way. However, once again, in terms of accessible natural green space, although Monmouth town is reasonably well served, and includes Chippenham Mead, Drybridge Park,

Claypatch Wood, Two River Meadow and Vauxhall Meadow, some of the rural wards in this area have no accessible green space, and some villages and rural communities are lacking in provision for outdoor sports.⁶

Urban tree cover in Monmouth town is 17.5%, higher than most other Monmouthshire towns. However, 5 hectares were lost between 2009-13.⁷ This reduction in tree cover results in a subsequent loss of benefits to health and well-being, absorption of pollution, biodiversity, and reduction in surface water run-off.

The meeting of the rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye at Monmouth means that the town is at particularly high flood risk. Although flood defences on the town side of the river mean that much of the town has some protection, there have been significant and devastating floods in recent years, most notably during Storm Dennis in February 2020, when as well as flooding 56 properties in Monmouth, there was substantial damage to infrastructure. The Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) Water Treatment Plant at Mayhill was also flooded in February 2020, with 7,400 properties affected by the loss of water supply. Supplies were maintained with a fleet of tankers bringing clean water, and bottled water supplies were provided, where needed. Supplies from the treatment plant were only restored 11 days after the flood event.⁸

The village of Skenfrith was also badly affected by flooding in both October 2019 and February 2020, with 18 properties flooding both times, as well as the local pub and village hall.⁹

In Monmouthshire's Flood Management Plan, 116 people and 18 properties are identified as being at high or medium risk of flooding from surface water, with 1,473 properties and 3,462 people at low risk of river flooding.

Following a successful funding bid to the Rural Development Programme, Transition Monmouth managed a project to assess the potential for natural flood management solutions around Monmouth.¹⁰ This has been further developed with a detailed study of the Kingswood area, to seek funding to install the recommended measures.¹¹

Monmouth has a very active voluntary sector working on sustainability, including Transition Monmouth. Monmouth Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency and established the Action on Climate Emergency, or ACE Monmouth group, which have been proactive in organising work to protect green spaces, encourage active travel and the Monmouth Climate Futures Festival.¹²

Water quality in this area varies. The River Monnow is of good quality, whereas the Trothy is only moderate quality, probably due to the impact of agriculture. As described previously, the River Wye is of good and moderate quality, and is nationally important for its fisheries, but is currently threatened by nitrate and phosphate pollution.¹³ A small area of Trellech is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, as is a small section crossing the border adjacent to Monmouth. These are designated for groundwater which has, or could have if action is not taken, a high level of nitrates, due to agricultural practices. There are also 5 Groundwater Source Protection Zones in place to protect underground drinking water supplies from pollution.

Although there are no Air Quality Management Zones in Monmouth and the surrounding area, there are some concerns about nitrogen dioxide emissions caused by traffic on the A40 in Monmouth. Monmouthshire County Council continues to monitor air quality along the A40 and in the town centre, particularly given the proximity to sensitive locations such as Monmouth School.¹⁴ The council has recently moved the children’s play area in Chippenham Fields away from the A40, which means that the children are not playing close to the source of air pollution, and benefit from a much more accessible, sustainable, inclusive and stimulating play area.¹⁵

Economic Well-being

House prices in this area are high, with 4 wards among the 10 most expensive in the county but 2 wards are among the 10 least expensive – the least expensive being in Overmonnow which is in the 30% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. The house prices in this area therefore demonstrate the disparities that are possible within Monmouthshire, with the more affluent wards having the potential to mask those that are more deprived.¹⁶

In 2020, 15.4% of all units within Monmouth’s central shopping area were vacant, the highest proportion on record, following a rise in 2019.¹⁷ The steepest climb in vacancy rates has been across secondary frontages, from 12.3% in 2018 to 21.1%. This might, in part, reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the high street, particularly with the loss of some national chains from Monmouth, such as Peacocks.¹⁸

“Monmouth high street should (and could) be a destination high street but at the moment is lacking in variety and I am often forced to go out of town or shop online”

In this area, 7% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 12% considered to be income deprived. 105 people (0.94%) are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for unemployment, of which 25 are aged 16-24.¹⁹ 14.8% of children are in low-income families. Monmouth includes Overmonnow 2, which is in the 30% most deprived LSOAs in Wales and has the third-highest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county, and the highest percentage of working-age people in employment deprivation.²⁰ Monmouth also includes Dixton with Osbaston, which has the joint lowest level of deprivation for income and employment in the county (along with Mitchel Troy for the latter) – illustrating, the disparity within Monmouthshire.

In the Monmouth catchment area, 18% of households 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.²¹

Social Well-being

The population of Monmouth and the surrounding area is just over 17,000. 16.9% of the population of Monmouth and its surroundings are aged between 0-15, the highest of the five areas, while 26.6% of the population are aged 65 and over.²²

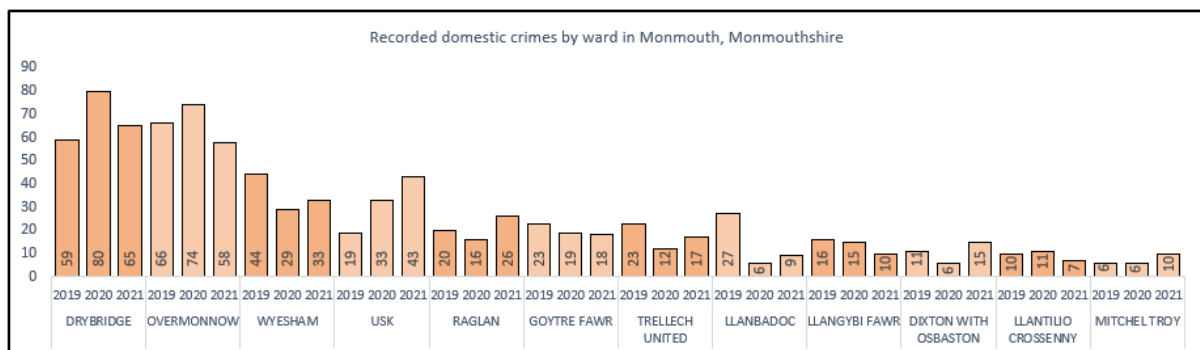
Monmouth and its surroundings have only one area in the most deprived 20% of areas in Monmouthshire. Part of Overmonnow (Overmonnow 2) is ranked the second most deprived area in Monmouthshire, where employment and education are the main concerns. 16% of working-age people in Overmonnow 2 are in employment deprivation, the highest in Monmouthshire, and 23.2% of working-age adults have no qualifications.²³ Residents in some parts of Overmonnow are eligible for Flying Start for pre-school children.

Access to services in the area around Monmouth is a key issue, with some areas being ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales. For example, Llantilio Crossenny is ranked the sixth most deprived area in Wales for access to services. In this area, two-thirds of households suffer from the unavailability of broadband at 30Mb/s and 3 hours average round trips on public transport to key services such as food shop, pharmacy, post office, library and secondary school.²⁴

80% of people in Monmouth and the surrounding communities report that their health is good or very good. Within the Monmouth area, this varies from 65% in Overmonnow 2 (the second most deprived area in Monmouthshire) to 86% in Trellech United 2.²⁵

From November 2020 to November 2021, overall crime in Monmouth increased from 24.5% to 25.4% of the county’s (n.b.: crime data for Monmouth includes Usk and Raglan). There has been a reduction of recorded crimes for Shoplifting, Theft, and Residential and Commercial Burglaries, possibly due, in part, to the pandemic and lockdown periods. There has been a notable increase in Violence Without Injury from 254 recorded incidents to 398. Violence With Injury, Public Order Offences and Rape also saw notable increases. From April 2020 to March 2021, 250 incidents of ASB were recorded, accounting for 22% of all reported ASB across Monmouthshire. The wards with the highest prevalence were Drybridge, Overmonnow and Trellech United. As of January 2021, there were 46 adults accessing support, 31 for alcohol and 15 for other substances.

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



Cultural Well-being

The market town of Monmouth is located on the river Monnow and acts as the main retail, educational, and cultural centre for an extensive rural area, including much of north-eastern and central Monmouthshire, and extending into the Forest of Dean and Herefordshire. Its location on the border between England and Wales is an important factor in the culture of the area, with the surrounding area of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty being of key environmental importance.

Compared to the other areas in Monmouthshire, the Monmouth area has a higher proportion of ethnic groups within its population, according to the 2011 Census. Despite these figures being low, reflected by the Monmouthshire figures as a whole, Monmouth has the 2nd highest mixed race population (0.7%) and 2nd highest Asian population (0.4%). Census data shows that the area is consistent with that of the county, as circa 62% of the population declared themselves Christian.

In terms of the Welsh language, there is an active Welsh society, Cymdeithas Gymraeg Trefynwy a'r Cylch, providing opportunities to socialise in Welsh in an informal setting. Welsh education for the Monmouth area requires travelling to either primary school in the county; both journeys are approximately 19 miles. An even further journey (24 miles) is needed for the nearest Welsh medium secondary school education, based in Torfaen. The lack of school provision is reflected in the figures, with the Monmouth area having the equal-highest proportion of population with no skills in Welsh.

The town of Monmouth has significant archaeological and historical importance. The Council for British Archaeology has previously designated Monmouth as the seventh best town for archaeology in Britain. In May 2012, Monmouth became the world's first Wikipedia project to cover a whole town, Monmouthpedia. The project covers notable places, people, artefacts, flora, fauna and other things in Monmouth in as many languages as possible, with a special focus on Welsh.²⁶

The built heritage of Monmouth and the surrounding area includes the Nelson Garden, Shire Hall, Market Hall, the Monnow Bridge, and Agincourt square.

Monmouth and the surrounding area also has a thriving arts, festivals and events scene. The town centre is home to a nationally and internationally significant collection of Nelson material, a theatre and cinema. Plans are underway to develop Shire Hall as a new cultural attraction and museum. Festivals and events include the annual Monmouthshire agricultural Show and the Monmouth Festival, a free nine-day music festival.

Following significant investment, the leisure centre in Monmouth has upgraded its fitness and sports facilities and also offers a play centre for primary school aged children. Monmouth Rowing Club is located beside the river Wye and caters for the membership of the club as well as the 3 school rowing clubs.

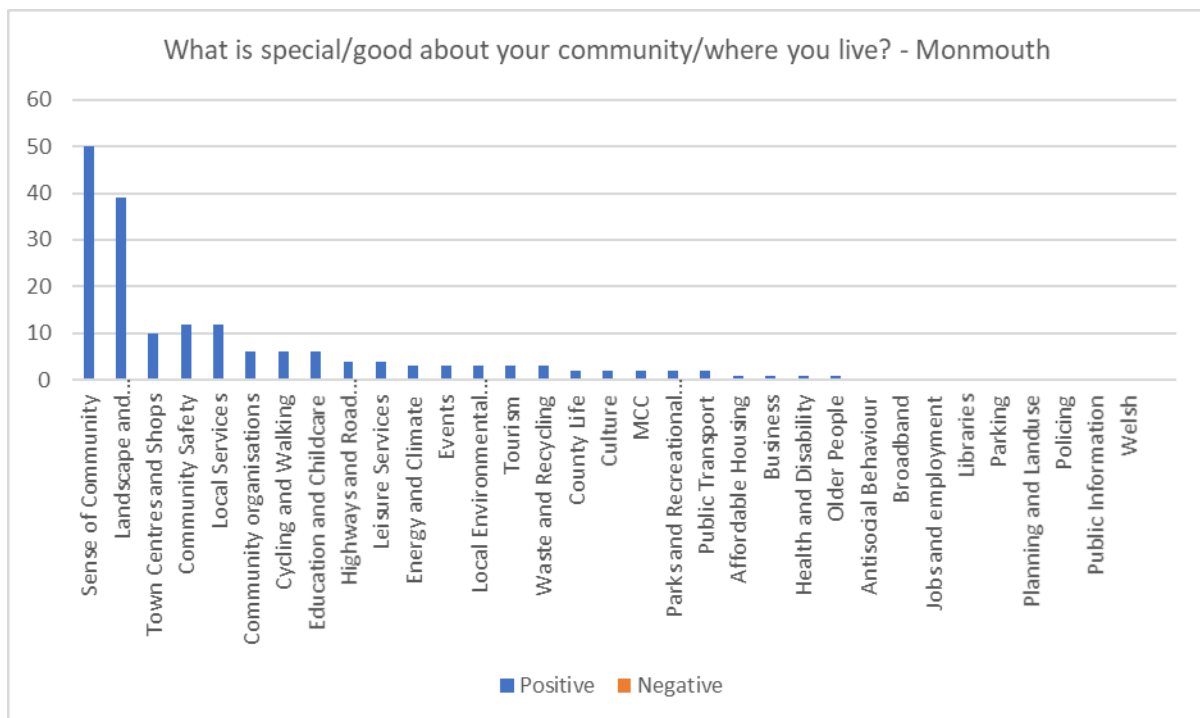
The average travel time by public transport to a sports facility in the area is very nearly double that of Wales (109 minutes vs 55 minutes), the second longest time in Monmouthshire. The area

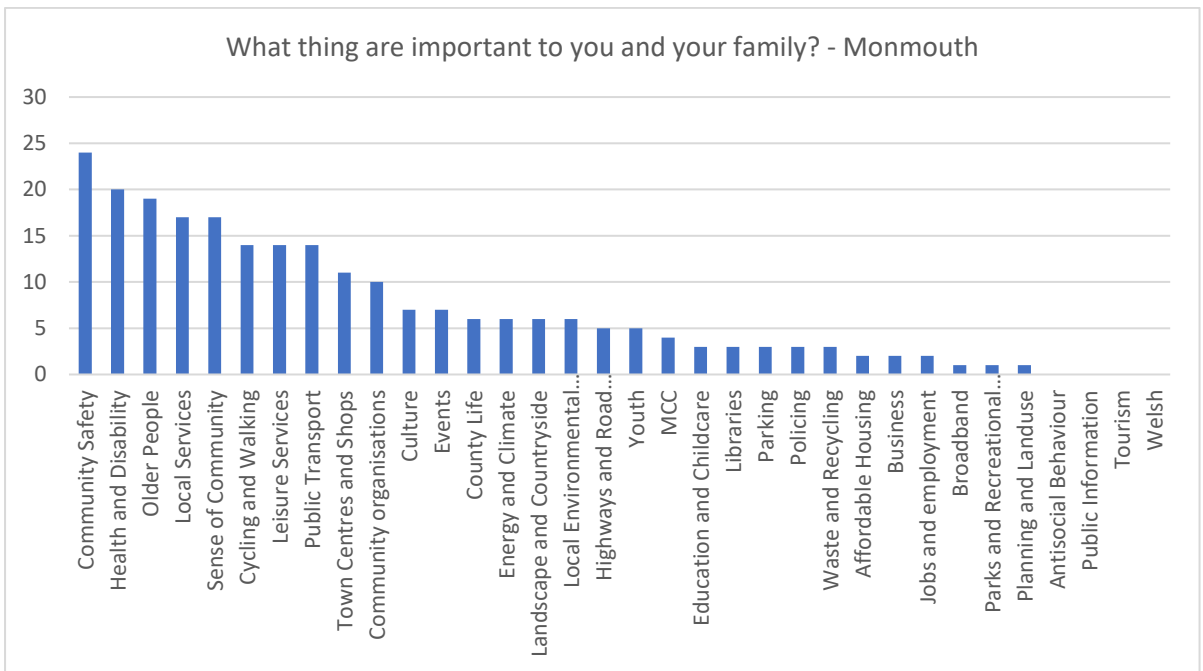
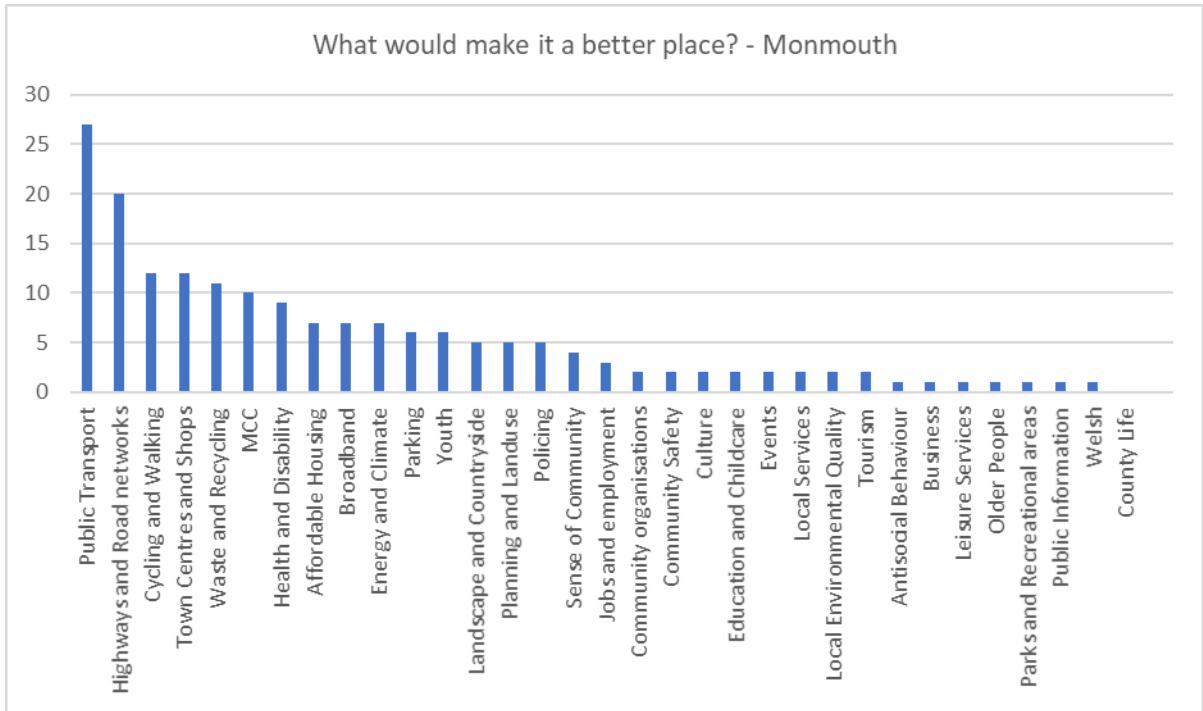
has the longest public travel time to a public library in Monmouthshire, at 83 minutes. This is also the case for private travel (18 minutes).

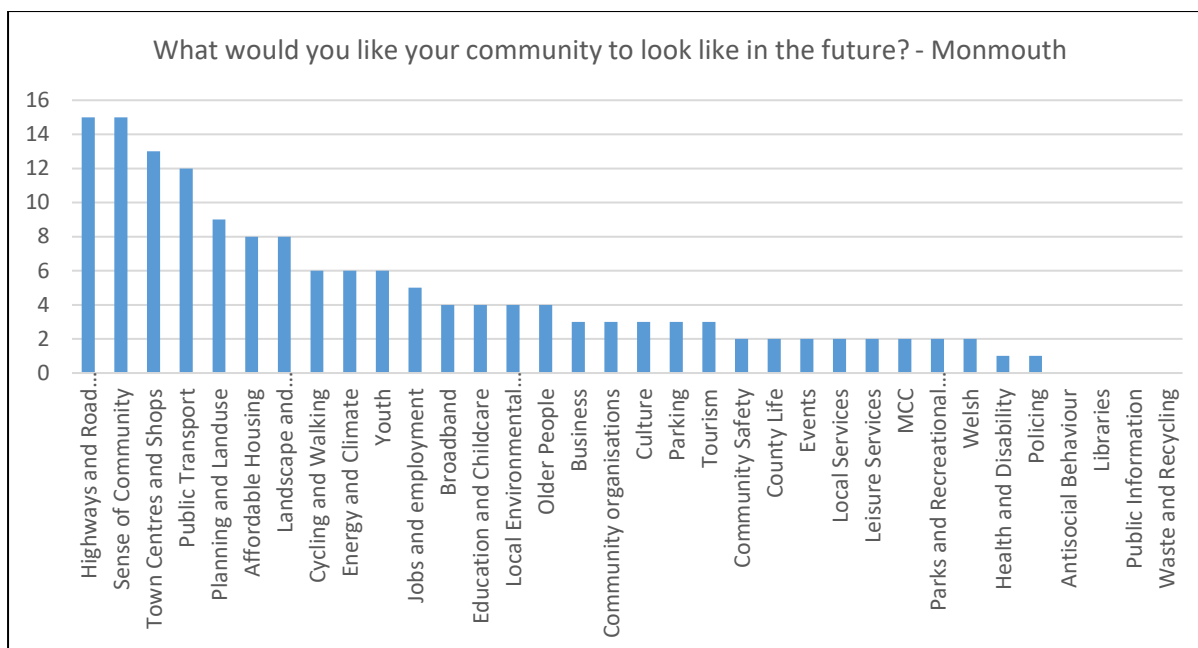
Engagement responses

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.







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[https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/dbimngs/FINAL%20July%202017%20Monmouthshire%20Destination%20Plan%202017-2020\(1\).pdf](https://www.visitmonmouthshire.com/dbimngs/FINAL%20July%202017%20Monmouthshire%20Destination%20Plan%202017-2020(1).pdf)

² Monmaps Countryside Layer

³ Wye Valley AONB Management Plan, 2015-2020

[www.wyevallyaonb.org.uk/images/uploads/general/AONB_MP_2015-20_Final_version_\(amended\)_Feb_16.doc](http://www.wyevallyaonb.org.uk/images/uploads/general/AONB_MP_2015-20_Final_version_(amended)_Feb_16.doc)

⁴ Wye Valley Tree Disease

<https://nrwcmdev.azureedge.net/about-us/news-and-events/news/wye-valley-tree-disease-community-events/?lang=en>

⁵ Information on larch felling – Wentwood and Trellech Common <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/forestry-projects/information-on-larch-felling-wentwood-and-trellech-common/?lang=en>

⁶ MCC Open Space Study Ashley Godfrey Associates, 2008

www.planningpolicy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MonmouthshireOpenSpace-Dec08.pdf

⁷ Tree Cover in Wales' Towns and Cities, NRW, 2016

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/679615/eng-urban-tree-summary-2016.pdf?mode=pad>

⁸ Section 19 Flood Investigation Report, Mayhill, Monmouth, February 2020

www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/10/Mayhill-Monmouth-S19-Report-Feb-2020-FINAL-1.pdf

⁹ Winter Flooding 2019/2020 – Summary of Main Impacts and Actions, MCC; Skenfrith and Storm Dennis: Under flood water – again

www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-wales-51567411

¹⁰ Renewable Energy Community Schemes

<http://monmouthshire.biz/project/renewable-energy-community-schemes-recs>

¹¹ Kingswood Natural Flood Management Feasibility Catchment walkover and hydraulic modelling Final Report, May 2021, JBA Consulting

¹² Action on Climate Emergency Monmouth

www.acemonmouth.org

¹³ Public Service Board Monmouthshire Environmental information for well-being assessments, NRW

¹⁴ MCC 2021 Air Quality Progress Report

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- ¹⁵ Highly-anticipated new inclusive play park in Monmouth officially opens to families
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/2021/10/highly-anticipated-new-inclusive-play-park-in-monmouth-officially-opens-to-families
- ¹⁶ UK House Price Index summary: July 2021
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-house-price-index-summary-july-2021
- ¹⁷ MCC 2020 Retail Background Paper – March 2021
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf
- ¹⁸ MCC Adopted Local Development Plan 2011-2021 Annual Monitoring Report
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2020/12/AMR-2019-2020.pdf
- ¹⁹ Profiling Places: Monmouth
www.profilingplaces.wales/Data.aspx?place=W37000354
- ²⁰ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019
<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation/?lang=en>
- ²¹ MCC 2020 Retail Background Paper – March 2021
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/05/Retail-Report-2020.pdf
- ²² Census 2011, InfoBase Cymru Age Structure
www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/themes/2011census/demography/tabular?viewId=957&geoId=78&subsetId=
- ²³ Indicator Data by Lower Layer Super Output Areas – 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>
- ²⁴ Indicator Data by Lower Layer Super Output Areas – Access To Services Domain
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/WIMD-Indicator-data-2019/indicatordata-by-lowerlayersuperoutputarea-accessstoservicesdomain>
- ²⁵ Census 2011, Nomis General Health
www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?reset=yes&mode=construct&dataset=939&version=0&anal=1&initset=
- ²⁶ <https://monmouthpedia.wordpress.com>