

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



# Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment 2022

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## Version Control

Title	Well-being Assessment
Purpose	To provide evidence base for Well-being Assessment
Owner	Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny
Approved by	Draft
Date	March 2022
Version Number	2.0
Status	For approval
Review Frequency	Annual
Next review date	
Consultation	January – February 2022

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

- Gwent as a whole (see [www.gwentpsb.org/well-being-plan/well-being-assessment](http://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](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire)

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# Introduction

Monmouthshire faces a number of challenges now and in the future. These include climate change, income and health inequalities and access to housing and transport. These are really complex things and we cannot pretend that we have all of the answers. To tackle them we need to work together as public services and as communities and to think far more about some of the solutions and the long-term impact of the decisions we make.

In April 2016, Welsh Government introduced The Well-being of Future Generations Act. This ground-breaking piece of legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our nation, our county and the communities that make it what it is.

The Act sets out how public services in Wales need to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems, and take a more joined-up approach. These are referred to as ‘the five ways of working’. By acting in this way we stand a much better chance of creating a place that we all want to live in.

In 2021, the five local authorities in Gwent moved from having five separate Public Service Boards to having one overall Gwent Public Service Board. The four statutory members of the Public Service Board, or PSB, are the Local Authorities, Local Health Board, Fire and Rescue Authority and Natural Resources Wales. Other organisations are also invited, such as Gwent Police, registered social landlords and voluntary organisations. PSBs must prepare and publish an assessment of local well-being, produce a well-being plan and report annually on its progress. This is the Monmouthshire part of Gwent’s first well-being assessment and it will describe well-being in the county based on a broad range of evidence.

This well-being assessment has been produced following a range of engagement with people and groups across Monmouthshire. This included an online survey, young people’s workshops and stalls at community events. The draft assessment is also subject to public consultation between January and February 2022. Alongside this, the document draws on a wide range of data, reports and academic studies to develop an evidence base to help us understand well-being in our county. This is about far more than needs, it takes an asset-based approach so that we can build upon, preserve and enhance the things that make this place special while identifying future trends and potential disruptions, whether positive or negative, so that we can maximise the well-being of future generations.

The report will be finalised by May 2022. The Public Service Board will then use the Gwent level assessment, together with these local assessments, to develop a set of well-being objectives for the area. These will be published as part of a Gwent Well-being Plan in spring 2023, which will then inform partnership activity and delivery in Monmouthshire. If you’d like to be more involved then please get in touch with us using the contact details on the previous page.

The following matrix shows how the themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals. This process is a useful way of ensuring that the well-being assessment is sufficiently cross-cutting and integrated and is addressing all of the goals. Throughout the assessment, the themes covered demonstrate contributions to the goals, but the goals are not necessarily explicitly referred to throughout the text to avoid repetition. The following matrix shows the predominant goals where there is significant contribution.

	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
Jobs and employment							
Earnings and locations							
Worklessness and inequality							
The effect of Covid-19							
Health and Well-being							
Transport and access to services							
Community Safety							
Mental Health							
Loneliness and Isolation							
Housing							
Child Development							
Education							
Ageing Well							
Landscape and Countryside							
Air and Water Quality							

*Themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals*

Climate Change							
Waste and Recycling							
Welsh Language							
Faith and Religion							
Landscape and Heritage							
Community and Social Action							
Cultural Attractions							
Sport and Leisure							

## The Communities of Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire is geographically large compared to many local authority areas in Wales. It is semi-rural in nature and is often perceived as leafy and affluent. However, headline statistics can fail to shine a light on the differences within and between communities. These differences can be all the more stark when they exist side-by-side. Assessing the well-being of each community is intended to ensure that the differences between the various communities within the board's area are analysed. Some local areas will also have, or are undertaking, their own planning through community plans or equivalent processes. These may want to consider the findings of the well-being assessment, and similarly the well-being assessment will need to continue to consider relevant evidence produced in these plans.

This assessment is based around five clusters, as shown on the map: Abergavenny and surrounding area; Monmouth and surrounding area; the heart of Monmouthshire which includes Usk and Raglan; Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley and Severnside which includes Caldicot and Magor. Even working at this scale can mask some of the differences we see, and so from time-to-time this analysis will draw on data at ward or Lower Super Output (LSOA) level.<sup>1</sup>

This is really important to ensure that differences between the various communities within our area are analysed. This assessment is structured so that you can read about the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of each area separately. These should be read in conjunction with the section covering the whole county as some issues are addressed more naturally at a county level, with less information available at a local community level.



# Monmouthshire Profile

Located in south-east Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in south Wales and the south-west of England and the Midlands. The county covers an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with an estimated population of 95,164.<sup>2</sup>

It is a predominantly rural county, with 53% of the total population living in wards defined as being in urban areas. The main settlements are Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth, Caldicot, Usk and Magor/Undy. The county has a distinctive identity arising from its location in the borderlands between England and the former industrial heartlands of the South Wales valleys. An integral element of Monmouthshire's distinctive settlement pattern arises from its historic market towns and villages and their relationship with the surrounding rural areas.

The county has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons in the north and the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley in the east. A good road network connects Monmouthshire to major population centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Bristol and many of the population take advantage of these links to commute out of the area for employment opportunities.

Monmouthshire has major landscape resources and is home to internationally and nationally designated landscapes, ranging from the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east and the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site to the north-west. It contains some good quality agricultural land and has a high proportion of farming land altogether – more than double the Welsh average, with 16.7% of this used for crops and horticulture.<sup>3</sup>

The county has a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare, significantly lower than the South East Wales average of 5.3 persons per hectare, with densities much higher in urban areas.<sup>4</sup> There is a higher-than-average proportion of older people in the county which is forecast to rise further. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033.<sup>5</sup>

Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous area offering a high quality of life for its residents. This is reflected in the 2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, with none of the lower super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 10% in Wales.<sup>6</sup> However, as is highlighted elsewhere in this assessment, these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when juxtaposed with areas of relative wealth.

# Economic Well-being

An economy's performance has a strong bearing on well-being. There is a perception of Monmouthshire as being an affluent county: the average annual wage is £34k, higher than the Wales average of £29k, and there is an above-average percentage of working-age people in employment (76.7%, June 2021).<sup>7</sup> However, there are issues and challenges, explored below.

## Jobs and Employment

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Monmouthshire has the second highest number of businesses per head of population in Wales. The largest sectors are Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (e.g. legal, accounting, scientific research and development, veterinary, etc.), making up 16.6% of all local business units. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing support 15.5% of the businesses, above the average for England and Wales, in terms of enterprise numbers.<sup>8</sup>

Monmouthshire has a relatively low business start-up rate compared to the Wales average, the combined England and Wales average, and that of the Cardiff Capital Region. However, the business death rate is also below average, while the five-year survival rate is comparatively high.<sup>9</sup>

	Birth rate	Death rate	Active	5-year survival rate
Monmouthshire	10.4	9.7	4120	45
Cardiff Capital Region	14.3	11.4	45,480	42
Wales	12.3	10.5	98,445	43

Source: ONS, *Enterprise Demography - Percentage of active enterprises*. N.B.: the 2021 figure for active businesses in the county is 4,490<sup>10</sup>

Although slightly fewer businesses are started in Monmouthshire, relatively speaking, those that are have a slightly better chance of survival in the short term than in other authorities.

Nevertheless, between 2014 and 2019, Monmouthshire saw only a 9.4% increase in the number of active enterprises, compared to an increase of 17.2% for the South East Wales Region and 12.3% for Wales overall. A number of engagement responses to the well-being assessment express concern for the number of businesses started in the county, and propose reduced business rates to encourage more new enterprises.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development predicts that Monmouthshire will have the fastest Gross Value Added per capita growth rate in Wales, with an annual growth rate of 1.68.<sup>11</sup>

In 2021, 91% of enterprises in Monmouthshire employed less than 10 people.<sup>12</sup> Only the manufacturing sector includes large firms (with 250 people or more), while Human Health, followed by Accommodation and Food Services, are the sectors with a proportionally larger number of small and medium-sized businesses, compared to micro-businesses.<sup>13</sup> Although micro businesses are a vital part of the county's economy, since they support fewer employees, and therefore provide fewer opportunities, this may be a factor in residents seeking employment elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> In addition, some micro businesses include farming and tourism, which can be seasonal and low paid. Monmouthshire's working population has a higher percentage of Managers, Directors and Senior Officials than Wales as a whole (12.2% and 9.6%, respectively), and a higher percentage in Professional Occupations (23.3% and 20.8%, respectively).<sup>15</sup>

Tourism is an important aspect of Monmouthshire's economy. In 2019, 2.28 million visitors contributed £245 million to the county's economy, a 2.6% increase on the 2018 economic impact figure. Tourism revenue grew in real terms by 18.5% between 2015-19, against a target of 10% for 2015-20.<sup>16</sup> However, Covid will have had a significant impact on tourism from March 2020 onwards. (see 'Cultural Well-being' section for further information about tourism)

Agriculture is an important part of the Monmouthshire economy – data shows that there are 695 agriculture, forestry and fishing enterprises in Monmouthshire, 15.5% of the total number of enterprises in the county, the second-highest number after 'professional, scientific and technical'.<sup>17</sup> Census data from 2011 shows that 2.8% of the county were employed in agriculture, food and fisheries.<sup>18</sup> Forestry resources are also economically important for the county but there is a potential future timber shortage due to a lack of planting around 50 years ago and very little economic incentive to plant woodlands.<sup>19</sup>

Monmouthshire has had a slow uptake of allocated employment land, leading to pressure for it to be used for other purposes such as housing and retail.<sup>20</sup> In 2021, 19.5% of the total area of industrial and business sites identified in the adopted Local Development Plan remains available for development, although there are presently limits on development in large parts of the county as a result of high levels of phosphates in the county's waterways.<sup>21</sup> There is a need to further develop employment land to promote economic growth and increased employment opportunities in the county. The impact of Covid-19 on the future demand for employment land

*"I would like the town I live in to be a hub for people working from home: I would like to see the norm being home workers lunching and shopping in my town"*

*"Hopefully, with more working from home and less commuting, local businesses will be able to grow"*

must also be considered, particularly in light of the move towards home working – already, there are higher levels of those in employment at home (15%) relative to the Wales average (11.9%).<sup>22</sup> Indeed, it is possible that the growth of remote working and people's desire to live in rural areas

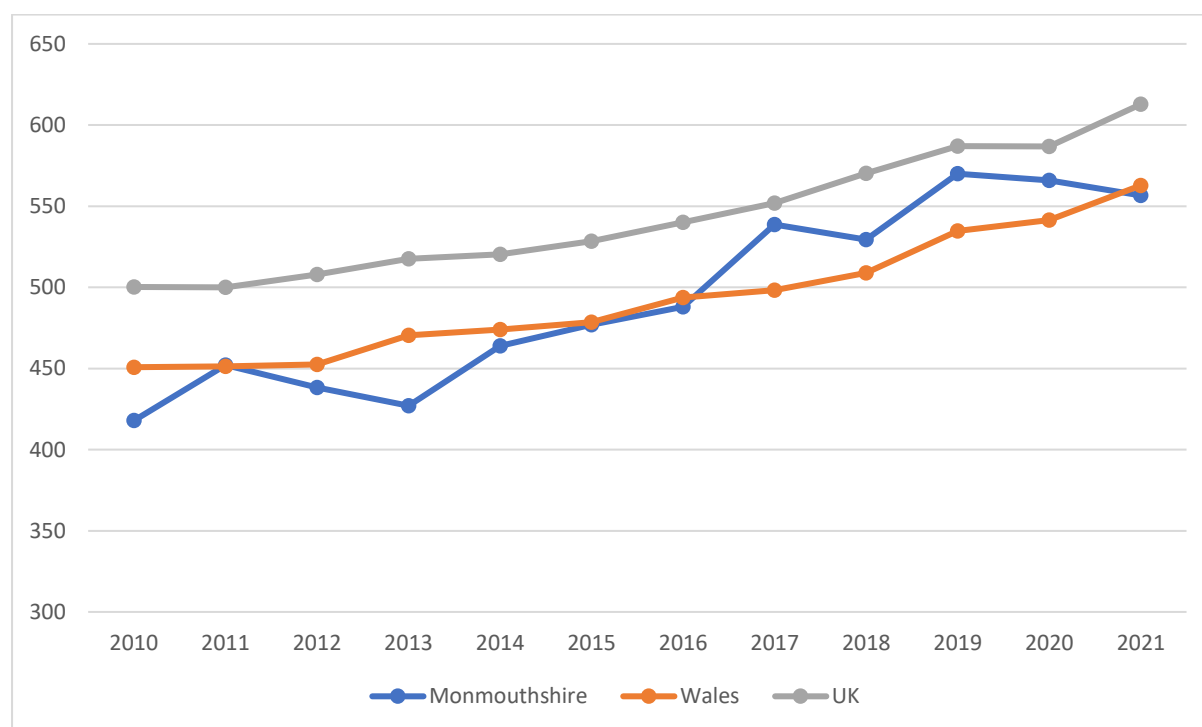
presents an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurs to start new businesses in Monmouthshire rather than in neighbouring cities such as Bristol.

Monmouthshire has a high percentage of people in employment, with 77%, compared to 72% for Wales and 74% for Great Britain.<sup>23</sup> However, as of 2020, Monmouthshire had a lower percentage of its population at working-age (16-64) than Wales as a whole, which may affect future economic growth.<sup>24</sup> As described in the 'Ageing Well' section, Monmouthshire has an ageing population, and a reducing younger population. At present, 42% of total outward migration is by people aged 15-29, which are typically education and economically driven.<sup>25</sup>

The £1.2 billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is a collaborative programme to act as the catalyst for regional economic growth and sustainable success in the region. Its work and impact is covered in the Gwent Well-being Assessment.

## Earnings and locations

In the last five years, the wages on offer in Monmouthshire have been approximately 10% below the UK average, and just under the Wales average: the average weekly wage available in the county in 2021 is £556.6, compared with £562.8 for Wales and £612.8 for the UK.<sup>26</sup>



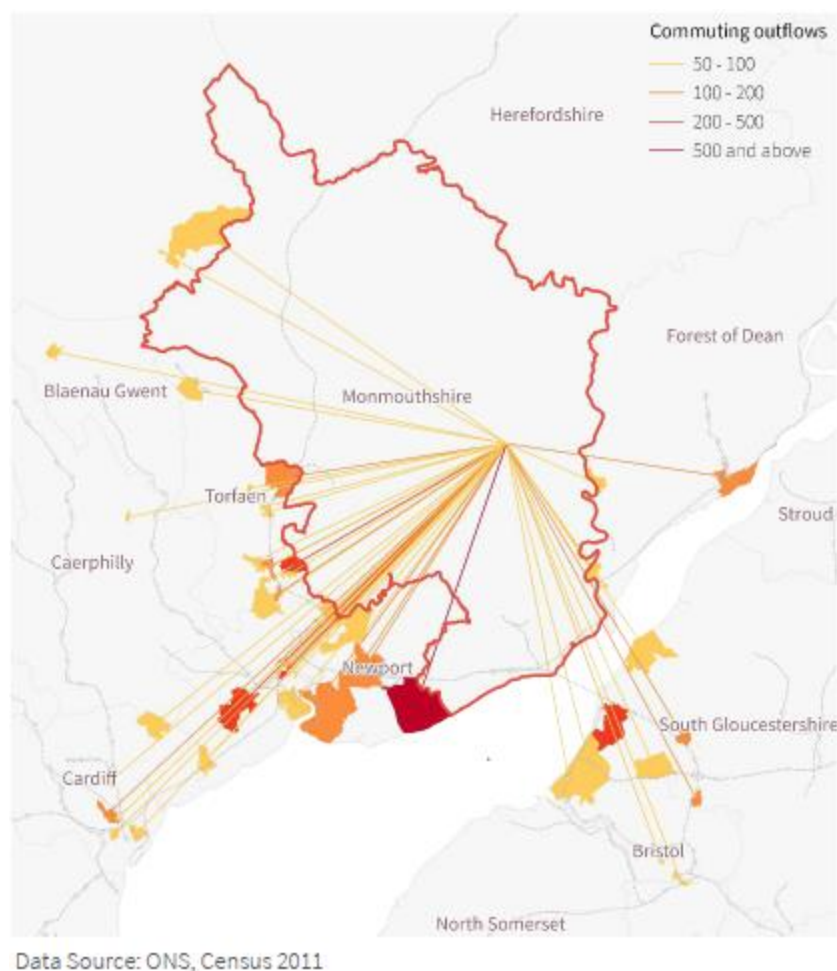
*Earnings by place of work<sup>27</sup>*

However, overall earnings by place of residence are still higher in Monmouthshire than the Wales or UK average: £688.8, £570.6 and £613.1, respectively, and a higher Gross Disposable Household Income per head than the Wales average, but lower than the UK.<sup>28</sup>

The difference between the wages on offer in Monmouthshire jobs and the wages earned by Monmouthshire residents is due to people working in higher paid jobs outside the county. 43% (19,700) of the county's economically active residents out-commute; in 2011, Monmouthshire's workers already had the highest average commuting distance of the ten south-east Wales counties.<sup>29</sup> Long commuting times can harm well-being, by reducing job satisfaction, leisure time, mental health and increasing strain in people's lives.<sup>30</sup>

*"There is very little possibility for young people to make a living here. Any jobs are low-paid, therefore there is no possibility of affording a house"*

In 2011, almost a quarter of Monmouthshire commuting was to Newport, 13% to Torfaen and 10% to Cardiff.<sup>31</sup> This data predates the removal of the Severn Bridge Tolls in 2018, which is likely to have increased commuting to and from Bristol and South Gloucestershire. There has been an increase in daily traffic across the bridge since 2019 (see 'Severnside' section).



*The direction of the most significant commuting outflows, 2011<sup>32</sup>*

The removal of the tolls is likely to have contributed to Monmouthshire's high house prices: they increased 4.1% in 2019 overall, directly after the removal, while prices in Chepstow had increased by £90k merely following its announcement (see 'Housing' section, and below).<sup>33</sup>

The average incomes of economically active women who both live and work within the county is significantly lower than that of men within the same category.<sup>34</sup> As of April 2021, the mean full-time pay gap was 5.4%, though this is lower than the Welsh mean of 9.8% and the UK mean of 14.9%.<sup>35</sup>

As of June 2021, the median house price was £359,159, significantly higher than the Welsh average of £216,152 (see 'Housing' section).<sup>36</sup> Monmouthshire has a higher average house price and a higher rate of growth in house prices compared with elsewhere in Gwent.<sup>37</sup> In 2020, the housing affordability ratio for Monmouthshire (the ratio of median price paid for a home to the median work-based gross annual earnings for full-time workers) was 8.23. This means that house prices were 8.23 times the average earnings, compared with 5.88 for the Wales average, making it harder, particularly for young people, to get on the property ladder.<sup>38</sup> The below-average wages on offer in the county, coupled with high property prices, make it difficult for young people and future generations to live and work locally.

Since 2009, the number of vacant units in Monmouthshire's central shopping areas was relatively stable, but from 2017 there has been an increase in vacant retail.<sup>39</sup> In addition, between 2009 and 2015, 1000 retail jobs were lost in the county.<sup>40</sup> Since 2019/20, the four centres have recorded a rise in vacancy rates: Abergavenny (6.6% to 7.6%), Caldicot (7.6% to 13.4%), Chepstow (11.2% to 13.5%) and Monmouth (14.4% to 15.4%). For Abergavenny and Monmouth, this is an increase for the second consecutive year although there is a perception that Abergavenny is thriving at present.<sup>41</sup> Engagement responses to the well-being assessment show residents' concern for the county's high streets, and their wish for more – and more varied – shops and businesses in them.

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

*"Home to thriving businesses in both the manufacturing and service sectors"*

*"More small businesses in the countryside to support young people's employment opportunities"*

*"We need to attract more high tech business and have local innovation hubs"*

All town centres, except for Monmouth, are below or broadly in line with the Great Britain high street vacancy rate (13.7%, December 2020).<sup>42</sup> The long-term effect of Covid-19 is not yet known.

## Worklessness and Inequality

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Monmouthshire's economy is currently ranked second in Wales, behind Cardiff, in the UK Competitiveness Index.<sup>43</sup> However, employment levels remain below their 2003 peak and, as

previously described, the largest employment sectors are those that tend to suffer from low pay, with the second-highest percentage of employees paid below the living wage in the ten local authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region, at 26.6%.<sup>44</sup>

Despite higher levels of economic activity overall, there are pockets of higher unemployment within the county. As of the 2011 census, these were located particularly in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and the community council areas of Llanfoist and Llantilio Pertholey.<sup>45</sup>

In November 2018, the largest proportion of benefit claimants in Monmouthshire (excluding those claiming a state pension) were those claiming Employment and Support Allowance; however, this was considerably less than in surrounding authorities.<sup>46</sup>

As of 2019, Monmouthshire had no areas in the most income-deprived 10% and only 26.8% (or 15 areas) in the most income-deprived 50% in Wales. Similarly, the county had no areas in the most employment-deprived 10% in Wales, and only 23.2% (13 areas) in the most employment-deprived 50% in Wales. Though this puts Monmouthshire in a positive position overall, there are areas of higher deprivation, particularly Overmonnow 2 in Monmouth, and Llanover 1, Cantref 2, Lansdown and Croesonen in Abergavenny, all of which are in the most deprived 30% in Wales.<sup>47</sup> The picture in Monmouthshire is therefore one of overall affluence but with stark income and employment disparities between individual areas in the towns.

Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the percentage of children living in workless households, rising from 4.9% in 2009 to 11.2% in 2019 and workless households themselves have rose from 10.8% in 2015 to 13.2% at the end of 2019<sup>48</sup>. However, these are still both below the Welsh average. Monmouthshire's percentage of workless households has risen faster than the Wales average, and the Covid pandemic may have had an effect of these figures with a high proportion of people working in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Similarly, Welsh Government data from 2019 showed that 15% of children in Monmouthshire were living in poverty with an impact on the wellbeing of children and parents, even though this was lower than the Wales average of 24%.<sup>49</sup>

## The effect of Covid-19

In Monmouthshire, the onset of the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns saw the numbers of out-of-work benefit claimants increase significantly, from 975 (1.8% of the population) in March 2020 to a high of 2,370 (4.3%) in August 2020. As of June 2021, the number was 1,890 (3.4%).

In Monmouthshire, the number of employees on furlough ranged from a peak of 10,500 in July 2020 (27% of eligible jobs, slightly lower than the Welsh average of 29%), to 2,600 at 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021.<sup>50</sup> According to the Monmouthshire RLDP Review September 2020, "The socio-economic data for unemployment rates and furlough numbers suggest that Monmouthshire, while being significantly impacted by the lockdown, has been less impacted than other areas in Wales, due to its strong underlining socio-economic characteristics, such as the very low proportion of unemployment claimants pre-Covid-19 and the sectoral mix within the county."<sup>51</sup>

As might be expected, in 2020/21 the number of parcels given out at Monmouthshire's four foodbanks increased from the previous year, which may reflect an increase in those in need during the pandemic.

Although Monmouthshire has fared relatively well as a whole, among those who are most likely to have been affected economically by lockdowns are young people and those on a low-income.<sup>52</sup> It is therefore likely that the pandemic has widened the existing inequality in Monmouthshire between high and low income households.

Considering the strength of tourism in Monmouthshire's economy, the pandemic could lead to increased employment through more internal tourism and 'staycations' in Wales.<sup>53</sup>

## Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the 'Economic Well-being' sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

### Jobs and Employment

The strength of the local economy is an important factor in well-being. Employment and jobs have a significant influence on cultural, social and environmental well-being. Monmouthshire is often perceived as affluent, but these headline measures mask some clear disparities. The natural environment provides jobs and opportunities.



### Earnings and Locations

The difference between wages earned inside and outside the county has a direct bearing on commuting and house prices, which in turn affect well-being. Town centre vacancy is an indicator of economic well-being, and can affect social well-being.



### Worklessness and Inequality

Rural communities can be more prone to poverty than urban areas. The prevalence of low paid and fragile employment contributes to the risk of in-work poverty. This can affect people's economic and social well-being.



## The effect of Covid-19

The potential for widening existing inequalities, and the effect on employment figures have a strong bearing on well-being.



# Social Well-being

Social well-being encapsulates whether people are happy, healthy and comfortable with their lives and what they do.

## Health and Well-being

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Life expectancy for people in Monmouthshire is the highest in Wales, at 80.5 years for males and 84.1 years for females, compared to 78.3 for males and 82.3 for females across Wales. Healthy life expectancy for males is 69.8 years, which is the highest in Wales, and 70.7 years for females.<sup>54</sup>

Behind the headline rates, there are notable variations, with those living in the least deprived areas of Monmouthshire expected to live longer than those in the most deprived, by on average 6.3 years for males and 3.6 years for females. Similarly, those in the least deprived parts of Monmouthshire are likely to live in good health for longer, by an average of 10.1 years for males and 11.1 years for females.<sup>55</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a decrease in life expectancy in England and Wales of around one year.<sup>56</sup> While it is too early to say, it is expected that the most and least deprived areas will experience this differently.

There are many factors that can have an impact on health including the environment, housing, early childhood education, income, lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These factors are part of the wider determinants of health and can impact in either a positive or negative way on physical and mental health. There are some communities in Monmouthshire that are experiencing challenges related to these factors and there are health inequalities in, and between communities in Monmouthshire.

The health domain of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows there are variances in the communities in Monmouthshire experiencing health deprivation. While many areas in the county are ranked in the least deprived areas in Wales for health, 20 areas in Monmouthshire are ranked in the 50% most deprived areas in Wales, these are particularly areas around some of the towns in Monmouthshire.<sup>57</sup>

The pandemic has also shone a spotlight on the need to reduce health inequalities, with some health inequalities potentially being exacerbated by the pandemic.

Further local health services and improved provision was identified by many residents in the engagement responses. Similarly, residents also identified health as being important to them and their family. The need for access to good care and local health services was a frequent response in comments, as was the need to ensure suitable care and support is available for people who need it, including older people.

What would make your local area a better place?

*“Better health services – easier to access”*

*“Access to dentistry”*

The health of the rural population in Wales is influenced by many factors such as income, housing, education, access to services and deprivation in general.<sup>58</sup> As a whole, the county appears to fare well compared to the rest of Wales when considering general deprivation, with no areas in the most deprived 10%, as discussed in the ‘Economic Well-being’ section. However, social deprivation and, in particular, access to services show high deprivation levels are widespread across rural areas of Wales, including Monmouthshire, as described in the ‘Transport’ section.<sup>59</sup>

Good health and well-being are resources for life by increasing an individual’s ability to achieve their educational, economic and social potential. 80.1% of people in Monmouthshire consider their general health to be good or very good, compared to 81.4% in England and 77.8% in Wales.<sup>60</sup> Healthy lifestyles contribute towards good health and improved well-being: results from the National Survey for Wales show that although Monmouthshire compares favourably with Gwent and Wales on many healthy lifestyle indicators, the absolute figures still present a challenge:

	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Gwent</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Percentage of adults who report being a current smoker	17%	18%	17%
Percentage of adults who report average weekly alcohol consumption above guidelines	20%	17%	19%
Percentage of adults who ate at least 5 portions fruit & veg the previous day	32%	20%	24%
Percentage of adults who were active at least 150 minutes in the previous week	61%	55%	53%
Percentage of adults overweight or obese (BMI 25+)	56%	65%	60%
Percentage of adults with fewer than 2 healthy behaviours	7%	10%	10%

*National Survey for Wales 2018/19 & 2019/20 – adult lifestyles<sup>61</sup>*

Healthy lifestyles in childhood and adulthood allow for healthy ageing and preventing chronic disease in older age. If healthy lifestyles are adopted early, they will ensure future generations age well, with greater independence and the ability to contribute until much later in life.

Deprivation is highly correlated with unhealthy lifestyles and subsequent ill-health. Therefore, the pockets of deprivation identified in the community profiles are likely to have worse health outcomes than the overall Monmouthshire picture, leading to inequalities in health, education and employment outcomes.

Although Monmouthshire's figures for the percentage of people eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day and healthy BMI are slightly better than those for Wales overall, there are still significant numbers who do not.

Community growing activities such as community gardens, Incredible Edibles and community orchards are in place across the county, but access to further land for communities and individuals who wish to start growing food would be useful and would give physical and mental health benefits. These projects could increase confidence in cooking with vegetables and fruits which could improve the diet for all, as well as giving nutrition and health benefits, mental health.

The percentage of smokers in Monmouthshire is 17%, which represents a significant number of people, and is equal to the Wales average. Children are particularly vulnerable to secondary smoke, making them more susceptible to conditions triggered by second-hand smoke. There are correlations between smoking and deprivation, and smoking is the largest single cause of preventable ill health in Wales, with high costs to the NHS and the economy.<sup>62</sup>

Monmouthshire has a higher-than-average proportion of adults who report drinking alcohol above the weekly recommended guidelines. Alcohol misuse not only poses a threat to the health and well-being of the drinker, but it can also cause harm to family, friends and communities. Alcohol-related admissions to hospitals from Monmouthshire are amongst the lowest in Wales.<sup>63</sup> The problem could be more hidden in Monmouthshire, with less immediately visible effects, including loss of productivity.<sup>64</sup>

Although Monmouthshire has one of the highest sports participation rates in Wales, 37% of adults in the county do less than the recommended 150 minutes of exercise a week, and over a quarter are active less than 30 minutes in a week.<sup>65</sup> People's lives are increasingly sedentary, partly as a result of technology making lives easier. Fewer people do manual work, and many jobs involve little physical effort.<sup>66</sup> People aged over 65 are the least active age group, with 57% of Welsh over-65s active for less than the recommended 150 minutes a week, which is significant with Monmouthshire's ageing population.

Obesity is rising in Wales, as it is globally; between 2003 to 2015 there was a 4% increase in levels of obesity among adults in Wales. Currently, in Monmouthshire, 56% of adults are overweight or obese, of which 23% are classed as obese (BMI of 30 or over). In 2018/19, 21.4% of 4 and 5-year-olds in the county were classified as overweight or obese, with 8.6% classed as

obese; the situation is feared to have worsened during periods of inactivity, school closures and lack of routine during the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>67</sup> As many sedentary behaviours start in childhood, such as school children being driven to school, children living with obesity are more likely to become obese adults. Obesity is a risk factor in numerous health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

The Office for National Statistics produces life-satisfaction data for the UK. The latest full annual results (from 2019/20) show Monmouthshire residents' responses score slightly higher than both the UK and Wales for all measures, including anxiety:<sup>68</sup>

	<b>UK</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>
Average Life Satisfaction Score	7.66	7.67	7.81
Average Worthwhile Score	7.86	7.89	8.05
Average Happiness Score	7.48	7.44	7.55
Average Anxiety Score	3.05	3.09	3.27

The ONS weekly survey on the impact of the coronavirus on day-to-day life in Great Britain shows the effect the pandemic has had on well-being; data from March 2020 to June 2021 shows that the most recent happiness levels are similar to pre-pandemic levels, despite large decreases earlier in the pandemic.<sup>69</sup>

## Transport and Access to Services

Transport is essential for many aspects of daily life, providing opportunities for people to access jobs, leisure, and social activities as well as vital services, including education and healthcare. Crucially for the local economy, it connects businesses with their customers and suppliers. However, the modes of transport we use can have profound effects on our environment, communities, and even our health.

Monmouthshire is a predominantly rural county and transport was highlighted as a particular issue in the previous well-being assessment. When asked what would make the area where they live better, issues to do with roads, traffic and highways came out as one of the greatest concerns amongst residents.

Over 40% of the county's economically active residents out-commute, at relatively high distances. (see 'Jobs and Employment' section for further detail)

In Monmouthshire, only 4% of people commute to work using public transport. 60% of drivers, though, say that they would switch to public transport if its quality improved.<sup>70</sup> In addition to the potential positive effect on well-being, this would also have benefits for the environment. Affordable and accessible public transport is also important for young people to more easily attend college and further education. During the engagement for the well-being assessment,

better public transport came out extremely strongly as something that would improve the area where people live.

Overall, 8% of Monmouthshire commuters share their car; this could be increased, particularly if participation in initiatives such as lift sharing were encouraged.<sup>71</sup> 75% of people in Monmouthshire believe we should all drive less to save the planet, according to 2021 YouGov opinion polling suggesting that car sharing could be a viable option.<sup>72</sup>

The ambition of the Active Travel Act is to increase substantially the number of people who walk and cycle for everyday journeys, particularly those that are for shorter journeys. Currently, only 1% of people in Monmouthshire commute to work by cycling, for

*"The first lockdown demonstrated to many people in our street that we suffered from traffic problems before"*

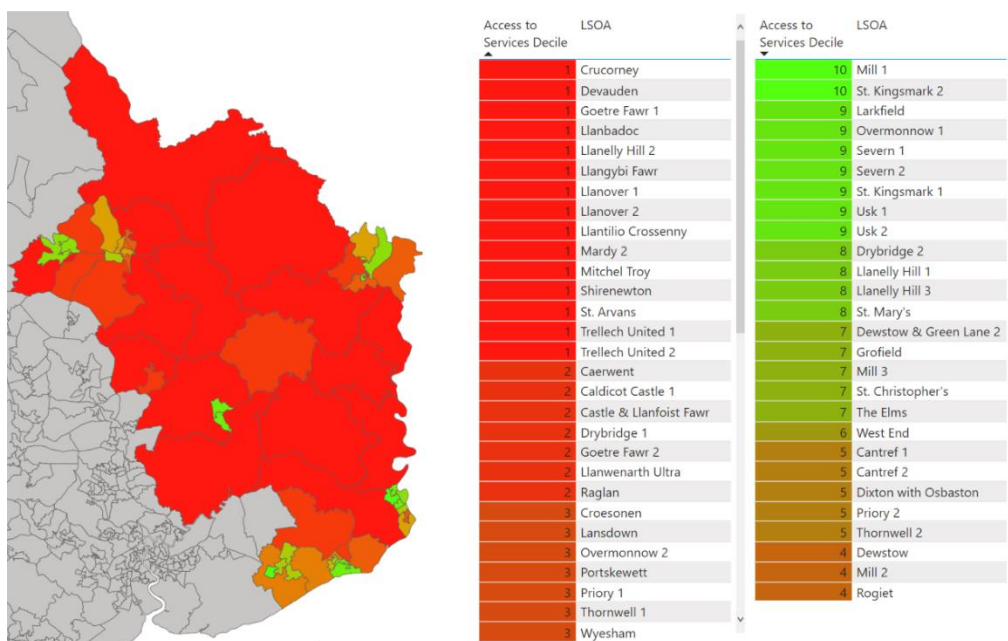
example, compared to 6% of people in the best performing similar local authority area.

However, the rural nature of the county makes active travel difficult. It has been calculated that 16% of commuter journeys in Monmouthshire could be made by bike, but this will require an uptake of e-bikes and good cycling infrastructure to be made available, such as segregated cycleways.<sup>73</sup> Significant investment is being made in active travel in the county. Anecdotal evidence locally aligns with national research suggesting that walking and cycling increased substantially during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, and if this increase is to be maintained, every opportunity must be taken to ensure that changed behaviours during a time of disruption don't revert to previous habits.<sup>74</sup> Many residents from across the county said that they would like more safe walking and cycling routes for use by young and old alike.

In 2020, nearly 70,000 vehicles were registered in Monmouthshire, of which over 55,000 were cars and 7,500 were light goods vehicles.<sup>75</sup> This is a ratio of 663 per 1000 people, an increase since 2011 when the ratio of cars/vans was 613 per 1000 people, itself a 10% increase since 2001.<sup>76</sup> This may reflect the challenges of using public transport or walking and cycling in a rural county like Monmouthshire.

Currently, electric vehicles are more expensive than their petrol or diesel equivalent, making the green option hard for many people to achieve. Electric Vehicle infrastructure will also need to improve as petrol and diesel cars are phased out. The Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for Wales sets out how the Welsh Government will invest in electric vehicle infrastructure and work with the private sector to give people in Wales the confidence to switch to electric vehicles.<sup>77</sup> Currently, 44 EV charging points are available in Monmouthshire. The council has installed chargers in several car parks across Monmouthshire and data shows they are being well used.<sup>78</sup>

Public and private return travel times to services such as doctors' surgeries, libraries or leisure centres in Monmouthshire are higher than the Wales average in every category except one.<sup>79</sup> These times are not surprising given the rural nature of the county, but they are a concern when considering its number of elderly residents and inadequate public transport.



Access to services decile by local area in Monmouthshire<sup>80</sup>

## Community Safety

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Crime in Monmouthshire is at a lower level than in the five other local authority areas covered by Gwent Police, but there has been a marked increase in certain crime types within the county recently. In the twelve months to April 2021, there were 4677 recorded crimes in the county, a rate of 49.4 per 1000 population. The data shows an increase of 560 crimes from the previous assessment, rising from 4117 in 2016, with an increase of 4.8 from 44.6 per 1000 population. Monmouthshire accounts for 9.87% of all crimes in the Gwent area. When compared with areas with similar demographic, social and economic characteristics relating to crime, Monmouthshire's crime rate is just above average.

From December 2019 to November 2020, there was an increase in Violence Without Injury, Criminal damage and arson, and Public Order offences. Incidents of Rape increased 35% between 19/20 and 20/21, while Other Sexual Offences increased 36.9%.

Shoplifting, residential burglary, commercial burglary, thefts, and vehicle crime have mainly shown reductions over this period, which is likely due in part to

*"As a family, we feel safe within our community, however, I can fully empathise that many do not. There is a level of anti-social behaviour in hot spot areas [such as] visible drug use that seems to go unchallenged, speeding and use of illegal off-road vehicles"*

the lockdowns during the pandemic, with restricted shopping and more people being required to stay at home.

There is evidence that Organised Crime Groups are operating within the county, which may contribute to some of the increases in certain crime types.

Drug Offences are showing a reduction in the county, with recorded incidents reducing from 213 to 185 from November 2020 to November 2021, which could be attributed to lockdowns during the pandemic. However, substance misuse remains an ongoing issue within our younger population. A confidential report highlights that Monmouthshire pupils rank higher than the national average for smoking, cannabis use, and alcohol consumption. Further data is being explored to better understand this issue.

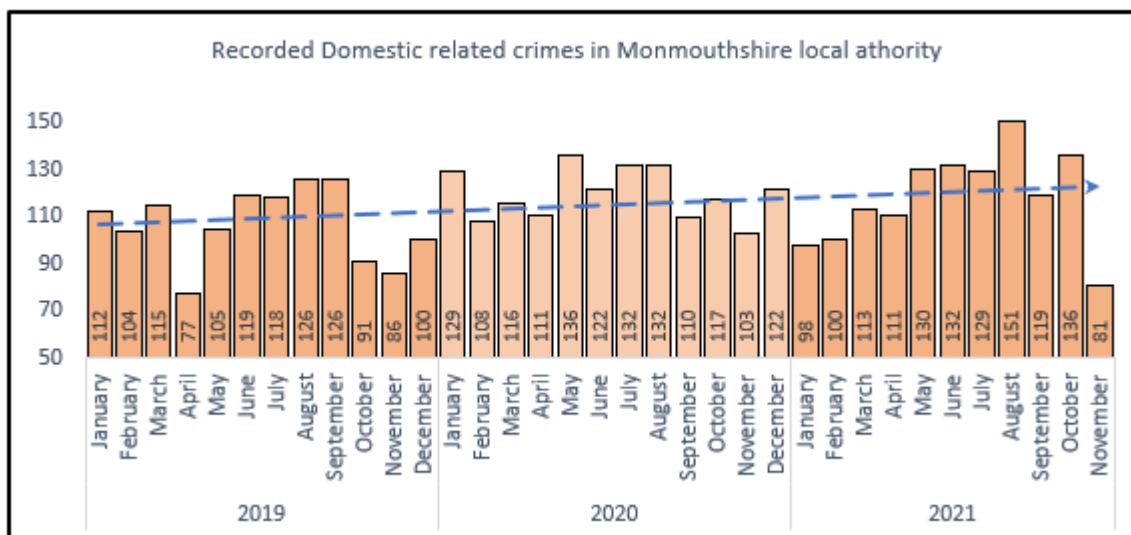
As of January 2021, the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) had a total of 288 adults accessing substance misuse services across the county. Of this number, 150 were receiving support for alcohol abuse, and 138 for other substance misuse issues. The main substances for which help is initially sought are Alcohol and Heroin, which have maintained steady use across the county. A fall in the number of adults accessing support during the pandemic and lockdowns was recorded, but the latest data indicates a recovery back to pre-pandemic levels of adults seeking support for substance misuse.

Anti-Social Behaviour incidents across Monmouthshire have seen increases and decreases from 2018 to 2021, decreasing from 1044 recorded incidents in 2018/19 to 946 in 2019/20 but increasing markedly to 1135 recorded incidents in 19/20 – a 20% increase across the county. Nuisance has been the most common classification of ASB in Monmouthshire during the most recent period, accounting for 53% of all incidents. Personal incidents have accounted for 15% and environmental incidents have accounted for 15% of all non-Covid-19 related incidents.

The last full year of data from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service in Monmouthshire was April 2019 – March 2020, in which time there were notable increases in deliberate refuse fires and automatic and malicious false alarms. But, as this data is not up-to-date, and pre-Covid particularly, a fuller discussion will need to await the release of further data.<sup>81</sup>

### Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

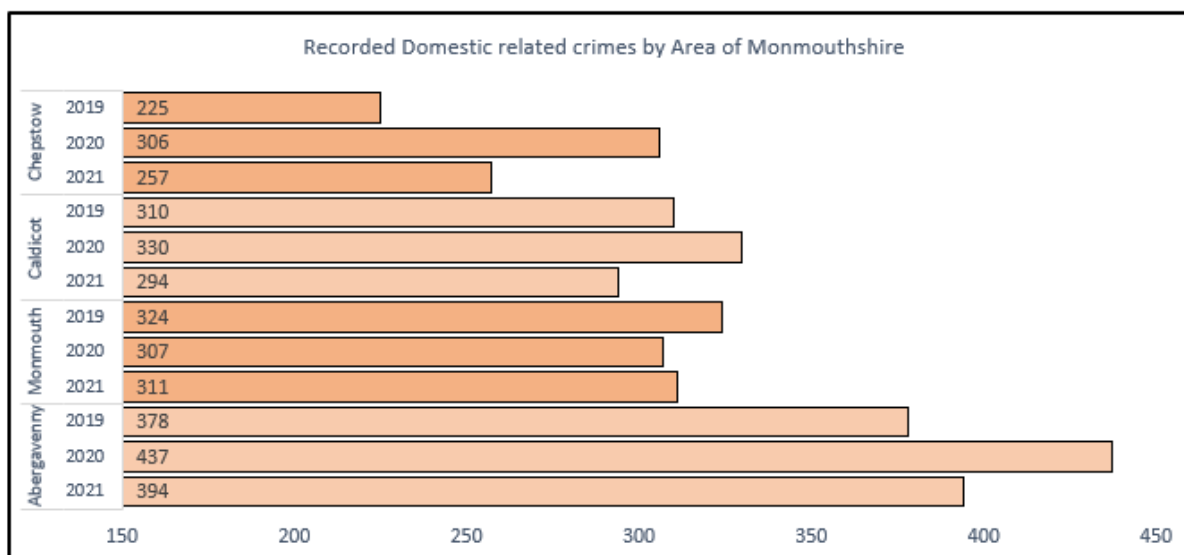
Domestic Crime in Monmouthshire has shown a steady increase since January 2019. In November 2021, the two-year average stood at 118 crimes per month. It is thought that Covid-19 had reduced the number of reported domestic crimes but the data below doesn't necessarily back this up, with only a 1% reduction in average monthly domestic crimes recorded in 2021, compared to 2020.



The rise in crimes in 2021 could be due to the encouragement by Gwent Police and other partner agencies for victims to come forward and report. It could also be down to the ability for victims to have time away from the offender to be able to report the crime as people go back out to work.

Common Assault and Battery is the most common type of domestic abuse recorded in Monmouthshire. Over the last three years it has increased year-on-year, as has the Pursue Course Of Conduct Which Amounts To Stalking offence, whereas Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and Harassment offending have decreased year-on-year over the last three years. Offences of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship increased by 40% in 2021.

Recorded domestic crime in Monmouthshire in the last three years has been more common in Abergavenny. All areas except Monmouth have seen a decrease in recorded crimes in 2021, looking at average crimes per month for each area over the last three years. Abergavenny makes up 30% of the average crimes per month, Monmouth 24%, Caldicot 23% and Chepstow 22% of average crimes per month. The reduction in crimes could possibly be due to the pandemic and restrictions during that period.



There have been more male offenders of domestic crime than female over the last three years, though the average monthly number of identified female offenders has increased slightly year-on-year since 2019. There was a significant increase in female offending in April 2020, which was the first month of lockdown. Over the last three years, the most common age category of overall domestic abuse offenders in Monmouthshire has been 22-60 years. Within this, age ranges of 31-40 years and 41-50 years are the most concerning, as they have shown significant rises year-on-year. Also of concern is the 71-80 years age range, which saw a huge increase of over 50% in only 11 months of 2021, compared with the full 12 months of previous year's data.

Although there is a worrying increasing trend of domestic-related crime in Monmouthshire, this could indicate that more victims are coming forward to report it. It also highlights the need for attention from all partners to support and protect the vulnerable.

## Mental Health

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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In 2015, 11% of adults in Monmouthshire reported that they were currently being treated for a mental illness.<sup>82</sup> The Welsh Government's 'Together for Mental Health' strategy reports that one in four adults experience mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime and one in six of us will be experiencing symptoms at any one time. At a time of recession and the pandemic, when levels of stress and anxiety inevitably rise, more people will be affected, and suicide rates are likely to increase.

More deprived communities often have the poorest mental health and well-being. Problems can often be passed on through generations and may perpetuate cycles of inequality. Many mental

health problems start early in life, and can be a result of deprivation including poverty, insecure attachments trauma, loss or abuse. This can be seen in the WIMD 2019 data, with the highest levels of GP-recorded mental health conditions in Monmouthshire found in the most deprived areas. In Monmouthshire as a whole, the rate of a GP-recorded mental health condition is the 9<sup>th</sup> lowest of all 22 local authorities.<sup>83</sup>

The National Survey for Wales uses the WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) to evaluate mental health. Monmouthshire scored 51.7 in 2018/19, a slight increase from the 2016/17 score of 51.3, and the 8<sup>th</sup> highest in Wales. In comparison, the Wales score in 2018/19 was 51.4. The pandemic has also exposed people to greater levels of stress and anxiety, as well as bereavements, coupled with the restrictions of access to coping mechanisms, such as seeing loved ones, or exercising, so these figures are likely to be higher now. The pandemic will also have had an impact on people's ability in Monmouthshire and across Gwent to get the help and support that they need. The well-being impacts of mental health are explored more generally in the Gwent Well-being Assessment.

What things are important to you?

*"Support groups for people of all ages and all needs – better support for the older generations – physical, wellbeing and mental health related"*

Data collected as part of the Children in Need Census showed that parental substance or alcohol misuse was present in one quarter of children receiving care and support from Monmouthshire children's social services, and 42% of children had a parent with a mental health issue.<sup>84</sup>

Depression is the most common mental health disorder in Britain, according to the Mental Health Foundation. The Rural Services Network points at evidence that seems to suggest mental health is probably better in rural areas.<sup>85</sup> However, they also conclude that there are a number of factors specific to rural areas such as demography, access to services, social exclusion and deprivation that may contribute to stress, anxiety and depression. Some rural occupations – including farming – have high suicide rates. Given the large number of farming business in Monmouthshire, this may be a significant issue.

The latest data from ONS reports that in 2020, the Wales suicide rate was 10.3 deaths per 100,000 population, of whom 79% were male.<sup>86</sup> In Wales, the suicide rate was 11.8 deaths per 100,000 population in between 2018-2020, with 964 deaths. In Monmouthshire over the same period, the rate was marginally higher than the rate in Wales, at 12.0. Caution is needed when interpreting suicide data, particularly annual fluctuations, because the small numbers, delays in registration and recording differences can produce unreliable rates.

## Loneliness and Isolation

Evidence suggests that loneliness and social isolation can impact physical and mental health significantly.<sup>87</sup> Different factors can place individuals at greater risk, including major life transitions, personal characteristics, and health conditions, but it can affect both young and old and those living in rural or urban areas.

*“Having a community relationship with a primary school is vital. Community activities for older people are vital to avoid the feeling of loneliness”*

An increasingly older population is the single most significant factor in the increasing prevalence of rural isolation. As described in the ‘Ageing Well’ section, Monmouthshire has an ageing population.

As of the 2011 Census, 5,515 people aged 65 and over in Monmouthshire lived alone.<sup>88</sup> Rural areas have a unique set of circumstances that can exacerbate the social isolation of older residents, leading to poor health, loss of independence and lower quality of life. Decreasing availability of rural public transport, greater reliance on car ownership and rises in the costs of fuel all have an impact on rural isolation. Transport plays a vital role in keeping older people connected to local communities and services but also family and friends. Being unable to get out and about due to a lack of transport can result in older people losing independence, leading to feelings of loneliness and a lack of independence.<sup>89</sup>

Loneliness among older people is exacerbated by distance from family members. Factors such as affordable housing and employment opportunities increase pressure on families to disperse. As further explored in the ‘Housing’ section, such pressures are significant in Monmouthshire. The Royal Voluntary Service states that older people who see their children once a month or less are twice as likely to feel lonely than those who have daily contact with their children.<sup>90</sup>

Broadband connectivity continues to be an issue for Monmouthshire. With the exception of Powys, the county has the lowest proportion of properties with Superfast UK broadband in Wales, and the lowest proportion of properties with Superfast EU broadband.<sup>91</sup> Overall, Superfast availability is 87% in Monmouthshire, compared to 94% for Wales, reflecting the rural nature of the county.<sup>92</sup> In 2019, the county had a digital deprivation rate of 12.5% (approximately 8,000 premises), but work has continued to install better fibre broadband to areas of south Wales, including Monmouthshire.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, given the county’s elderly and rural population, and the fact that single pensioner households are the least likely to have internet access (at 51%), it is likely that digital exclusion currently affects many residents in Monmouthshire.<sup>94</sup>

The accessibility of local village shops and services such as post offices often act as community hubs and provide a place for daily interaction. In 2020/21 three quarters of Monmouthshire residents agreed they have a feeling of belonging to their local area.<sup>95</sup>

## Housing

A person's health is directly affected by the quality of their home and the environment in which they live. Poor housing is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases and depression and anxiety, while those with mental health conditions are one and a half times more likely to live in rented housing when compared with the general population.<sup>96</sup> Over the last 10 years, housing conditions in Wales have improved but several factors still disproportionately affect those experiencing social or economic disadvantage, including homelessness, fuel poverty, unaffordable housing, and lack of safety and green spaces.<sup>97</sup>

Compared to the Wales average of £216k and the UK average of £255k, the average house price in Monmouthshire is high, at £359k.<sup>98</sup> Overall prices have risen 35% in the last 5 years, with a jump of £23k in the Monmouthshire average just between September 2020 and June 2021; this is likely due to a greater demand in rural areas following the increased ability to work from home as a result of Covid-19, though there is an indication that prices have recently started to plateau.<sup>99</sup> The removal of the Severn bridge tolls will have made the county more appealing to the residents of Bristol and south West England as it has lowered commuting costs. Nevertheless, prices are very high when related to earnings, with a ratio of 8:1, though in Abergavenny and Monmouth it is as high as 11:1.<sup>100</sup> As outlined in the 'Jobs and Employment' section, Monmouthshire's high house prices make it very difficult for young people, particularly, to live and work locally, leading many to move out of the county.<sup>101</sup>

Of the approximately 40,000 households in Monmouthshire, 75% are owner-occupied, which is 5% above the Wales average.<sup>102</sup> Studies suggest that the rental properties available reduced by almost 50% between 2010-19 and the private rental market is highly unlikely to be a viable option for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance – an inability to access private rented accommodation due to high prices is one of the issues leading to people in Monmouthshire being unable to form households and to leave the county.<sup>103</sup> Between 2010-19, the rental values across Monmouthshire saw an average increase of almost 25%.<sup>104</sup>

The difficulties in buying or renting a house create a large demand for affordable housing within the county.<sup>105</sup> There are approximately 5,700 units of affordable housing across Monmouthshire, mostly owned and managed by Monmouthshire Housing Association, Melin Homes and Pobl.<sup>106</sup> The affordable housing waiting list in Monmouthshire stands at more than 3,500 households, of which 2,400 have a recognised need.<sup>107</sup> In the engagement responses for the well-being assessment, residents throughout the county stressed the need for more affordable housing, and the risk that young people in the county are unable to live and work locally.

2018 Welsh Government projections indicate that the overall number of households in South East Wales would increase by 11.8% (77,400) between 2018 and 2043; Monmouthshire will need to accommodate a share of this growth while meeting the needs of an ageing population and trying to retain younger age groups.<sup>108</sup> In the immediate future, it has been estimated that 468 additional affordable homes will be needed per annum up until 2025.<sup>109</sup> However, new build

homes are not the total solution to the supply of affordable homes in the county e.g. increasing the supply of private rented homes and bringing empty properties back into use by other methods.<sup>110</sup>

Over the last 6 years, the total number of affordable dwelling being built (495) has been below the delivery target of 672 affordable units, required by the local development plan adopted in 2014. However, in the most recent monitoring periods housing completions have been much closer to the annual average requirement, due mostly to the speed with which the allocated strategic sites have come forward.<sup>111</sup>

Despite this progress though, several factors currently affect the delivery of additional affordable housing in Monmouthshire. The first is the high levels of phosphates in the River Wye and River Usk, which mean that any new developments in those areas must demonstrate that the levels will be neutral or will improve as a result of the development. At present, this is preventing new developments in the areas of Abergavenny, Monmouth and Usk. Second, due to limited land available for development, there is high competition for land coming forward. Third, high land values and increased costs of building materials are affecting viability and deliverability. The National Development Framework sets out Welsh Government's policy, and will restrict housing development – including affordable homes – in Monmouthshire as it seeks to concentrate new developments in Newport, Cardiff and the valleys. Finally, it is difficult to deliver affordable housing within town centres due to heritage requirements, the cost and extent of renovation work often required, and significant flood risks.<sup>112</sup>

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

*"A town where there is more public/social housing for young families, and better employment opportunities for our young people"*

*"Opportunities for young people to get on the housing ladder if they wish to"*

*"With house prices accelerating all the time we need to make sure that everyone can afford to live and remain in our community"*

Approximately 15% of the existing stock of affordable housing is located in rural areas, equating to around 870 units. However, the majority of these properties do not benefit local communities, as they are not covered by the rural allocation policy that requires people to demonstrate a local connection to that community. Additional affordable housing is needed in these rural areas to enable people to remain in their local communities, particularly younger households and first-time buyers who are often priced out of the open market and have to move away to access housing.<sup>113</sup>

In rural counties, second homes are often a factor that compounds housing supply issues; however, of the 42,114 households in Monmouthshire, only 0.5% are second homes, low when compared to several other local authorities in Wales.<sup>114</sup>

In August 2021, Welsh Government committed £250m for 20,000 new low carbon homes for rent within the social sector in the next few years, of which Monmouthshire has been allocated

£7.5m.<sup>115</sup> Social housing is generally more energy-efficient due to being newer and because of improvements made to social housing for Welsh Housing Quality Standard.<sup>116</sup>

A household is considered to be living in fuel poverty if the occupant is living on a lower income in a home that cannot be kept warm at a reasonable cost.<sup>117</sup> 10% of the households in the county are in fuel poverty; this is below the Wales average of 12%, but high considering the county's overall affluence, working out to around 4,000 households.<sup>118</sup> Households in rural areas are more likely to be in fuel poverty, which could reflect a greater proportion of rural households not having central heating; in the 2011 census, over 600 households (1.6%) in Monmouthshire had no central heating.<sup>119</sup> While fuel poverty is predominantly experienced by households with low incomes, the occupants are also generally older, as are the buildings themselves, which is relevant to Monmouthshire given the older population and housing stock.<sup>120</sup> In addition, rural properties are often not on the gas network so depend on more expensive oil or bottled gas for heating.

The current homelessness situation in Monmouthshire is extremely challenging due to the lack of temporary and permanent accommodation and the continuing level of need for homeless support.<sup>121</sup> The average stay in temporary accommodation is longer than normal due to a lack of suitable alternative accommodation because existing temporary accommodation is at capacity and the supply of permanent accommodation vacancies is insufficient to meet demand.<sup>122</sup> Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Monmouthshire County Council has experienced a significant increase in demand for homelessness accommodation, as Welsh Government guidance required it to ensure nobody had to sleep rough or was at risk of sleeping rough. This issue has been exacerbated due to citizens not being able to stay with family or friends.<sup>123</sup> As of August 2021, there were 147 households in temporary accommodation, including 73 households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Many of these are single homeless people with multiple support needs.<sup>124</sup>

Of those assessed as homeless in Wales in 2019/20, 41% were successfully helped to secure accommodation, whereas in Monmouthshire in 2020/21 the prevention figure is only 35%, illustrating the scale of the county's problem.<sup>125</sup> However, despite the challenging situation, Monmouthshire County Council is increasing both accommodation and housing support; in 2019/20 the county had only 5 rough sleepers, making it the joint 6<sup>th</sup> lowest in Wales.<sup>126</sup>

Providing appropriate housing to meet the needs of the population in Monmouthshire, including older people and disabled people, is essential so that people are able to access suitable accommodation that meets their needs, are not trapped in unsuitable accommodation or need to move from their communities to access more suitable housing. Planning for flexible, adaptable accommodation with the whole life course in mind will improve the ability of older people and those with disabilities to live independently at home.

## Child Development

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Children born into secure, loving families are more likely to grow up to be better educated, more financially secure and healthier, and are more likely to give their children the same good start in life. The first thousand days of a child's life from conception to their second birthday have a significant effect on their outcomes and those of future generations.

Teenage pregnancy is both a cause and a consequence of health and education inequalities and is associated with poorer outcomes for children. Monmouthshire has a rate of 26.6 per 1,000 conceptions under the age of 20. This is far below the Welsh average of 37.2 per 1,000 and the second-lowest in Wales.<sup>127</sup>

Birth weight is an important determinant for future health, as it is inversely associated with infant mortality and life expectancy, and is predictive of disability and educational achievement as well as diabetes, stroke and heart disease in adults.<sup>128</sup> Monmouthshire had 4.7% of low birth weight live single births in 2015 compared to the Welsh average of 5.5%.<sup>129</sup> Using data available at a smaller geographical area, it appears that the rates are highest in Portskewett, Priory 2 in Abergavenny and West End in Caldicot.

In Monmouthshire, 43.8% of babies are breastfed at 10 days following birth, which compares favourably with the Welsh average.<sup>130</sup> This is important, as breastfeeding has long-term benefits for babies, lasting into adulthood, and health benefits for mothers, while promoting early bonding and attachment between mother and baby.

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's Early Years programme for families with children less than four years of age, and includes free quality, part-time childcare for two to three-year-olds, an enhanced health visiting service, access to parenting programmes and speech, language and communication support. The Monmouthshire Flying Start service is available to families in defined areas of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Chepstow and Caldicot.

Legislation requires the provision of, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare to work, to undertake training or education, or to prepare for work. Parents have reported a lack of adequate childcare for children with a disability, including after school clubs, child minders, and holiday provisions. They struggle to find adequate suitable carers when using direct payments, and there is a lack of places at after school clubs.<sup>131</sup>

On the whole, the quality of childcare provision in Monmouthshire is very good and there is sufficient provision to meet the needs of most families; however, there are some gaps in

provision that have been identified and need to be addressed (such as Welsh Language provision).<sup>132</sup> An action plan was drawn up to address highlighted gaps and to reduce the barriers to accessing childcare that were identified.

*“I also worry how our young families can afford to work and pay for nursery provision with very little affordable childcare provision in place”*

Some responses to the engagement survey identified the affordability of childcare as being an issue and the potential impact that this has on their parents being in employment.

Play is important to children’s development; further information on play provision and the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) for the county is in the sport and leisure section of the Culture assessment.

The main oral disease of childhood is tooth decay which, like many other diseases, is associated with social deprivation. This is largely preventable, for example by reducing intake of sugary and starchy food and drinks. The most recent data shows that, on average, Monmouthshire children aged 5 have 0.9 decayed, missing or filled teeth, just below the Welsh average of 1.22. At age 12, the average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for Monmouthshire children is 0.5, below the Welsh average of 0.6.<sup>133</sup> There are concerns that children’s oral health may have been negatively affected during the coronavirus pandemic, with access to dental care being limited.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are chronic stressful experiences in childhood that can directly hurt a child (such as abuse or neglect) or affect them through the environment in which they live (such as growing up in a house with domestic violence or with individuals with alcohol and other substance use problems). ACEs tend to be ‘passed down’ through families and lock successive generations of families into poor health and anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately, data on ACEs for Monmouthshire is not available.

Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the number of looked after children over recent years. The number of looked after children has increased from 173 at the end of 2018/19 to 219 at the end of March 2020. Despite a slight decrease in the number of looked after children in March 2021 to 213, there has been a sustained increase. The rate in Monmouthshire of 123 children looked after per 10,000 child population remains higher than the equivalent Wales rate which is 115 per 10,000.<sup>134</sup> The number of children on the child protection register in Monmouthshire has fluctuated but the overall remains higher than a few years ago. As a result, there is significant demand on Children Services in Monmouthshire.

## Education

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Monmouthshire has 30 LEA funded primary schools including two Welsh-medium, six Church in Wales and two Roman Catholic primary schools. There are four secondary schools and a pupil referral unit. Across the authority, 16.6% of compulsory school age pupils are eligible for free school meals.

In 2018, the Welsh Government began the process of developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to align and help the realisation of the new Curriculum for Wales and associated reforms. These arrangements include a new set of measures for Key Stage 4 to support a broader learner choice, valuing learner needs and achievements, along with a move away from gathering this information on a school-by-school basis.

Amendments to the regulations relating to teacher assessment information supported the Welsh Government's decision to cease publishing comparative information about end of phase or key stage teacher assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Test data at a school, local authority, or regional consortium level.

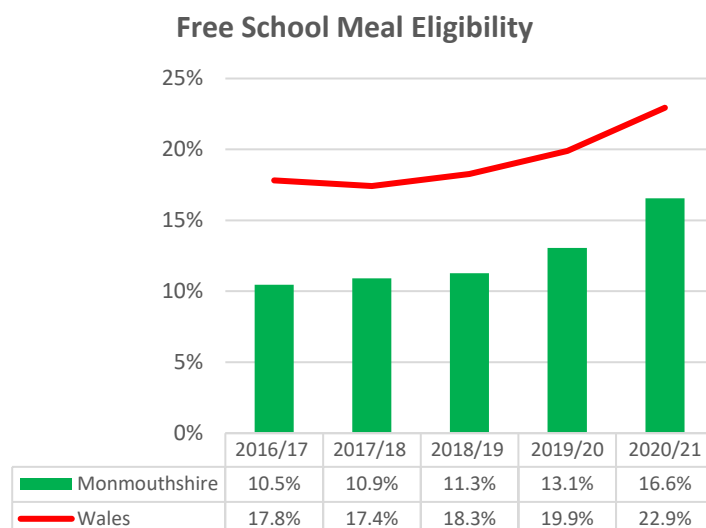
In 2019, further modifications were made to some of the regulations underpinning the reporting and collection of school information to take account of the disruption to schools as a direct result of coronavirus and the disproportionate administrative burden they may have posed during these challenging times, including school reporting requirements in relation to the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/2022 school years. This means the local authority is unable to provide school academic performance information at this time.

Skills and qualifications are important for progression into further education or employment. Having good local schools and education provision was identified as being important to Monmouthshire engagement respondents and their families.

School attendance is a critical factor in student achievement. Attendance in Monmouthshire primary schools during the last year of available data (2018/19) was the highest in Wales, with 4.6% of half-day sessions missed due to all absences, with the Wales average being 5.4%.<sup>135</sup>

Attendance in secondary schools tends to be slightly lower than in primary schools. As with primary schools, attendance in Monmouthshire secondary schools during 2018/19 was the highest in Wales, with 5% of half-day sessions missed due to all absences (compared to 6.2% for Wales).<sup>136</sup>

An increasing number of Monmouthshire children are eligible for free school meals although not all parents who are eligible claim for them. The coronavirus outbreak has resulted in a further increase and as a result, the percentage of compulsory school-age children eligible for free school meals in Monmouthshire in 2020/21 is 16% and lower than the Welsh average of 22.9%. In Monmouthshire, however, the percentage of children eligible is increasing at a faster rate than the Welsh average:



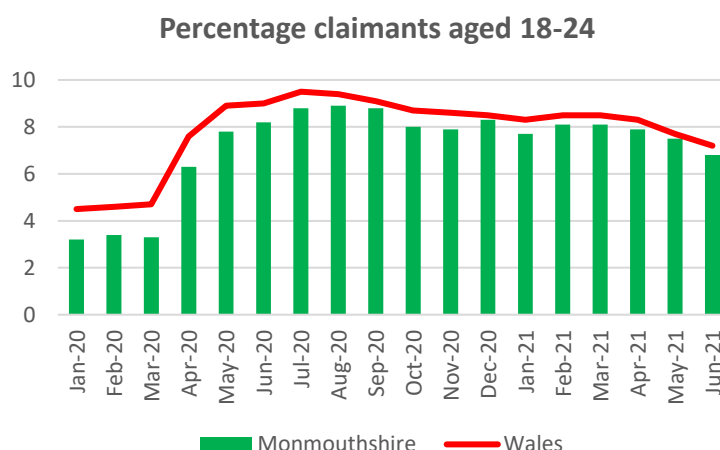
*Percentage pupils aged 5-15 eligible for free school meals<sup>137</sup>*

In considering effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, Estyn defines vulnerable pupils as those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers to learning, for example pupils with special educational needs, pupils with mental health issues and medical needs, and looked after children. Disadvantaged pupils are considered to be pupils who may have barriers to succeeding in school because of detrimental circumstances beyond their control; for example, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils from low-income families.<sup>138</sup> The latest annual report produced by Monmouthshire's Chief Officer for Children and Young People highlights that securing better outcomes for our learners eligible for free school meals remains an important area of focus.<sup>139</sup> The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation also highlights that there are different levels of attainment between different communities where pupils are attending the same school.<sup>140</sup> Further assessment of children and young people with health conditions, disabilities and sensory impairments – including the predicted number of children with a disability in Gwent – is included in section 3 of the Gwent Population Needs Assessment.<sup>141</sup>

Studies have shown that time spent NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) can have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health, and increase the likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low quality of work later on in life.<sup>142</sup> Careers Wales data shows the percentage of year 11 school leavers who were NEET in 2020 was 1.4% in Monmouthshire and for year 13 school leavers 3.9%. This compares favourably with the Wales figures of 7.4% of 16-18 year olds.<sup>143</sup>

Almost one-third of Monmouthshire Key Stage 4 pupils entered higher education in the following three years after leaving Year 11 compared to 29.9% for Wales.<sup>144</sup> A lack of high-quality graduate jobs in South Wales means that the healthy and better qualified often leave the area for better opportunities, leading to a 'brain drain' effect. As more people that are qualified leave, it becomes more difficult for the area to recover and attract the employment opportunities that people seek.<sup>145</sup>

The coronavirus outbreak has particularly affected the labour market status of young people: the percentage of claimants aged 18-24 in Wales rose from 4.7% in March 2020, peaking at 9.5% in July 2020. Monmouthshire followed this trend, although below the Welsh average. By June 2021, claimant rates were lower than the peak in summer 2020 but still some way above pre-pandemic levels:



*Percentage claimants aged 18-24<sup>146</sup>*

Qualifications of working-age adults at both NQF levels 3 and 4 in Monmouthshire are both above the Welsh average. Working-age adults with no qualifications are 3.8% and below the Welsh average of 7.3%.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme is a long-term investment for schools to develop as hubs for learning and reduce buildings in poor condition. Monmouthshire has benefitted from the programme, with new secondary schools in Caldicot and Monmouth, for example.

As described in the Gwent assessment, the coronavirus pandemic has had a disruptive effect on schools and education.



*Monmouth Comprehensive School*

The usual process of awarding Key Stage 4 and 5 results were altered for the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, leading to uncertainty for students, resulting in some leaving education or going on to university without having sat a formal exam at GCSE or A Level. Consequently, some students may feel less confident and lag behind previous years in terms of their readiness for the next challenge in their lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact upon attendance at schools across Wales. Monmouthshire has been no exception, with attendance rates in 2020/21 being 94.4% at primary phase and 92.8% at secondary phase which is 1.0pp and 2.2pp respectively below the latest published Monmouthshire data contained in the National data releases in 2018/19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the well-being of students. The local authority has allocated funding from Welsh Government to address this issue, with a programme of support developed to commence in Spring Term 2022.

The Covid pandemic also contributed towards the rise in learners who were home educated by their parents. The number of pupils whose parents who have chosen to 'Elect to Home Educate' has increased from 57 at the start of the pandemic to 93 pupils as of December 2021 (though Covid is not the sole cause of this increase).

Equipping our children and young people with the skills they will need to enter a rapidly changing workplace is vital. Many low skill, routine tasks are likely to be automated while emerging sectors such as smart technology, artificial intelligence, and robotics are likely to grow.

Respondents to the engagement exercise in Monmouthshire identified education as an important part of the future of their community.

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

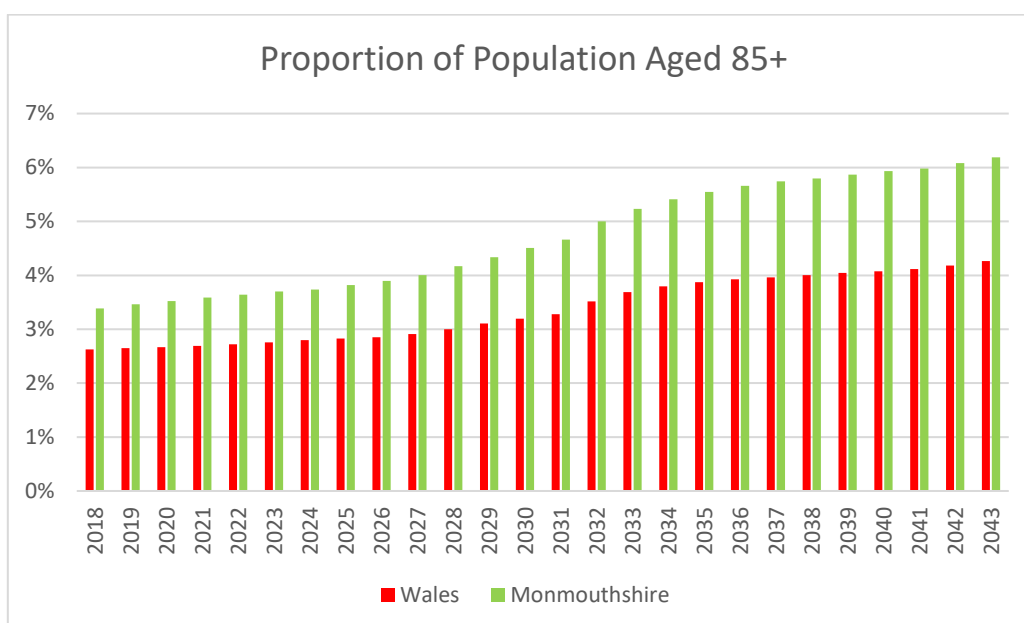
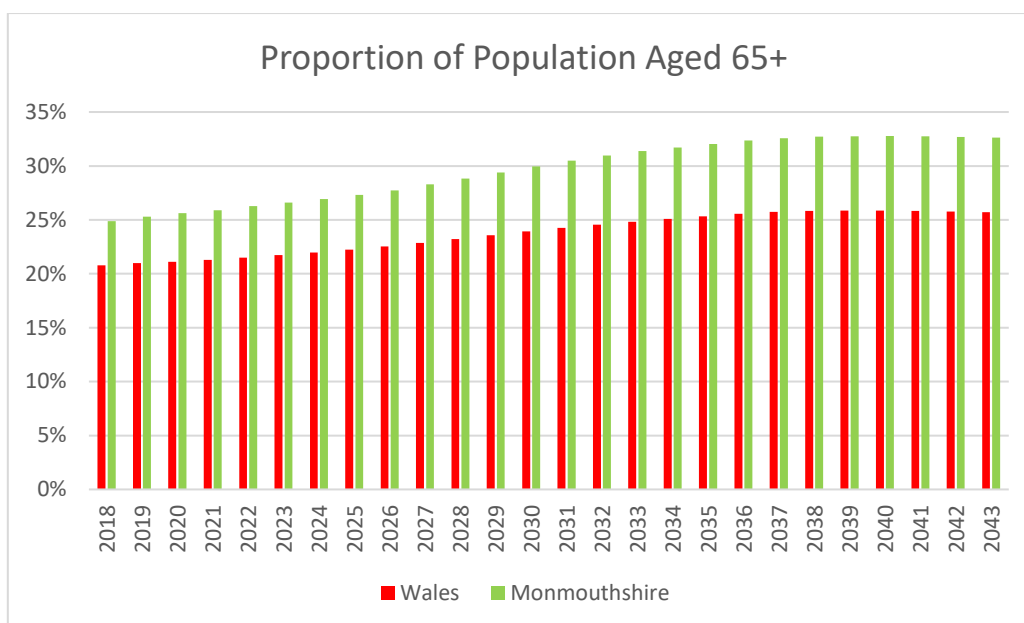
*"Improved chances for future generations achieved by both children and adult learning and training advances"*

More information on future skills is considered in the Gwent well-being assessment.

## Ageing Well

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire's population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 41% and, more significantly, those aged 85 and over by 96% by 2043.<sup>147</sup>



As the age of the population increases, so too does the number of unpaid carers. Social Care Wales estimates that 12% of the population of Wales are unpaid carers, a figure that could increase to 16% by 2037. Wales also has the highest proportion of older carers and carers providing more than 50 hours' care a week; this is particularly relevant to Monmouthshire, given its ageing population. Better support for unpaid carers was identified by some respondents to the engagement exercise.

What would make your area a better place?

*"More respite support services for unpaid carers"*

The most common health problems amongst older people, and causes of hospital admission and mortality, are respiratory and heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and fractures. Falls are the most common cause of serious injury in older people and the most frequent reason for hospital attendance.<sup>148</sup> Elderly fallers account for 10% of all 999 calls to

the Welsh Ambulance Service.<sup>149</sup> A reluctance to leave home due to a fear of falling comes across strongly in Monmouthshire County Council's survey of social care users.

Monmouthshire has integrated health and social care teams, with a mix of skill sets, which provide people with the most appropriate professional when needed. Reablement is a vital service delivered by the integrated teams over a six week period that aims to restore people to independence at home after a fall or other crisis event. During 2020/21, Monmouthshire's reablement service delivered 291 periods of reablement, at the end of which 58.8% of people had no requirement for long term services.

Referrals to Adult's Social Services in Monmouthshire have increased over recent years, and services are facing unprecedented pressure as a result of a range of factors. In March 2021, 1,813 adults had care and support plans detailing the support required. During 2020-21, 80 people began a service in a residential care home and 1,324 adults started a domiciliary care service, which may include new additional care hours to existing provision.<sup>150</sup> Monmouthshire has specific challenges in adults social care due to rurality and demographics in the county. Demand has increased significantly during the pandemic and people are often presenting with needs that are more complex. Some of this has been attributed to the effect of coronavirus lockdowns, in particular, some people are now experiencing reduced confidence and physical frailty. Recruitment and retention of care staff is also considerable challenge. There is a key challenge of the fragility of the whole health and social care sector and balancing demand pressures and staff retention to provide the care required.

Dementia UK estimates that 1 in 14 people over the age of 65 have dementia, and the condition affects 1 in 6 people over 80. The number of people with dementia is increasing as people are living longer; it is estimated that by 2025, more than 1 million people in the UK will have dementia.<sup>151</sup> With Monmouthshire's ageing population, there will therefore be increasing levels of dementia in the county in the future.

There were many responses to the engagement exercise on the importance of, and concerns related to, the provision of care for older people and ensuring older people can remain involved in their local community and supported at home for as long as possible.

*"Older people want to stay in their own homes so there needs to be sufficient services to support this – health, mental health support – and they may need help to continue to be involved in the community, such as transport"*

*"Domiciliary services are vital for those older people who wish to stay living in their homes"*

Older people and their contribution to their communities are often undervalued: in 2017, Age UK estimated the economic contribution of employment, informal caring (including childcare) and volunteering by people aged 65 or over amounted to £160 billion.<sup>152</sup> In 2019/20, Welsh Government's National Survey for Wales reported that 30% of people aged 65-74 volunteered.

It becomes even more important to remain involved and active in older age, in order to stay healthy and remain independent. Continuing to learn throughout life can improve and maintain

our mental well-being. Daily physical activity is recommended for older adults, carrying very low health and safety risks for the majority. In contrast, the risks of poor health as a result of inactivity are very high. Across Wales, 59% of adults participate in a sport or physical activity. However, this figure drops to 44% of people aged 65-74 and further to 19% of those aged 75 and over.<sup>153</sup> Further assessment of activity rates is provided in the ‘Cultural Well-being’ section.

The pandemic has undoubtedly affected the well-being of older adults, as shown in the results of the ONS survey on the social impact of the coronavirus pandemic on older people in Great Britain. Being worried about the future, feeling stressed or anxious, and being bored had most commonly affected older adults’ well-being.<sup>154</sup>

## Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the ‘Social Well-being’ sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

### Health and Well-being

Good health and well-being is a resource for life by increasing an individual’s ability to achieve their educational, economic and social potential. The environment has an important role in contributing to people’s health and well-being.



### Transport and Access to Services

Transport whether public or private is an essential for people to access the jobs, services and activities they need. The environment in Monmouthshire is impacted upon by transport but also provides opportunities for active travel.



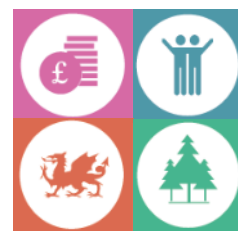
### Community Safety

Social and economic circumstances can lead to crime, while perceptions of crime and safety can impact on people’s well-being in communities, many residents in Monmouthshire see Anti-Social behaviour as a priority.



## Mental Health

People's Mental Health and well-being will be impacted upon by economic, social, environmental and cultural factors both as reasons for and treatment of mental health problems and promoting people's well-being.



## Loneliness and Isolation

An increasingly older population is the single most significant factor in the increasing prevalence of rural isolation. Rural areas have a unique set of circumstances that can exacerbate social isolation, such as poor transport options, which can in turn lead to poor health, loss of independence and lower quality of life.



## Housing

Having a secure home is a prerequisite to well-being. Economic and social circumstances impact on the availability of housing, with Monmouthshire house prices are amongst the highest in Wales. This could also affect the long-term viability of some communities, though housing developments need to be balanced against environmental impacts, but can also deliver environmental benefits through design, quality and green infrastructure.



## Child Development

Children born into secure, loving families are more likely to grow up to be better educated, more financially secure, and healthier adults and they are more likely to give their own children the same good start in life. The first thousand days of a child's life from conception to their second birthday has a significant impact on their outcomes and those of future generations.



## Education

Equipping young people with the skills and education they need for future employment, to fulfil their potential and maximise their social and economic well-being.



## Ageing Well

The challenges of the well-being of an ageing population are well documented and mainly cover economic, social and cultural factors. However, older people are also a significant asset to the county, while community-based assets in the county provide an opportunity to improve the well-being of older people.



# Environmental Well-being

Natural resources, such as air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil, provide our most basic needs, including food, energy and security. They help to keep us healthy and help people and the economy to thrive, while reducing flooding, improving air quality and supplying materials for construction. Natural resources also provide a home for wildlife, give us iconic landscapes to enjoy, and boost the economy through tourism.<sup>155</sup>

However, they are also under pressure from development, climate change, the need to produce energy, and more. Managing our natural resources responsibly is essential to ensure our long term social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

## Landscape and Countryside

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is undoubtedly its landscape and natural environment. Monmouthshire is recognised for its rich and diverse landscapes, stretching from the flat open coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south, to the exposed uplands of the Black Mountains within the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north and the picturesque river gorge of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the east. The benefits of the natural environment and landscape for health and well-being are well-documented, for both physical health and mental health, and this has never been more evident than through the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns.<sup>156</sup> Local landscapes can also provide an important link to our sense of national pride, culture and local identity, and are important for tourism, recreation and economic activity.<sup>157</sup> During the engagement for the well-being assessment, when asked what is good about where people live, the second most cited reason was the landscape, countryside and green spaces.

Green infrastructure (GI) is a term used to refer to high quality natural and semi-natural areas, such as trees, parks, gardens, woodlands, verges and rivers, which together make a living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. In Monmouthshire, the council uses a green infrastructure approach for delivering biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, supporting landscape setting and quality of place, addressing health and well-being, identifying solutions for tackling climate change, supporting active travel, managing public rights of way, and providing the framework for partnership working.<sup>158</sup>

People enjoy the landscape of Monmouthshire for many reasons. This includes for its tranquillity, and Monmouthshire also has 5 Dark Sky Discovery Sites for astronomy.<sup>159</sup>



*Walking down the Sugarloaf*

Landscape and countryside are also important contributors to the economy in Monmouthshire, including through tourism, agriculture and forestry. These are explored more in the ‘Jobs and Employment’ and “Landscape and Heritage” sections.

As well as having an important role to play in health and well-being and economic well-being, the condition of our green spaces in

Monmouthshire gives an important

indication of environmental well-being. Agriculture has a significant effect on environmental well-being, with the way land is managed having a direct impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity, habitats and landscape. In the future it is likely that there will be significant impacts on agriculture and land management as a result of subsidy changes that come into place following Brexit.

Monmouthshire has large numbers of sites with local, national, European and international recognition of their value for wildlife and biodiversity, including a Ramsar Site, Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These are explored more in the Local Well-being Assessment section. The number of local Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation has increased significantly from 589 sites in 2016 to 759 sites in 2021 as a result of funding to survey sites as part of a Resilient Greater Gwent Project.<sup>160</sup> However, the quality of the earlier designated sites is not fully known; sites may have been degraded in quality or lost. A number of key sites are known to have been lost due to changes in management and development.

In addition to these designations for biodiversity (and geology), there are also protected landscapes within Monmouthshire. The east of the county is part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and parts of the county outside Abergavenny form part of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon World Heritage Site and Clydach Gorge Landscape of Special Historic Interest. To the east is the Wye Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, and in the south of the county, the Gwent Levels is designated as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.<sup>161</sup>

However, despite these designations, there are still numerous threats to environmental well-being. NRW’s SoNaRR2020 report assesses the extent to which Wales is achieving the sustainable management of natural resources, illustrating that Monmouthshire, like Gwent as a whole, is not meeting the four long-term aims of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (further information in the Gwent Well-being Assessment).<sup>162</sup> A wide range of issues that are

difficult to manage or regulate are contributing to reducing the resilience of Wales' ecosystems, which affect the delivery of ecosystem benefits and impacts on people's well-being, and the loss of biodiversity and decline in quality of many species, habitats and designated sites is continuing.<sup>163</sup> Many local residents said that wildlife and biodiversity was important to them and they wanted to make sure that it was protected.

In Monmouthshire, some of the threats to the natural environment are contributing to the species decline highlighted in the Gwent State of Nature Report.<sup>164</sup> For example, numbers of lapwing have greatly reduced and the range of the adder has declined, making isolated populations more vulnerable and less resilient. Threats to species include tree disease, in particular ash dieback and larch disease, causing fragmentation of ancient woodland parcels, pollution and over-abstraction on the Rivers Usk and Wye and their tributaries, and development pressures reducing habitats and increasing habitat fragmentation, which means that wildlife cannot easily move from one area to the next.<sup>165</sup> There are many partnerships in Monmouthshire which are attempting to address some of these issues, such as the Wye Catchment Partnership, the Living Levels Project, the Black Mountains Partnership and the Monmouthshire and Newport Local Nature Partnership. Initiatives such as Nature Isn't Neat and the Monmouthshire Pollinator's Policy are examples of work aiming to improve biodiversity and protect pollinators.<sup>166</sup>

There is also extensive regional working through the Gwent Green Grid and the Resilient Greater Gwent partnerships.<sup>167</sup> These regional partnerships offer a key delivery mechanism for the Gwent PSB and South East Wales Area Statement and support ecosystem management and climate adaptation at a scale which is appropriate to the habitat or landscape and exceeds political boundaries.

Invasive Non-Native Species in Monmouthshire are another threat, such as American signal crayfish, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed. As well as being detrimental to native wildlife, there is a significant financial impact. Research suggests that such species cost Wales £125 million per year from damage to crops, ecosystems and livelihoods.<sup>168</sup> There are projects by Resilient Greater Gwent and the Wye Valley AONB which aim to address Invasive Non-Native Species.

The resilience of ecosystems means how well they can deal with disturbances, either by resisting them, recovering from them, or adapting to them.<sup>169</sup> Although there are some important wildlife corridors in Monmouthshire, such as the Rivers Usk and Wye and the Severn Estuary which allow species to migrate if under pressure, the county also has isolated pockets of habitats, such as grasslands and ancient and semi-natural woodlands that are scattered and poorly connected. This could result in the loss of certain species to Monmouthshire, with a subsequent loss of overall biodiversity.

Loss of woodland and tree cover is also an issue of concern in Monmouthshire, which affects economic, social and environmental well-being. The county has extensive broadleaved woodlands in the Wye Valley, small blocks of farm woodland, rural estates and some commercial

forest blocks, resulting in 15.2% of the county being wooded (slightly above the Wales average of 14%).<sup>170</sup> As well as the importance of woodlands for biodiversity, they are important for our local economy, through tourism and recreation and employment, for building resilience through carbon storage, reducing flooding, stabilising soils, and improving health and well-being by improving air quality, reducing noise and providing green space for recreation. Threats from tree disease, particularly ash die back and larch disease, a burgeoning deer population, conflicting recreational pressures and little economic incentive to plant and manage woodlands on farmland means that some woodlands are now in a poor condition, of small size, and are fragmented.

Trees are also an essential component of our urban Green Infrastructure, delivering a range of services to help sustain life, promote well-being, and support economic benefits. They make our towns more attractive to live in – encouraging inward investment, improving the energy efficiency of buildings – as well as removing airborne pollutants and connecting people with nature. They can also mitigate the extremes of climate change, helping to reduce storm water run-off and the urban heat island. However, Monmouthshire has only 15% urban tree cover, less than the Wales average, with some areas as low as 8.4%. 12 hectares of woodland were lost in Monmouthshire between 2011 and 2014, while every town lost tree cover between 2009 and 2013 (county tree cover has fallen by 1.2% between 2009-13), reducing the many benefits they bring.<sup>171</sup> Work is underway to increase tree cover; for example, Monmouthshire County Council has exceeded its commitment to plant 10,000 trees in three years in its Climate Emergency Strategy, funding tree planting through the profits made through Monmouthshire's two Re-use Shops, and the extremely ambitious community project Stump Up for Trees.<sup>172</sup> New i-Tree Eco technology is being used in Severnside and Chepstow to understand more about the benefits that urban trees bring in order to develop priorities for a tree plant plan.<sup>173</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, much of rural Monmouthshire does not have easily accessible natural or semi-natural green space or easy access to amenity green spaces such as sports pitches.<sup>174</sup> For example, the average number of parks, public gardens, or playing fields within a 1000m radius is 2.67, well below the Wales average of 3.4.<sup>175</sup> Less available good quality public green space is usually associated with economically deprived areas but some of these areas in Monmouthshire are some of the least deprived in the county, so the figures are mostly due to the area's rurality and the small size of the respective towns/villages.<sup>176</sup>

There are over 3,850 hectares of mainly rural commons in Monmouthshire, where there is usually a right to roam on foot, plus 24 village greens. Excluding the Brecon Beacons National Park there is also about 150 hectares of land designated as Open Access, plus 3,550 ha of open access woodland managed by Natural Resources Wales.<sup>177</sup>

Monmouthshire has approximately 2,165 kilometres of public rights of way, including several long-distance paths such as the Wales Coast Path and Offa's Dyke trail. These rights of way are important for leisure and recreation, as well as for tourism, active travel and to improve health and well-being. However, 89% of these are footpath only and don't provide for cyclists or horse riders. Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020-2030 sets objectives for

the county's rights of way network, countryside sites and wider public access, and recognises the importance of access to quality green spaces for physical and mental well-being for residents and visitors.<sup>178</sup> A Regional Access Forum for Gwent is also being established to help improve the countryside access network regionally and locally.

## Air and Water Quality

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Air pollution is the biggest environmental threat to health in the UK, with between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths a year attributed to long-term exposure.<sup>179</sup> There are significant health and social care costs associated with air pollution.

Air quality across Monmouthshire varies. Although less than some other parts of Gwent, as a whole, pollution is still relatively high given the rural nature of the county. Monmouthshire does not have a significant industrial contribution to air quality, so the air quality in the county is almost completely due to transport-related emissions, with high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulates from vehicles, which are particularly detrimental to health.<sup>180</sup> Monmouthshire has two Air Quality Management Areas, the details of which are given in the area chapters. In 2020, due to the impact of the Covid pandemic and lockdowns, air quality in Monmouthshire improved compared to 2019 at all air quality monitoring locations, and 2020 concentrations were the lowest to date.<sup>181</sup> The data is not yet available since lockdowns were eased, but anecdotal evidence suggests that this air quality improvement was only temporary and that emissions have likely returned to pre-Covid levels.



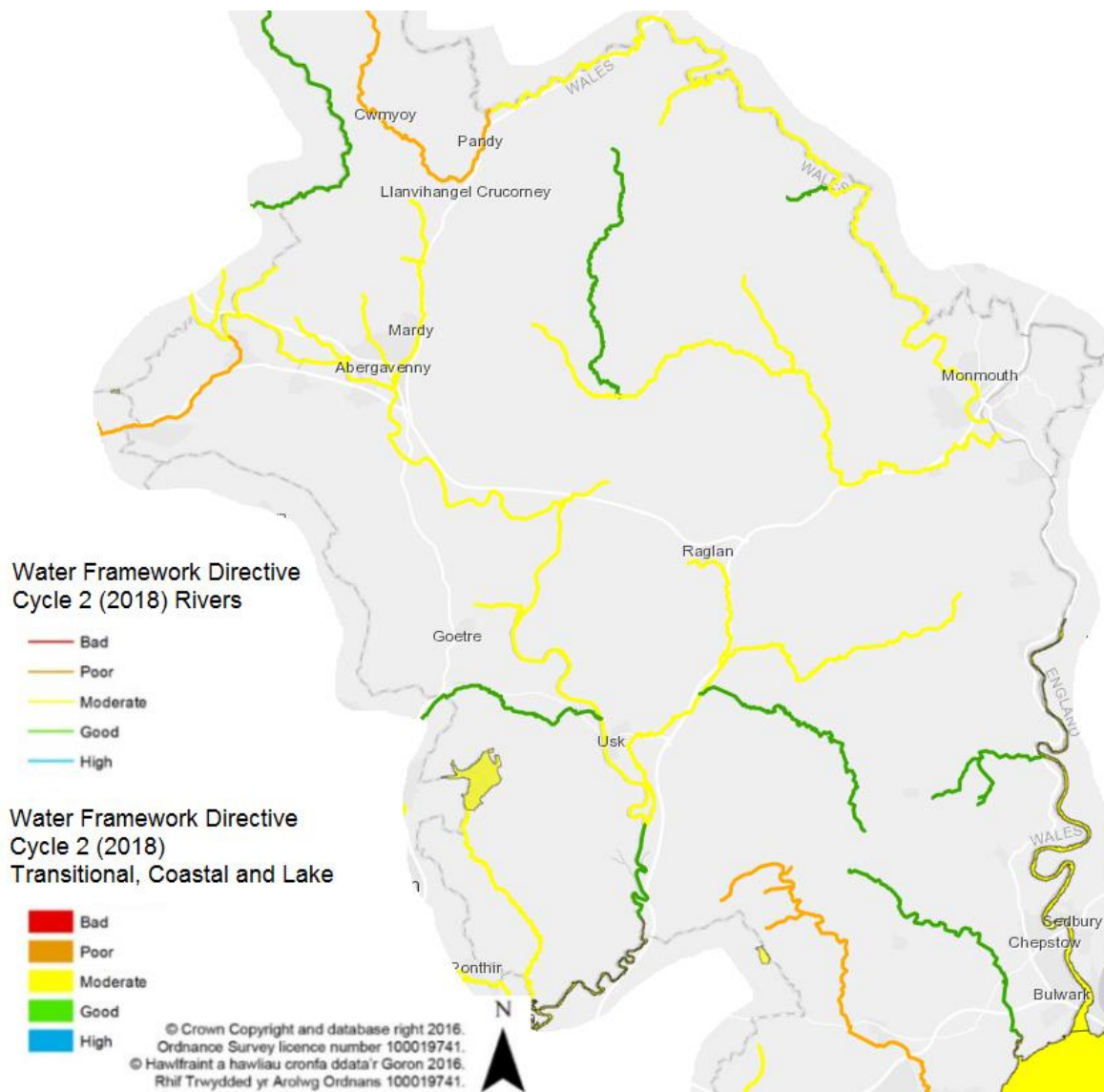
*One of the winning anti-idling poster designs*

Complaints about cars idling their engines, particularly outside schools, has led to an anti-idling campaign being run in 2020/21, with children designing posters to be made into road signs.

Rivers and water form some of the most attractive features of the Monmouthshire landscape. They are seen as popular routes for walking and cycling such as the Usk Valley and Clydach Gorge and are visitor destinations such as the Wye Gorge, Llandegfedd Reservoir and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. The river valleys have high ecological value as well as being the foci of historical settlements. However, pressure from development, increases in recreational use, changes in agricultural practice and climate change continues to affect these attractive landscapes.<sup>182</sup>

Water quality varies across the county. Waterways assessed under the EU Water Framework Directive as bad, poor or moderate are deemed as failing the standards and need to be improved to at least good by 2027. They are assessed on a combination of ecological and chemical monitoring. The NRW map below shows the water quality of each waterway in Monmouthshire with further details given in each of the 5 local area assessments. Several water bodies in Monmouthshire face a range of diffuse rural, industrial and sewage pollution.

Water pollution from rural sources, particularly phosphates, nitrates and sediment, is identified by NRW as a significant threat to wildlife and plants within the county. NRW has brought in detailed planning guidance to ensure that new developments don't increase phosphate levels in the Rivers Wye and Usk Special Areas of Conservation.<sup>183</sup> Monmouthshire has 3 designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) where groundwater has, or is at risk of, high levels of nitrates.<sup>184</sup> The main area is around Raglan, and there is also a small area of Trellech and a small section that crosses the border near Monmouth. High levels of nitrates are linked to agricultural practices, such as a change in agriculture away from extensive livestock farming to more intensive arable farming, horticulture and poultry production.



*Water quality in Monmouthshire (Source: NRW)<sup>185</sup>*

As a result of the pollution threat to water supplies, Monmouthshire has a total of 19 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZ) which seek to protect underground aquifers that are an important source of drinking water such as wells, boreholes and springs, in areas where the risk of contamination of ground water is high. SPZs aim to ensure that pollution by waste water or sewage, slurry, pesticide, herbicides, oil or other chemicals doesn't take place.<sup>186</sup>

Many partnerships work together to balance demands on the rivers and catchments. Nutrient Management Boards are an important mechanism to reduce the effects of nutrients on catchments such as the Wye Nutrient Management Board and the River Usk Nutrient Management Board, which is now being set up.<sup>187</sup> Although both the Rivers Usk and Wye are protected as Special Areas of Conservation because of their water quality, both are now failing to meet water quality standards.<sup>188</sup> Due to concerns raised by the evidence of algal blooms in the River Wye in 2020, NRW reviewed three years of data and in January 2021 published evidence showing that 88% of the River Usk catchment and 67% of the River Wye catchment failed to

meet the required phosphate target. Eutrophication, which is the increase of nutrients in the water, can result in changes to vegetation, increased algae and less oxygen, making the water unsuitable for fish and other animals, or recreation. NRW have suggested that the high phosphate levels result from a range of issues including the release of sewage and overgrazing, although many of the public campaigns blame the water quality issues on the proliferation of poultry farms.<sup>189</sup> The recent UK Government decision around tightening restrictions on water

What would make your area better?

*“Cleaner rivers and a strong rejection of polluting developments upstream”*

*“A river Wye that’s clean and unpolluted”*

*“Rivers free from pollution with local residents empowered to monitor and report on the state of the rivers in their area”*

companies releasing sewage into watercourses has brought the issue even more into the public eye, with strong public reaction.<sup>190</sup> As we face more extreme weather as a result of climate change, and additional house-building practices using the same sewerage network, the likelihood of sewage pollution in the future increases.

Monmouthshire’s water supply comes from a variety of sources, including surface water reservoirs, such as the Talybont on Usk reservoir, river abstractions from the Wye and the Usk and private water supplies such as

boreholes, wells and springs. 95% of Wales’ water supply comes from rivers and reservoirs, which are vulnerable to drought and low rainfall, conditions which are predicted to become more frequent with climate change.<sup>191</sup> As a rural county, Monmouthshire has around 1000 properties with private water supplies.<sup>192</sup>

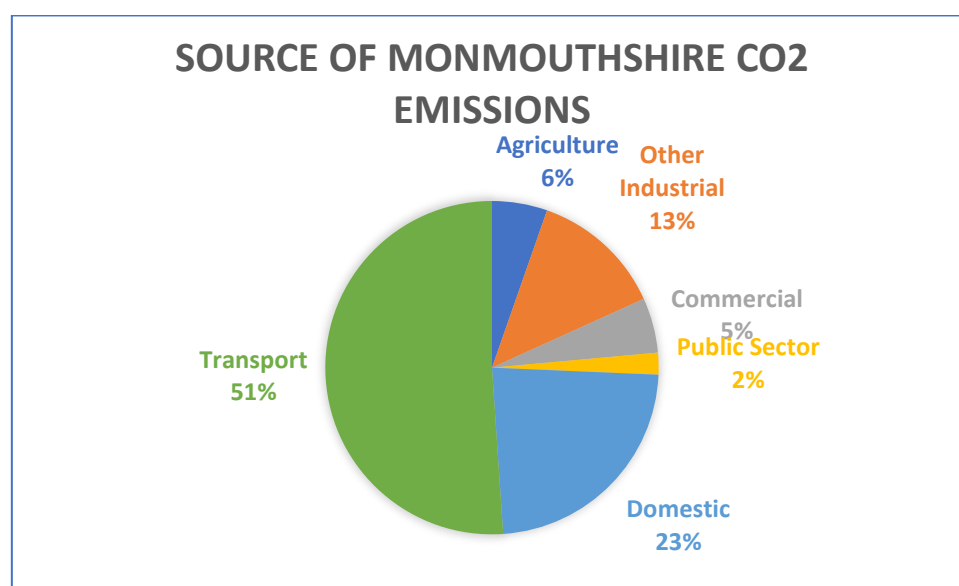
## Climate Change

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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When contemplating climate change, it is important to consider both how Monmouthshire is contributing to climate change, and how resilient the county is to its likely effects. Climate change is a global issue; Monmouthshire’s emissions contribute to global emissions and don’t stay within our boundaries. How the county works to reduce carbon emissions is a significant part of our contribution to being globally responsible.

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions (the principal man-made contributor to climate change) per Monmouthshire resident were 6.6 tonnes.<sup>193</sup> This figure has gone down steadily each year since 2010, probably due to the increasing share of energy being generated by renewables. When carbon figures are examined more closely, it is clear that emissions from transport due to the rural nature of the county and the poor public transport provision are the reason for the high

overall emissions.<sup>194</sup> This is also reflected in Monmouthshire having the largest carbon footprint in Gwent.<sup>195</sup>



*UK local authority dioxide emissions, National Statistics*

Emissions from the domestic sector are also higher than neighbouring authorities. This is probably because, in comparison, Monmouthshire has more houses that are older and with solid walls, so are harder to insulate, and because the rural nature of the county means that many properties rely on oil for their heating, rather than mains gas. This also contributes to people living in rural areas finding themselves in fuel poverty (see ‘Housing’ section).<sup>196</sup>

Steps are being taken to reduce emissions through the rollout of renewable energy technologies across the county. By the end of 2019, there were 3,655 renewable energy installations in Monmouthshire, the vast majority of which were photovoltaic solar.<sup>197</sup> The installed renewable energy capacity in Monmouthshire was 85.3 MW and the amount generated was 105,288MWh, up from 61,204 in 2015. However, the UK Government reductions in Feed-In Tariffs means that these figures have not increased as rapidly in recent years, although anecdotal evidence from local solar installers is that business is booming as more people are working from home as a result of Covid, and want to make the most of daytime electricity generation. During our engagement with residents, there was strong recognition of the importance of using renewable energy to help reduce climate change. Future energy security in the UK is a significant concern since by 2050, 50% of the UK’s oil will come from potentially unstable countries, and 80% of fuels will come from overseas – so increasing the uptake of renewables is extremely important, both to reduce our carbon emissions and for energy security.<sup>198</sup>

*“Focus on reducing things that exacerbate global warming, support to insulate homes, introduce solar panels, solar water heating, non-fossil fuel heating etc”*

*“I think very assertive action on climate change is very important. What kind of world are we passing on to younger generations?”*

Although walking and cycling tourism in Monmouthshire is high, limited access to safe, off-road cycle routes for families and day-to-day commuting is likely to contribute to our carbon emissions. This, combined with poor public transport provision, contributes to Monmouthshire's high carbon dioxide emissions. (see 'Transport' section for information about Active Travel and measures being taken to increase walking and cycling)

There is much third sector activity on climate change being carried out by Transition Towns and many other Monmouthshire groups to reduce carbon emissions and build local resilience to climate change. One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is its strong culture of volunteering and active third sector involvement, as described in the 'Cultural Well-being' section, which includes environmental and sustainability groups. There has been a significant increase in public awareness of climate change in the last few years, reflected in the increasing number of campaigns and campaigning groups such as Extinction Rebellion Abergavenny, and the School Strikes for Climate.<sup>199</sup>



*Youth 4 Climate Abergavenny strike (source: Youth 4 Climate Abergavenny)*

Public pressure from these groups was one of the factors in Monmouthshire County Council declaring a Climate Emergency in May 2019, following presentations to the council from community groups and young people. A Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan were published in October 2019, the latest progress report was June 2021, and a refreshed Action Plan was agreed in November 2021.<sup>200</sup>

The 2021 3<sup>rd</sup> UK Climate Change Risk Assessment for Wales anticipates hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and more extreme weather events.<sup>201</sup> The risks associated with these future changes in weather patterns are significant and include an increase in flooding risk, heat related death or illness, health impacts, risk to ecosystems, food and timber production, pressure on water supply and so on.<sup>202</sup>

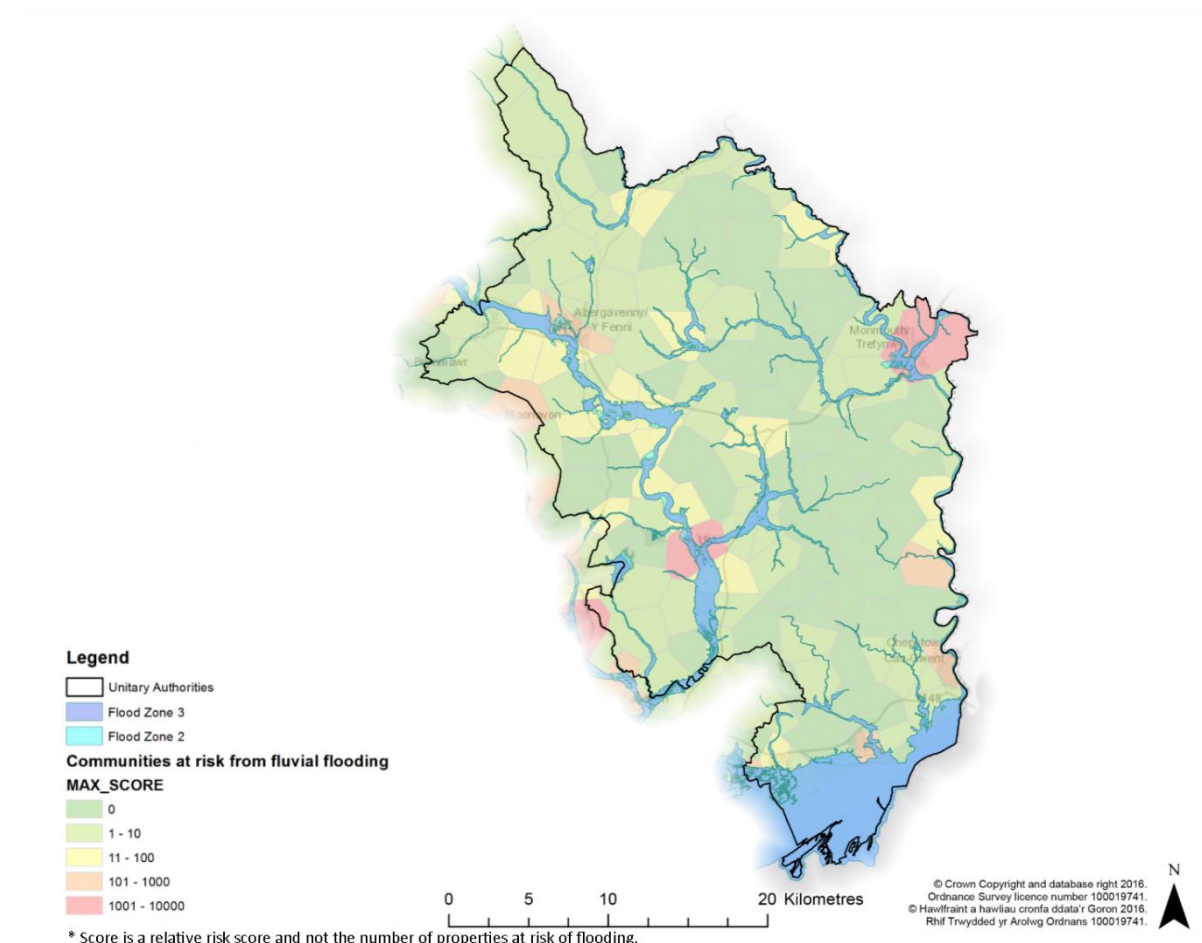
The potential for an increase in flooding will be a particular issue of concern in Monmouthshire. The impacts of flooding are being increasingly felt across the county. In the winter of 2019/20 alone, a total of approximately 180 residential properties and 50 commercial properties are known to have been flooded across the county.<sup>203</sup> This flooding happened in: Skenfrith, Monmouth, Usk, Llanbadoc, Abergavenny, Caldicot, Llanvihangel Gobion, Llanwenarth and

Tintern, with some of these properties (in Skenfrith and Monmouth) flooding twice in less than six months. Flooding has significant effects on physical and mental health, insurance, economy and infrastructure.



*The extent of flooding in Usk in February 2020*

The following map from Natural Resources Wales shows that Usk and Monmouth are the communities most at risk of river flooding, but Abergavenny, Chepstow and Caldicot are also at risk. Parts of Tintern also flood regularly at high spring tides. These effects are explored in more detail in the Local Area Assessments.



These figures don't take surface water flooding into account though, so the risk of flooding is actually higher. Monmouthshire's Flood Risk Management Plan data estimates that approximately 1,344 people and 292 properties are at high (1 in 30 years) or medium (1 in 100 years) risk of flooding from surface water, clustered mainly around Caldicot, but also in Abergavenny, Monmouth and Chepstow.<sup>204</sup>

National Flood Risk Data from 2021 (as yet unpublished) shows the following number of properties at present day risk of flooding in Monmouthshire:

	Tidal			Fluvial (River)			Surface water		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
<b>Residential</b>	435	671	167	1754	252	80	1347	162	168
<b>Non - Residential</b>	54	163	15	474	58	25	154	32	31

Source: National Flood Risk Data (as yet unpublished)<sup>205</sup>

Although surface water flooding is likely to remain an issue, especially with more rainfall and extreme weather, legislation has been introduced in recent years that aims to reduce the extent to which future developments worsen surface water flooding: all new development given planning consent after January 2019 requires sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for surface water to be approved before construction work begins.<sup>206</sup> In

addition, a new planning policy initially due to be introduced in December 2021, but now deferred to June 2023, recognises the varying degrees of the river and coastal flood risk, now and in the future, and will require planning authorities to prevent risk exposure when considering the location of new developments.<sup>207</sup>

*"The water systems we have were not made or built to cope with climate change and such heavy rainfall that we now see. We must work to adapt and extend services such as these to avoid further flooding and damage to our village"*

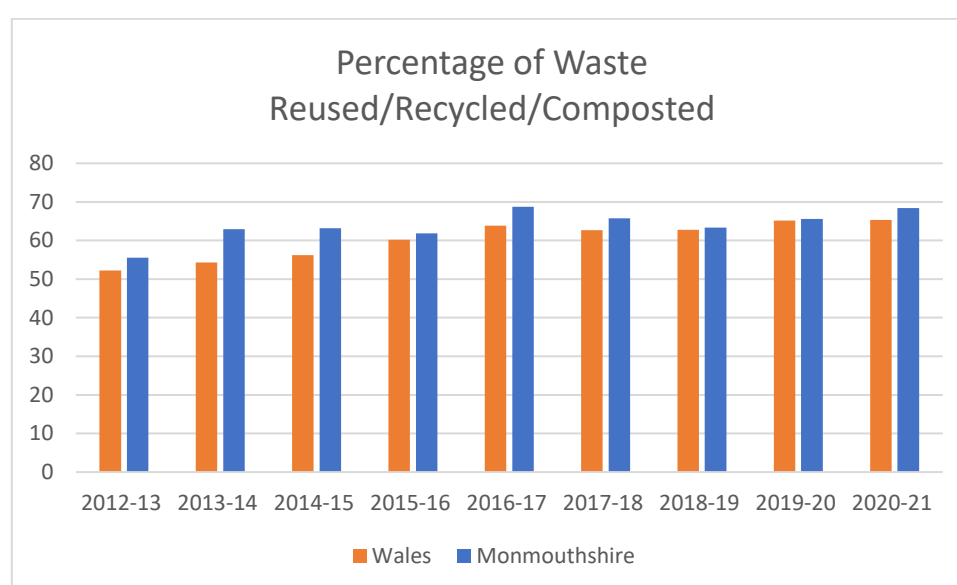
As well as the impact on homes, the effects of flooding on business can be significant, and damaged infrastructure can cause huge disruption to business and community life. Effects such as these require significant funding to mitigate and repair. For example, Monmouthshire County Council received almost £1.7 million from Welsh Government in 2020/21 for repairs to bridges, culverts, landslips, footpaths and footbridges that were damaged in Storm Dennis.

## Waste and Recycling

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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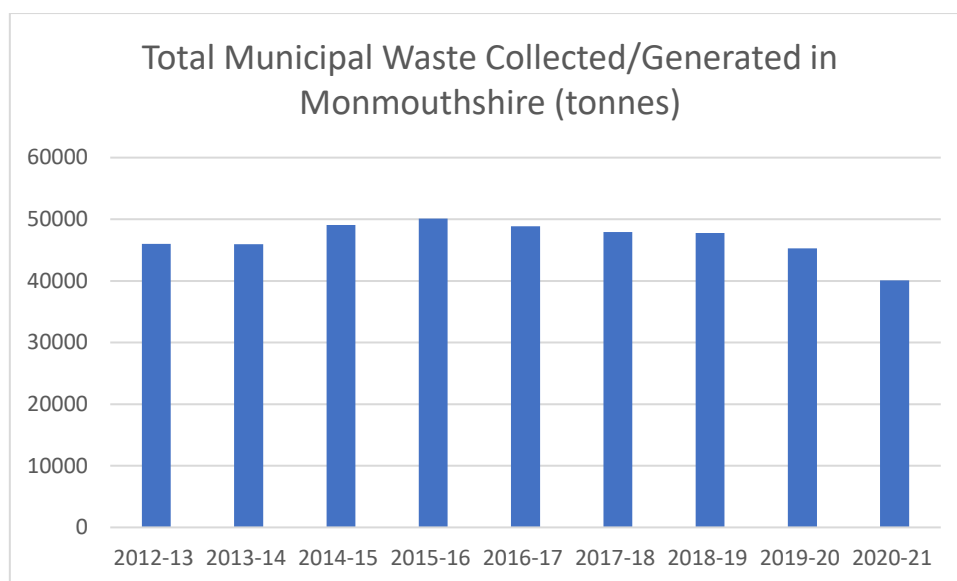
Monmouthshire is fortunate to have a great deal of goodwill from the public towards recycling, which has resulted in our good recycling rates.

In 2016, changes to wood waste reporting across Wales were introduced and combined with a reduction in funding for national and local recycling campaigns, recycling figures in Monmouthshire, along with many authorities, fell back slightly. However, by 2020/21 this figure was back up to 68.4% of municipal waste in Monmouthshire being sent for reuse, recycling or composting, higher than the Welsh average over this period.<sup>208</sup> This is due to kerbside recycling rates increasing when the Household Waste Recycling Centres shut during the Covid lockdown, when the first quarter of 2020/21 saw the highest recycling rate ever in MCC of 74%, with record numbers of residents using kerbside recycling collections.<sup>209</sup>



*% of waste reused/ recycled/ composted (Source: StatsWales)*

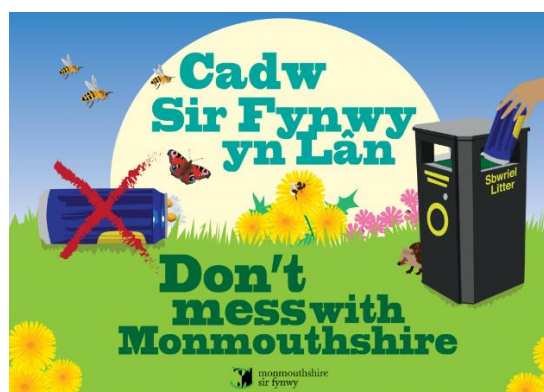
The overall amount of municipal waste collected has decreased steadily each year from 2016/16, with a significant drop to 40,082 tonnes in 2020/21.<sup>210</sup> It is likely that this reflects the better participation in the kerbside recycling scheme during lockdown, and also perhaps lower levels of consumption and waste during this period.



*Total Municipal Waste collected/generated (tonnes) (Source: StatsWales)*

Flytipping incidents in Monmouthshire decreased steadily year-on-year from 846 incidents in 2006/07 to 303 incidents in 2015/16, and then stayed low for a few years, but seem to have increased in 2019/20 to 572.<sup>211</sup> There is dissatisfaction about levels of litter in the county. In 2018/19, only 60% of those surveyed in Monmouthshire were satisfied with the levels of litter, although this is higher than the Welsh average of 54%.<sup>212</sup> However, despite this, actual levels of street cleanliness are high, with 97.2% of streets inspected in 2018/19 considered to be of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness, so satisfaction doesn't necessarily match with people's perceptions.<sup>213</sup>

In response to high levels of littering across Wales, Welsh Government has invested in Caru Cymru, which is working with each local authority on campaigns to reduce litter.<sup>214</sup> In Monmouthshire, this has included establishing litter champions, setting up litter picking hubs and increasing signage in locations like laybys, car parks and picnic sites, as well as high profile local campaigns.<sup>215</sup> Monmouthshire observed increasing levels of litter, particularly as lockdown eased and more people were congregating and meeting outdoors to socialise.



*Monmouthshire's anti-littering campaign*

Public awareness of the effect of single-use plastics has increased enormously in recent years. In Monmouthshire, this has resulted in the subsequent burgeoning of plastic-free town initiatives in the county, and in 2018, Monmouthshire County Council unanimously agreed to work towards becoming Plastic Free Monmouthshire.<sup>216</sup> Work to reduce single-use plastic has included moving from school milk in plastic bottles to delivery from a local dairy in glass bottles, a move from disposable recycling bags to reusable polypropylene sacks, and a ban on disposable cups in council offices.

There has been a noticeable move towards an increased emphasis on re-use and repair, known as the circular economy, both at a local and national level.

The council has helped to facilitate the establishment of community Repair Cafes in Abergavenny and Monmouth, and the availability of Welsh Government Circular Economy funding has resulted in the establishment of 2 re-use shops at Household Waste Recycling Centres, 4 Bentyg Library of Things, and supported other initiatives such as setting up community fridges to take waste food and further repair cafes. In addition to clear environmental well-being benefits by reducing waste and consumption, there are significant social and economic well-being benefits as local communities work together, share skills and save money.

What would make the area better?

*“More emphasis on green issues - encouragement to recycle and reuse”*



*Llanfoist Re-use Shop opened in 2019*

## Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the ‘Environmental Well-being’ sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

## Landscape and countryside

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is undoubtedly its landscape and natural environment, which is an integral element of the county's economy through agriculture, forestry and tourism. The county's green infrastructure network promotes health and well-being, is critical to resilience, and sustains multiple social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits.



## Air and Water Quality

Natural resources, such as air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil, provide our most basic needs, including food, energy and security. They keep us healthy and help people and the economy to thrive. The local economy and transport use all affect air and water quality, which can affect people's health and environmental well-being.



## Climate Change

It is important to consider both how Monmouthshire is contributing to climate change, and how resilient the county is to the likely effects of climate change. A huge range of social, economic, environmental and cultural factors affect, and are affected by, climate change.



## Waste and Recycling

Economic, social, environmental and cultural factors all have an impact on how much waste is produced within Monmouthshire and on how much is recycled. They also affect the cleanliness of the county. Many third sector groups are working in the environment and sustainability fields, which include many volunteers.



# Cultural Well-being

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act considers improving cultural well-being aimed at achieving the 7 well-being goals. The broad areas of well-being related to culture that contribute to their achievement in Monmouthshire have been considered in the assessment, along with strong connections and interactions between cultural well-being and social, economic and environmental well-being.

## Welsh Language

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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In 2017, Welsh Government set out its ambition to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 in the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. The strategy sets challenging targets for both the long and short-term; these include increasing the proportion of learners in Welsh-medium education and increasing the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Given Monmouthshire's location in the South-East corner of Wales, as well as its shared border with England, there is a general perception that Welsh language use is low. However, the 2011 Census showed that Monmouthshire was one of only two local authorities in Wales to see a rise in Welsh language speakers over the previous decade, from 9.7% to 9.9%.<sup>217</sup> A likely factor in this rise is the growth of the two Welsh-medium primary schools, based at either end of the county: Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni in Abergavenny, and Ysgol Y Ffin in Caldicot.

However, more recent data from the National Survey for Wales has shown a decline in Welsh language use. The percentage of those who understand spoken Welsh in Monmouthshire was 8% in 2019/20, having been 11% (2018/19) and 15% (2017/18) in previous releases.<sup>218</sup> These fluctuations should be interpreted with caution, based on the sample size of the survey. The survey also shows a decline for Wales in 2019/20, reporting 22%, having been 29% in the previous 3 releases. The forthcoming Census 2021 data will provide a more comprehensive picture of the Welsh language skills within the county.

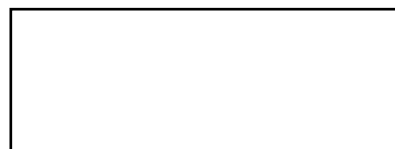
The demand for Welsh-medium education in the north of the county has seen proposals being consulted on, with regards to relocating the primary school to a bigger site. The proposals are referenced in the county's WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan), a plan that seeks to review and implement measures to increase the level of Welsh throughout the education sector in Monmouthshire.

Pre-school groups such as Cylch Ti a Fi provide children and their parents an opportunity to meet once a week in an informal Welsh environment; provision in Monmouthshire is scattered across the county with groups in Abergavenny, Caldicot and Monmouth. There is a Meithrin playgroup also located in Abergavenny that provides daily sessional care and education for children aged 2 to 5. The availability of such groups is a positive sign for the presence of the Welsh language in Monmouthshire and allows the language to thrive at an early age.

However, there is currently no in-county Welsh medium provision at the secondary school level. Pupils travel to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Pontypool or to Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed in Newport – this lack of local provision is a barrier for some parents in sending their children to Welsh-medium schools.

Welsh language community groups exist in each of the towns. They hold regular meetings for various activities, such as coffee mornings and reading groups, and allow Welsh speakers and learners an opportunity to socialise through the medium of Welsh. Other groups with regional/national footprints are also active within Monmouthshire, such as the Urdd and Menter Iaith BGTM, which work with schools and within communities to promote the use of the language. Active Welsh language groups are also located in neighbouring authorities, so are easily accessible to Monmouthshire residents, many of whom take this opportunity to use, learn or develop their skills. There is an increasing interest in the language, as evidenced by the growing popularity of Welsh for Adult education provision; indeed, there is a recognised shortage of Welsh-speaking tutors to meet the current demand.

The engagement responses contained mixed views on the language, with some wishing to have more opportunities to use the language on a day-to-day basis, whereas others believed there should be less emphasis on it.

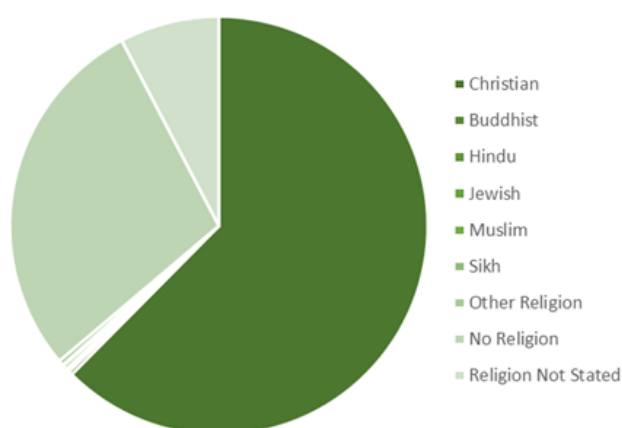


## Faith and Religion

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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The data from Census 2011 remains the most comprehensive data source for faith and religion.

Religion in Monmouthshire



These figures show that 62.5% of Monmouthshire residents are Christian, close to 5 percentage points higher than Wales overall. The other major religions were represented by figures of less than a percentage, as shown in the graph.

Monmouthshire has a Buddhist Centre located in Raglan, but the nearest Mosque is located in either Blaenau Gwent or Newport, and many of the nearest houses

of worship for other religions are in Cardiff or Bristol. In 2021, a community venue was identified to establish a multi-faith cultural centre in Abergavenny, with plans to pilot Friday prayer sessions for the Muslim faith. A few comments from the engagement responses noted the lack of local halal shops, as well as the distance needed to travel to the nearest Mosque.

Census figures from 2011 show that 98% of Monmouthshire's population are of white ethnicity. There are only small numbers of black and other minority ethnic residents in Monmouthshire, with Asian being the largest group, at 1% of the population (900 persons).

Many people in Monmouthshire have a strong sense of belonging to their local area. In 2018/19 the National Survey for Wales showed there has been an increase in many of the indicators in the community cohesion section. The graphics below show how Monmouthshire compares to the rest of Wales in the Future Generations Indicators that make up part of the section.

Satisfaction with the local area - Monmouthshire		
2016/17	2018/19	Rank in Wales
90.8%	91.8%	4/22

Have a sense of community - Monmouthshire		
2016/17	2018/19	Rank in Wales
53.4%	61.3%	3/22

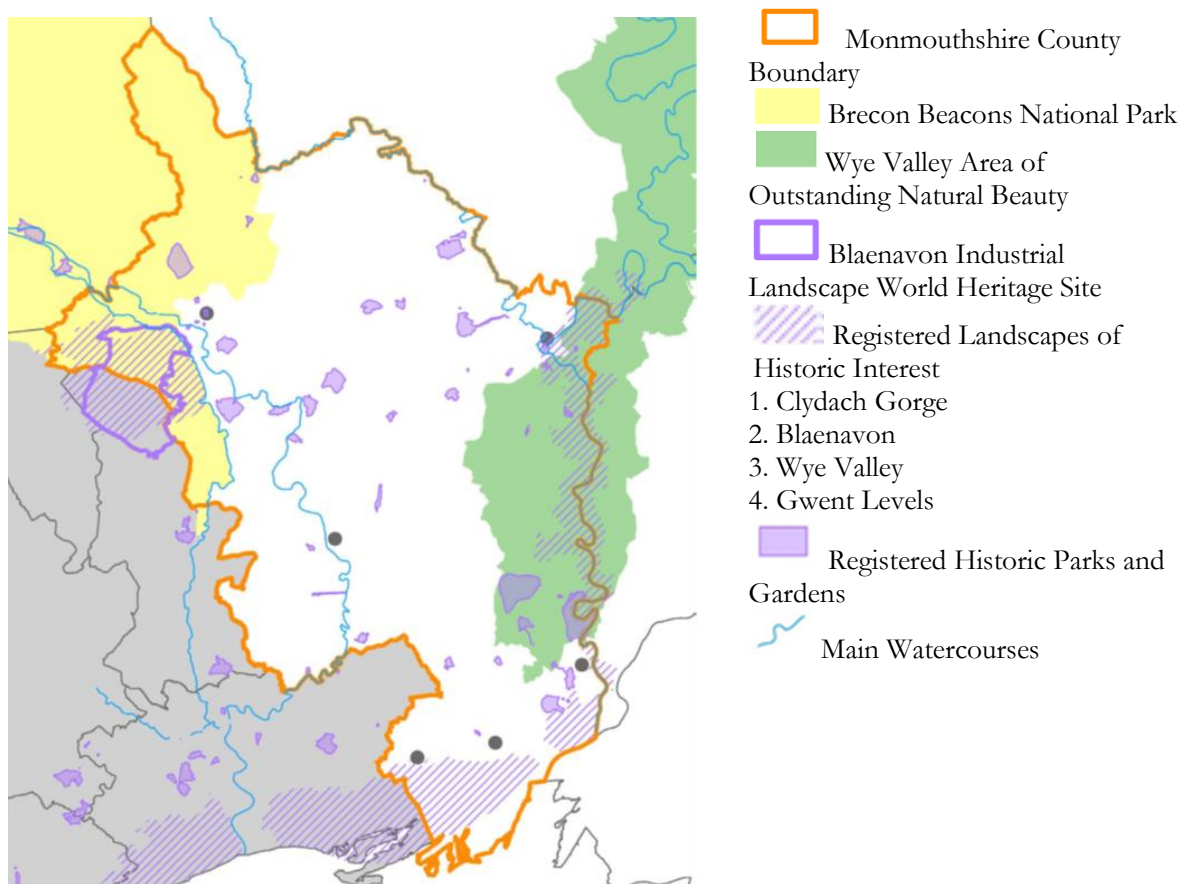
## Landscape and Heritage

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Monmouthshire has a distinctive identity arising from its location in the borderlands between England and South Wales, and geography of historic market towns and villages and their relationship with the surrounding rural areas. Landscape and environment are assessed in detail in the ‘Environmental Well-being’ section of this report.

The varied landscape of the county of Monmouthshire is the product of natural and human influences over thousands of years. The following map shows the key landscape assets in Monmouthshire.<sup>219</sup> Many features and areas of historical and cultural value in Monmouthshire are recognised as important heritage assets, including conservation areas designated for their special historic or architectural interest, registered Historic Parks and Gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and Listed Buildings. These include iconic built heritage sites such as Tintern Abbey, industrial heritage sites like Blaenavon World Heritage Site (partially in Monmouthshire), and Clydach Ironworks, and a significant number of castles and churches.

*Key landscape assets in Monmouthshire*



The draw of such iconic and historical assets in Monmouthshire is demonstrated in the results of the 2019 Visitor Survey, which showed that 41% of people had come to the county to visit historical and religious sites or attractions; this was slightly more likely to be a factor in visiting Monmouthshire than visiting Wales as a whole (36%).<sup>220</sup> Tintern Abbey (37%) and Chepstow

Castle (36%) were the most likely sites to be visited. The short and long-term effects on tourism in the county as a result of the pandemic will need to be monitored.

Landscape and Countryside was the second most popular theme mentioned when asked what is special about where respondents live. Across all 5 of the local areas, many references were made to the beauty of the landscape and the ability to access green spaces.

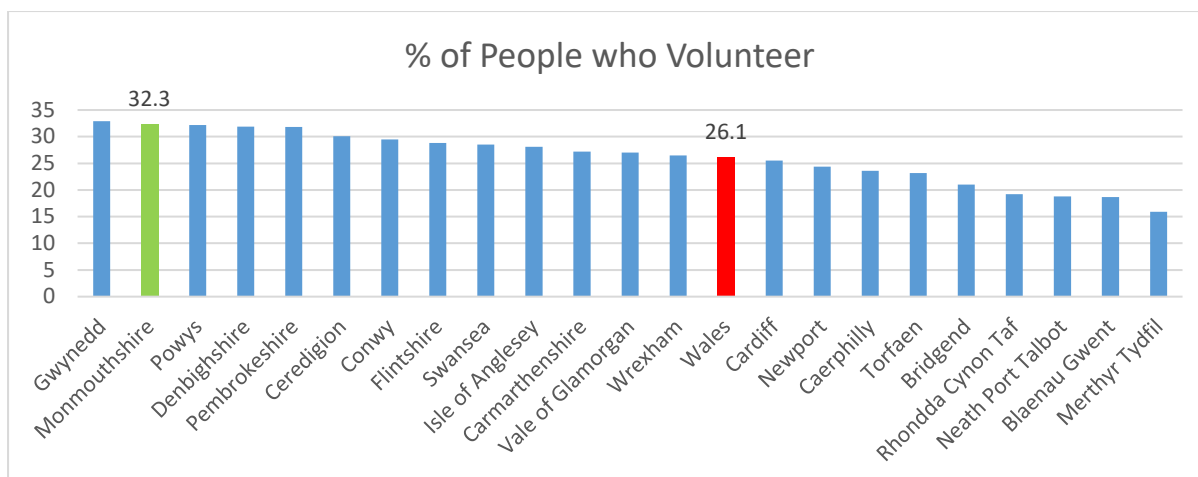
It is important to promote and protect this landscape for future generations, not only for its importance to Monmouthshire's heritage but for its recognised contributions to the economy, environment and health and well-being in Monmouthshire, as identified elsewhere in this assessment.



## Community and Social Action

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Monmouthshire has a long and healthy history of volunteering and local social action. People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons, including the chance to give something back to the community or make a difference to the people around them, provide an opportunity to develop new skills, or build on existing experience and knowledge.<sup>221</sup> National Survey for Wales data in 2019/20 revealed that 32.3% of people in Monmouthshire volunteered, the second-highest figure in Wales.<sup>222</sup> Volunteering has been shown to have a positive effect on social networks and inclusion within communities. 'Monmouthshire, A County That Serves' (ACTS) volunteering programme is helping to highlight and support volunteering opportunities available within the county. It recognises that the social capital in Monmouthshire can be further developed to support well-being.<sup>223</sup>



The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a tremendous response with the mobilisation of volunteering and community groups. These efforts have been integral in supporting those most in need in our communities during the pandemic. In July 2020, the Monmouthshire PSB agreed to formally adopt the place-based partnership working model of Community Support Networks across the county as a mechanism that would aim to deliver the aspirations of the well-being plan, “to build sustainable and resilient communities”, placing communities and active citizens across the county at the heart of what ‘we do’ through leading a relational place-based, multi-agency support structure.

## Cultural Attractions

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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Monmouthshire offers a wide range of arts and cultural attractions, including museums, theatres, and libraries. The county hosts many long-established, as well as new and expanding, events, and festivals, including agricultural shows, food festivals, music festivals and cycling races. There is increasing research showing an association between engagement with sport and culture and an individual’s subjective well-being measured as happiness.<sup>224</sup>

There is limited data to fully assess the situation of arts and events and their subsequent link to well-being in Monmouthshire. Arts bring meaning, authenticity, and enjoyment to our everyday life. They create and sustain jobs, enrich education services, bring people together and improve quality of life.

The Arts Council for Wales identifies the roles that the arts play in contributing to the well-being goals. These include a contribution to jobs, wealth and tourism through the cultural sector – for example, Borough Theatre in Abergavenny, which is being redeveloped, and the Wye Valley

River Festival – equipping young people with skills of creative imagination and entrepreneurial vision, benefits to emotional health and wellbeing, and supporting a thriving Welsh language.

In 2019/20, 75% of Monmouthshire residents said they have been to an arts event in the last 12 months, the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage in Wales.<sup>225</sup> A similar percentage (76%) of people said that they had attended or participated in arts, culture or heritage activities at least 3 times a year, higher than the Wales figure of 71%.

Museums and heritage attractions play an important part in preserving the history of Monmouthshire for communities and visitors, providing individuals with a sense of place through the history and heritage of collections and heritage assets, strengthening community links by involving local groups in projects and contributing to the local economy. Collections and the stories they tell are also important for well-being, for example, by supporting those living with dementia and their carers.<sup>226</sup> Council-run museums and heritage attractions are located in Abergavenny, Chepstow, Caldicot, Tintern and Monmouth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on culture and the arts, with initial lockdowns preventing attractions from opening and people gathering. Income streams were paused for a long time, and once reopened, it is likely a hesitancy to return alongside increasing operating and staff costs to adapt to new guidelines will continue to affect the businesses. To evolve, many museums and historical/cultural attractions are actively increasing their level of digital content, and reaching new audiences as a result.

Tourism is vital to Monmouthshire's economy and generates income to support a wide range of businesses that benefit from spending by visitors. The location of the county presents key opportunities as a gateway to Wales – offering the chance to make a great first impression, especially now that Severn Bridge tolls have been removed. There is significant evidence that the development of cultural attractions also has considerable economic development potential, beyond direct tourism, leading the regeneration and increased footfall in towns, and added vitality for town centres, which is one of the reasons for the council's investment in Abergavenny Library and Borough Theatre, plans for Shire Hall Museum Monmouth and recent funding bids.<sup>227</sup>

According to the 2019 visitor survey, visitors to Monmouthshire are more likely to be on a day trip than visitors to Wales as a whole (at 90%, compared to 89% across Wales). The average number of nights staying in Monmouthshire is the same as the Wales figure. According to the survey, visitors to Monmouthshire were most likely to have come to the area to visit historical and religious sites or attractions (41%).

Libraries play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. There are six community hubs in Monmouthshire, that also include library services, offering both physical and digital services to all. Schemes such as Reading Well provide books that are recommended by health experts and provide information and advice on dementia and mental health. 2018/19 statistics show that the libraries saw over

400,000 visitors across the 6 sites and home delivery.<sup>228</sup> The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a greater emphasis in library services on the digital offer available, as well as remote services.

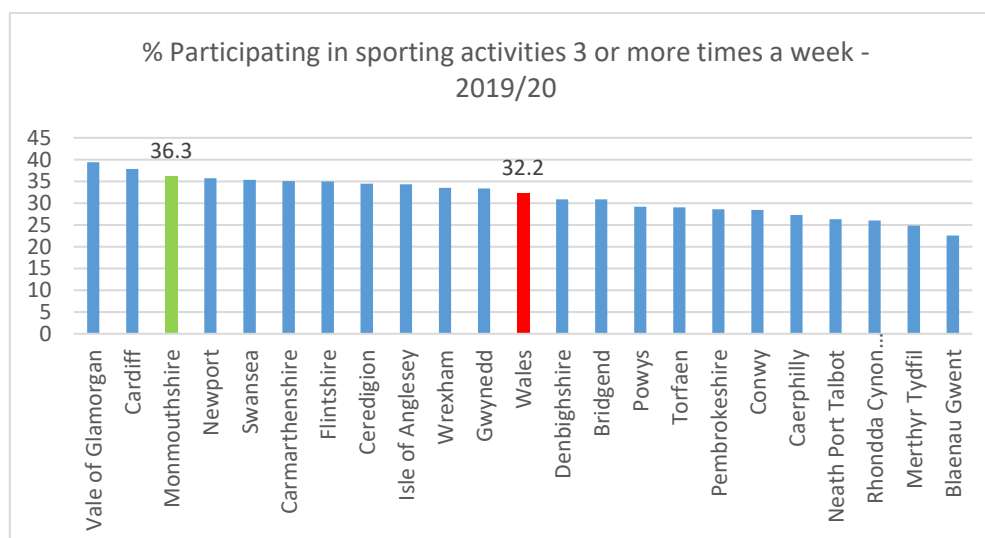
## Sport and Leisure

Contribution to well-being goals	<b>Prosperous Wales</b>	<b>Resilient Wales</b>	<b>Healthier Wales</b>	<b>More equal Wales</b>	<b>Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<b>Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally responsible Wales</b>
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There is considerable evidence that supports the health and well-being benefits of healthy and active lifestyles for both adults and children.<sup>229</sup> Guidance from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends that adults should aim to be active daily.<sup>230</sup> An active lifestyle is important in reducing levels of obesity and other chronic conditions, as discussed in the 'Health and Well-being' section. Key findings from research by The Department for Culture Media and Sport showed that arts engagement, frequent library use and sport participation are all associated with higher well-being.<sup>231</sup>

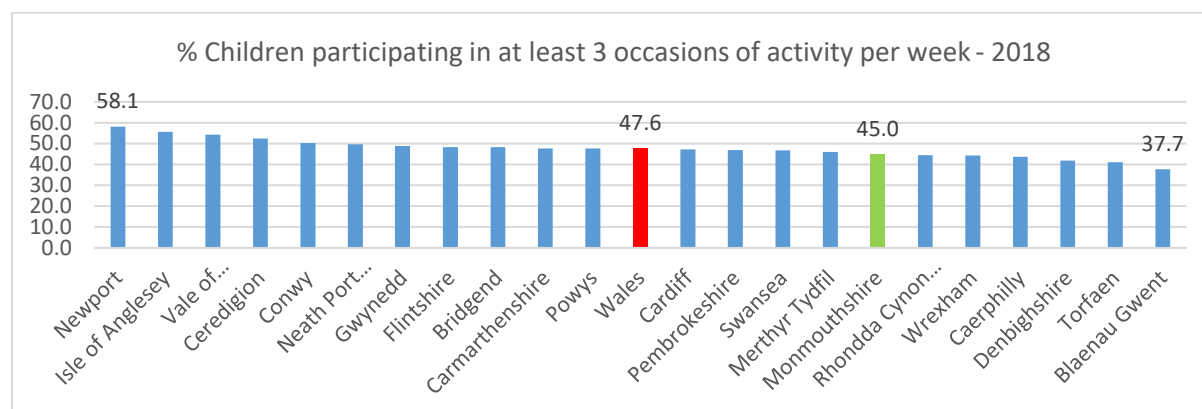
Monmouthshire is a county with a range of Green infrastructure, including open space areas, cycle paths and walking routes as well as a range of indoor and outdoor activities, sports clubs, societies, and community facilities across the county. There are leisure centres in Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot and Chepstow which play a pivotal role in the promotion of physical activity, well-being, and mental health. All leisure centres have swimming pools, fitness provision and outdoor playing pitches.

The latest data from the National Survey for Wales in 2019/20 shows that 36% of adults in Monmouthshire reported participating in sporting activities three or more times a week, which is amongst the highest levels of participation reported in Wales.



In 2017, Sport Wales research showed that 31% of respondents in Monmouthshire had a sports club membership, the highest across all local authorities in Wales.<sup>232</sup> The data showed that males were more likely to have a membership (a Wales high 37%) than women (25%, 3<sup>rd</sup> in Wales).

The Department of Health recommends that all children and young people, aged 5-18 years old, should engage in moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours, every day.<sup>233</sup> The School Sport Survey, undertaken by Sport Wales most recently in 2018, has captured a detailed picture of the frequency of participation. In Monmouthshire, 45% of pupils across Years 3 to 11 took part in organized sport activity other than in curriculum time (i.e. extracurricular or club sport) on three or more occasions per week, while 25.7% take part in no frequent activity. Compared to 2015, the number participating 3 or more times a week has dropped from 48.8%, whereas those who take part in no frequent activity have dropped from 27.3%



Understanding the makeup of participation in different settings can help to identify the different access, provision and opportunities that children and young people have to participate in sport. In Monmouthshire, participation in extracurricular sport is lower than the Wales average (Monmouthshire 47%, Wales 49.9%), whereas participation in community sport outside school is higher (Monmouthshire 67.5%, Wales 65.1%).

There are also targeted schemes to encourage exercise for health reasons. Monmouthshire National Exercise Referral Scheme is more than ten years old and has received more than 10,000 direct referrals from health practitioners for a range of specific chronic condition pathways, obesity, cancer, chronic obstructive disorder, and mental health.

Participation in sporting activity has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Less participation in physical activity may have longer-term impacts on health and well-being. A survey conducted in Wales throughout the pandemic showed that 47% of respondents felt that their physical fitness has declined over the past 12 months, and 40% reported weight increase.<sup>234</sup>



Several comments from the engagement questionnaire referenced the desire for better leisure facilities. Being able to access local clubs, gym facilities or swimming pools were some of the examples given.

The latest Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) for the county, completed by the council in March 2019, took into account a range of existing evidence, as well as a child questionnaire, which highlighted the barriers to greater play, including opportunities for play, time for play (including competing

demands on children's time) and attitudes to play (of parents and others). To inform the 2019 PSA, Year 5 pupils from the county's schools were surveyed; 2/3 of pupils confirmed that their school participated in the Daily Mile, with 84% of pupils believing it helps to contribute to a healthy lifestyle. When asked if they preferred to play in a playground or green spaces, 70% preferred green space. Some of the key actions arising from the assessment for action in 2019 are space for play, supervised provision, providing for diverse needs, policy integration and community engagement.

There is a range of provision for young people from 11-25 in Monmouthshire through the council's youth service. This includes youth clubs, youth centres, school holiday events and activities, Duke of Edinburgh Award and other types of support, and complements activities for young people such as uniformed groups and the voluntary sector.<sup>235</sup>

In a rural county like Monmouthshire, access to leisure and cultural services is important. The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) shows that the average public transport travel time to a sports facility is 88 minutes, and a public library is 53 minutes.<sup>236</sup> For private transport, travel time is 14 minutes for a sports facility and 13 minutes for libraries. For some areas, travel times will be significantly longer and much higher than the average across Wales; the area profiles provide an assessment of more local issues in Monmouthshire.

## Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the 'cultural Well-being' sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

## Welsh Language

The promotion and protection of the Welsh language are important for the social, economic and cultural well-being of Welsh language speakers and learners. It is also important for tourism as part of the cultural experience for visitors.



## Faith and Religion

There is a strong sense of community spirit in Monmouthshire, which is an important factor in people's well-being. Faith and religion play an important role in well-being, and people benefit from feeling a sense of belonging.



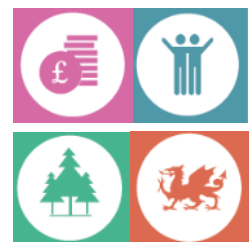
## Landscape and Heritage

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is undoubtedly its landscape and natural environment. The landscape and natural and built heritage of Monmouthshire is an important part of the quality of life and an integral element of social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in Monmouthshire.



## Community and Social Action

Monmouthshire has a high level of social capital and rates of volunteering. This high level of community action makes an invaluable contribution to social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in the county.



## Cultural Attractions

There is increasing evidence showing the association between culture and an individual's subjective well-being measured as happiness. Cultural attractions in Monmouthshire affect social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being, while levels of wellbeing can also be a barrier to participation in arts and cultural events.



## Sport and Leisure

Healthy and active lifestyles for adults and children have many health and well-being benefits, and sport and leisure opportunities are important contributors to the Monmouthshire economy. Barriers to participation can be due to economic, social, environmental or cultural reasons.



# Key Emerging Issues:

## Economic

- Monmouthshire has a competitive economy with excellent potential for growth. There is, however, a low rate of business start-ups compared to the capital region and Wales as a whole. The growth of remote working and people's desire to live in rural areas presents an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurs to start new businesses in Monmouthshire rather than neighbouring cities like Bristol.
- There is a slow uptake of employment sites in the county alongside issues of poor broadband speed which could be interconnected with the low rates of business start-ups. The potential growth in co-working spaces could offer start-ups a low risk option to locate in the county.
- The below-average wages on offer in the county, coupled with high property prices, make it difficult for young people and future generations to live and work locally.
- We are seeing an outward migration of young people, driven by employment and higher education opportunities elsewhere, which are not available in the county.

## Social

- There is a lack of affordable housing in the county. This will be exacerbated by the National Development Framework which could limit the development of new homes in Monmouthshire, reducing our ability to tackle homelessness. In the short term this is compounded by the level of phosphates in rivers which has resulted in a block on new developments.
- There are significant income inequalities within communities, with wealth sitting alongside relative poverty on a scale not seen in other parts of Wales. Research suggests that gaps between rich and poor within a community have negative repercussions for a whole range of things from educational attainment to physical health.
- Monmouthshire enjoys high levels of social capital. Large numbers of people volunteer which helps build connections and is a major contributor to well-being. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the energy we have seen in communities during the pandemic but also a risk that as the pension age changes and people retire later, the number of active volunteers could decline.
- We have an ageing population; while this has many advantages, it will create additional pressure on health and social care. With high property prices and limits on development it will be difficult to attract the workforce needed to meet the needs of residents.
- Both adult and children's social care are facing acute pressures with escalating demand, increasing complexity and workforce shortages all contributing. While there is pressure to free-up hospital beds, the care system does not have the capacity to accommodate

this, meaning that more resources will be drawn into the acute settings to meet short-term needs rather than being directed towards a sustainable long term model of provision.

- There are significant differences in life expectancy, and action is required to address health inequalities and ensure that a range of programmes are in place to increase the opportunities people have to live health lives and reduce health harming behaviours such as high alcohol consumption, smoking and diet.
- Children, particularly the most vulnerable, whose learning has been disrupted by the pandemic may be at a disadvantage as they enter the workforce or higher education, and other aspects of their well-being may have been affected.
- There are good levels of educational attainment in the county but some groups, such as those eligible for free school meals and vulnerable children, are not achieving at the same level as the wider population and the gap is not narrowing. There are also differences in attainment between different communities, where pupils are attending the same school.
- One in four adults and one in ten children are experiencing mental health issues. This is exacerbated by loneliness and the challenges many have faced during the pandemic placing pressure on stretched services such as CAHMS. Resources such as Melo, to help people manage their own mental health and well-being, offer an opportunity to address this but will only be part of the solution.
- We are seeing increasing levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the county and concerns about the level of substance misuse amongst younger people.

## Cultural

- The county has good levels of sports participation compared to other parts of Wales but levels of exercise are still too low and obesity is increasing, which have implications for health.
- There is an increasing opportunity to use Monmouthshire's culture, heritage and landscape to capitalise on the potential of the UK holiday market, with fewer people travelling abroad, which also has positive impacts on the climate by reducing the number of people flying.
- The pandemic has reduced visits to cultural attractions that play an important role in well-being, such as museums and theatres, which will affect their viability.

## Environmental

- Monmouthshire has a high carbon footprint per head of population.
- The rural nature of Monmouthshire means that transport is a significant contributor to the county's carbon emissions, with some areas also experiencing poor air quality. There is high car ownership and the rural nature of the county means active travel is not an option for many people, while many do not have a driveway which, along with

affordability, will slow the adoption of electric vehicles. There needs to be a move away from private cars to more active travel, public transport and low-emission vehicles in order to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

- The effects of climate change are becoming apparent in Monmouthshire, particularly flooding, which has impacted many communities in recent years. This is likely to get worse as the build-up of greenhouse gases continues to affect global weather patterns.
- Water quality in many parts of Monmouthshire is under threat due to a combination of sewage releases into watercourses and run-off from agriculture.
- There is an opportunity to capitalise on the growth of the sharing economy to reduce consumption and waste which will also increase the ability of people on low incomes to borrow rather than buy.
- Tree disease is a significant threat to the landscape and biodiversity of Monmouthshire, with large areas of ash and larch having to be felled, meaning many more trees need to be planted to sequester carbon. There are opportunities through work with community groups, the Welsh Government and the Queens Green Canopy to increase tree coverage in the county.
- Like elsewhere in Wales, biodiversity is declining due to threats and pressures on species and habitats.

# Monmouthshire's Five Areas

## 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 Bloreng 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>237</sup>

Threats to habitats in this area include:

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"*

- 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 of drought, and supporting good water quality, providing important habitat as well as 'locking in' carbon.<sup>238</sup>
- 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.<sup>239</sup>

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.<sup>240</sup>

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.<sup>241</sup> 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.<sup>242</sup>

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.<sup>243</sup> 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.<sup>244</sup>

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.<sup>245</sup> 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.<sup>246</sup>

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.<sup>247</sup> 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.<sup>248</sup>

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.<sup>249</sup>

*"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.<sup>250</sup> 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.<sup>251</sup>

## 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.<sup>252</sup>

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.<sup>253</sup>

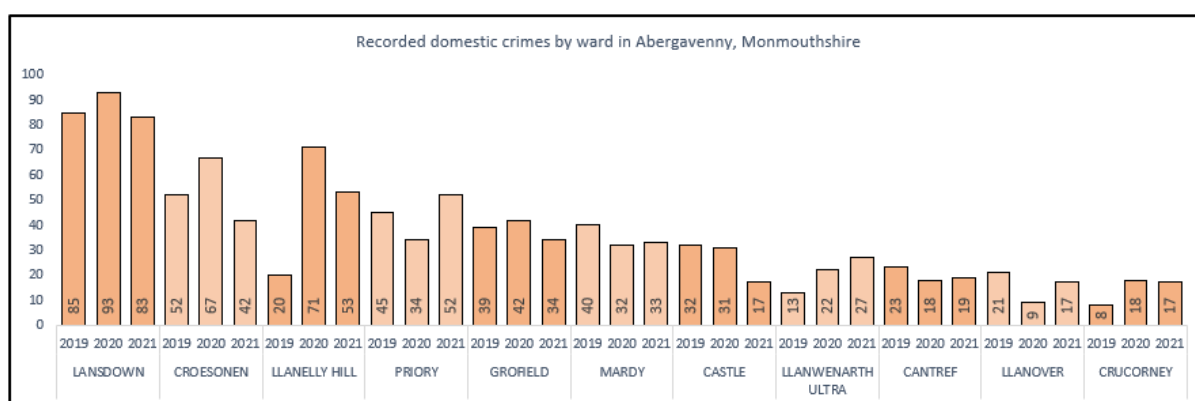
From November 2020 to November 2021, overall crime in Abergavenny decreased from 35.1% to 33.9% of Monmouthshire's total, with a reduction of recorded crimes of Shoplifting, Theft,

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.<sup>254</sup>



*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.<sup>255</sup>

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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?**

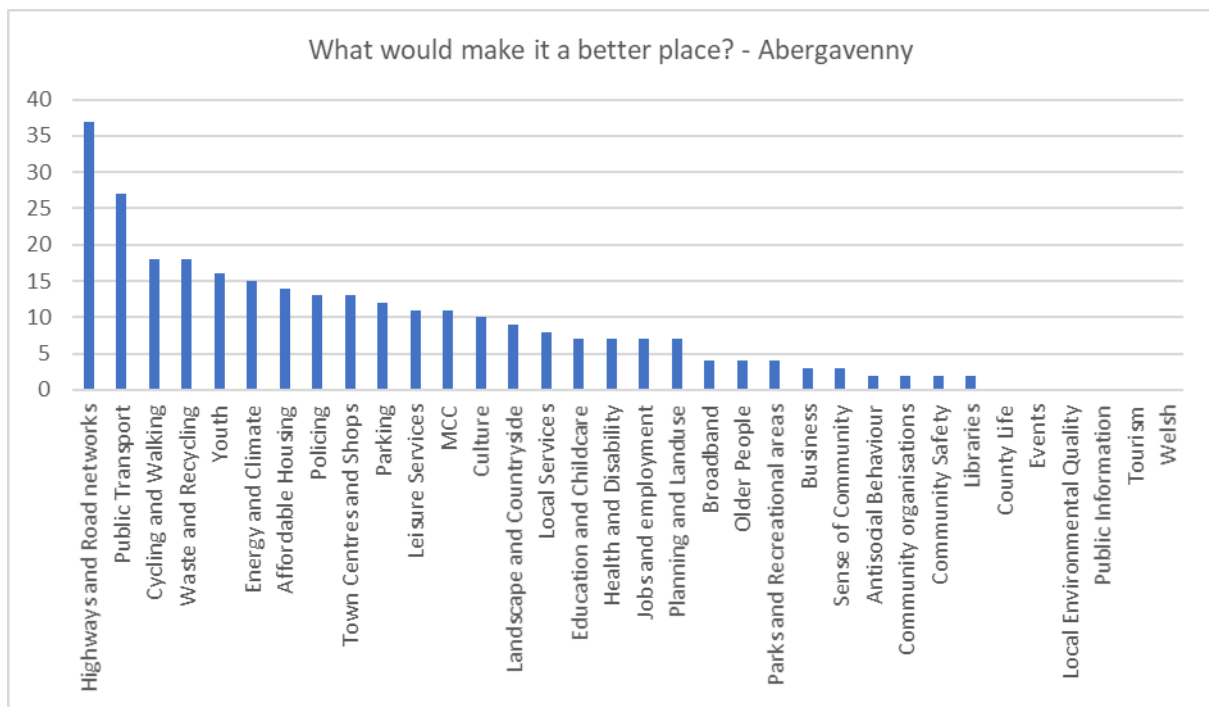
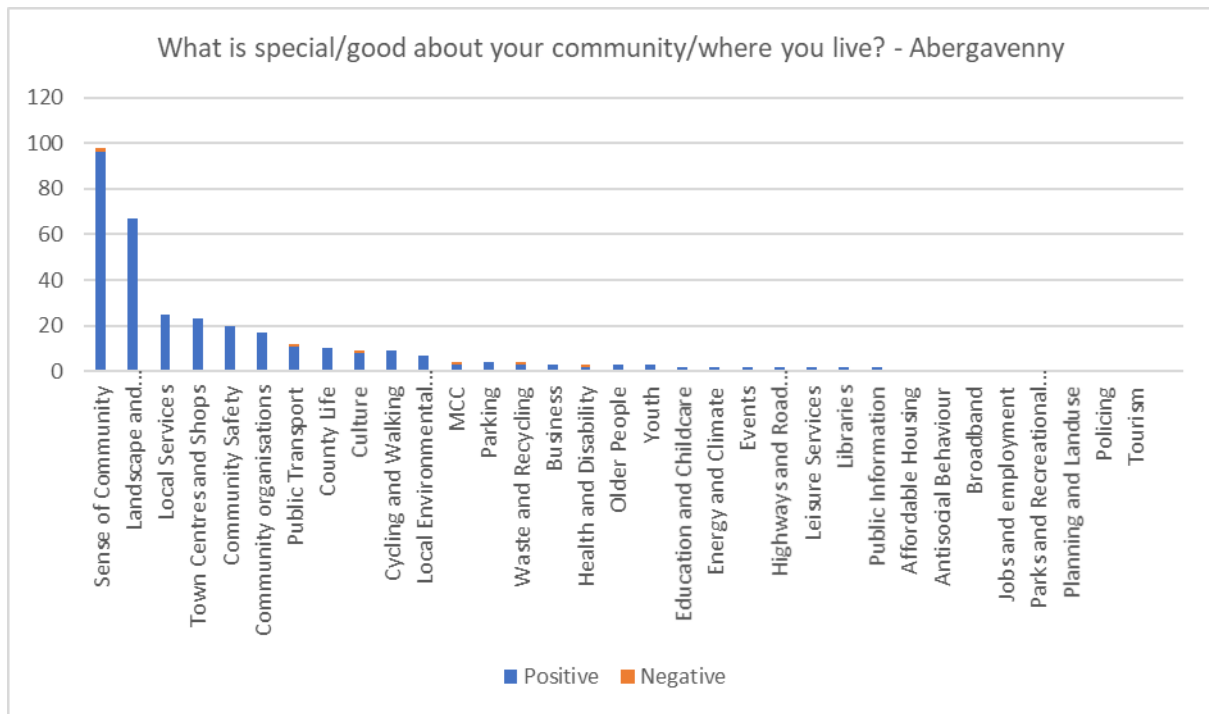
*"Buses to more locations and express buses to some e.g. Abergavenny to Monmouth"*

*"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.



## Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley

### Environmental Well-being

This area is centred around the town of Chepstow, and the southwestern quarter of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The historic core of the town is centred around the castle, overlooking the River Wye. Tree cover from the outskirts of Chepstow northwards is

almost continuous, and on the plateaux above the Wye, there are important concentrations of flower-rich neutral and calcareous meadows, particularly in the Shirenewton and Caerwent areas.

The landscape and nature conservation value is reflected by the many protected areas. The Severn Estuary is of international importance for wintering and passage waterfowl, saltmarshes, exposed sandbanks, fish feeding areas and an unusually large natural tidal range which influences the species that occur here. The estuary is protected as a Ramsar site, overseen by the United Nations.

The Severn Estuary is also a Special Area of Conservation, protected under the EC Habitats Directive, as is the River Wye because of the cleanliness of its waters and the wide range of species that it supports. There are 14 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the Chepstow and Lower Wye area, the most important sites for nature in Wales, comprising meadows, woodland, bat sites and geological, as well as 185 SINC, sites of local importance for nature conservation.<sup>256</sup>

Unlike many other parts of Monmouthshire, many of these sites are well connected to other



*Autumn in the Wye Valley, from Eagle's Nest*

sites, with woodlands well connected to other large woodland blocks, including on the English side of the border in the Wye Valley Woodlands Special Area of Conservation. This means that these sites are more resilient to change or disturbance because species can easily migrate.<sup>257</sup>

However, as elsewhere in the county, ash dieback is a threat. First confirmed in Monmouthshire in 2014, we have

seen the effects worsen across the county in recent years and have already had to remove all infected trees at Old Station Tintern.<sup>258</sup>

The Woodland Trust owns a large part of Wentwood Forest and other sites, and NRW also owns and manages many sites in the Lower Wye Valley. Wentwood Forest has been affected by Larch disease, which means that large areas had to be felled in 2021.<sup>259</sup>

As well as wildlife designations, the area is also valued for its landscape, hence its Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status. The beauty of the landscape for centuries brought visitors and tourists to the area to do a tour, and the popularity with visitors continues today, which is an important contribution to the local economy.<sup>260</sup> Projects such as the Tintern Ambassador scheme aim to involve volunteers in welcoming tourists and helping them to get the most out of their visit.<sup>261</sup>

*"We have only lived in Chepstow for a short time having moved from a large city. The natural beauty of the area is what I love most"*

Chepstow marks the start of several long-distance walks, the Wye Valley Walk, Offa's Dyke and the Wales Coastal Path, and will soon have a new link connecting with the England Coast Path across the old Severn Bridge.

Although Chepstow town has many public green spaces, such as Warren Slade and Park Redding Woods, overall there is a deficit of accessible natural green space. Likewise, rural parts of the Lower Wye are not well served by accessible natural green space, and some rural areas have no access to sports pitches and few amenity open spaces.<sup>262</sup> Despite Chepstow's proximity to some extensive woodlands, the town itself only has 15% urban tree cover and has lost 5 hectares of tree cover between 2009 and 2013.<sup>263</sup>

Greater urban tree cover could help to reduce the air quality problems that Chepstow faces. The A48 at Mount Pleasant, Hardwick Hill and Newport Road has been designated as an Air Quality

*"Traffic is a huge problem and makes Chepstow unbearable at times"*

Management Area (AQMA), due to high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulates from traffic, especially HGVs, on this busy road. This type of pollution is particularly detrimental to health, causing respiratory

problems.<sup>264</sup> Despite this designation in 2007, and the development of an Air Quality Action Plan, concentrations within the Chepstow AQMA still exceed the objective for long-term nitrogen dioxide, despite a large decrease between 2012 and 2019; therefore this AQMA will remain.<sup>265</sup>

The Severn Bridge tolls were removed in December 2018, which has led to increased congestion in Chepstow as more people are commuting across the border or have moved from Bristol to Chepstow to take advantage of lower house prices.<sup>266</sup> Data from Highways England shows that in the year after the tolls were removed, the average number of cars crossing the Severn Bridge per day increased by 16%.<sup>267</sup> There has been substantial local campaigning to reduce congestion and the impact of car transport, led by Transition Chepstow which has published a Transport Plan for the town.<sup>268</sup>



*Protesters as part of the Save the Wye pilgrimage (source: @nyebeauty)*

The River Wye and its tributaries support many important species including Atlantic salmon, white-clawed crayfish, sea and river lampreys, and otters. However, concerns over a deterioration in water quality in the Wye – potentially because of pollution from chicken farms and sewage treatment over recent years – has led to both national campaigns and local protests.<sup>269</sup>

The Nedern Brook, the northerly part of which is in the Chepstow and Lower Wye area, is of poor quality, due to pollution from sewage and misconconnections.<sup>270</sup>

There are 3 Groundwater Source Protection Zones in this area, in Penterry, Chepstow Park Wood and much of Caerwent and part of Shirenewton, where special care is needed to protect underground aquifers from contamination.

Parts of the Chepstow and Lower Wye area are at risk of flooding due to the proximity to the Severn Estuary, the River Wye and the various tributaries of the River Severn.<sup>271</sup> In Chepstow town, 221 people are at high or medium risk of surface water flooding.<sup>272</sup> This equates to 19 properties at risk, which is relatively low, but there is much important infrastructure at risk, such as the Severnside rail line and industrial units southwest of Chepstow.

Parts of Tintern flood regularly at high tide, but residents are notified of the forecast high tide dates annually by Monmouthshire County Council; the council has a presence during those times to close the road if necessary, sandbags are stored locally, and many residents often have measures in place to mitigate the effect of flooding such as floodgates and sandbags. Despite these measures though, 10 residential properties and 9 commercial premises were flooded by tidal flooding in March 2020.<sup>273</sup>

The Gwent Levels are an important feature of the landscape of southern Monmouthshire. The levels extend over 5000ha between Chepstow and Cardiff from the Severn Estuary shoreline to the M4. The Levels are one of the largest surviving areas of ancient grazing marsh and drainage ditch systems, known as reens, in Britain. Some ditches date back to Roman times. The Living Levels Partnership is key to ensuring the Levels are managed sustainably, and to involve the public.

Wetlands provide many economic, social and environmental benefits which can be conservatively valued at over £65 million a year for an area the size of the Gwent Levels. The water levels in the reens are kept high in summer to provide water for farmland and ideal conditions for wildlife. In winter, the water levels are dropped for flood protection.<sup>274</sup> Much of the Levels are protected by flood defence, and discussions over the maintenance of these are ongoing with NRW.

Agriculture is also an important feature in this area. Monmouthshire has very little Grade 2 agricultural land, but most of those areas that are Grade 2 are found in the south of the Lower Wye area.<sup>275</sup>

Chepstow has a number of environmental and sustainability groups working in the area. Transition Chepstow is very active with projects on energy, transport, food and more. Gwent Energy Community Interest Company are based in Chepstow, which have many excellent and pioneering community energy projects around the county. There are also groups looking after local woodland, promoting Fairtrade and local cycle routes.

## Economic Well-being

Chepstow is the second most expensive area for house prices in Monmouthshire, of which 3 wards are in the county's most expensive 10. However, it also has 2 wards in the 10 least expensive, demonstrating the potential differences that can be found within a single area.<sup>276</sup>

The overall vacancy rate of 13.5% in Chepstow is the highest since 2003. The town retains a high percentage of trade for convenience goods but in comparison, trade is being drawn away from the town given its proximity to Cribbs Causeway in Bristol and Spyttly

*"Increase the number of shops at Chepstow"*

*"Chepstow High Street needs urgent action – it is totally run down"*

Retail Park in Newport.<sup>277</sup> Nevertheless, engagement responses noted the recent improvements to the high street, such as making it mostly pedestrianised, and the draw of the weekly Sunday market.

In this area, 8% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 12% considered to be income deprived. 145 people are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for unemployment, of which 35 are aged 16-24. 13.4% of children are in low-income families.<sup>278</sup>

In the Chepstow catchment area, 15% of households are below 50% of the median income for the UK, and 20% are below 60%, as compared with 17% and 22% respectively for Monmouthshire, and 25% and 33% for Wales as a whole.<sup>279</sup> Thornwell has the second-highest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county, while St Kingsmark 1 and Trellech United 2 have the joint first and joint second-lowest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county, respectively.<sup>280</sup>

## Social Well-being

The population of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley is 19,762, and similar in demographic profile to Severnside. 60.5% of the population are of working-age, the second-highest after Severnside. 23.2% of residents are aged 65 or older, the second-lowest of the five areas after Severnside.

Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley has one area in the most deprived 20% of areas in Monmouthshire. Part of Thornwell (Thornwell 1) is ranked the third most deprived area in Monmouthshire, largely due to deprivation in health, income and education.<sup>281</sup> One-quarter of people in the area are in income deprivation, and repeat absenteeism in school is one of the highest in Monmouthshire. Pre-school children residing in particular postcodes in Thornwell are eligible for Flying Start.

As with other areas in Monmouthshire, access to services is an issue in some parts of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley, for example, Devauden and St. Arvans. Average travel times for key services in the area particularly by public transport, are longer than average time for Wales.<sup>282</sup>

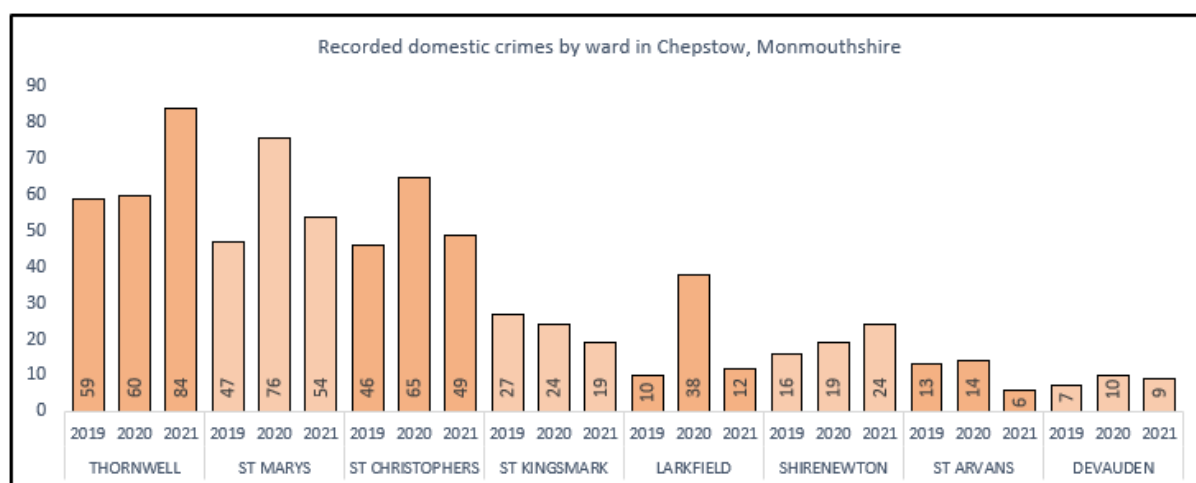
The health of 83% of people in Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley is reported as good or very good, which is the highest of the five areas. St. Mary's had the lowest proportion, with 78%, and

St Kingsmark 2 the highest, at 89% (this is also the third least deprived of Monmouthshire's areas). In the Chepstow area, more people live with long term limiting illnesses, and more suffer from cancer in Thornwell 1 than in other areas.<sup>283</sup>

Of those in Monmouthshire on the affordable housing waiting list with a recognised need, the largest demand is for one-bedroom accommodation, particularly in the Chepstow Housing Market Area (as of May 2021).<sup>284</sup>

From November 2020 to November 2021, overall crime in Chepstow remained the same at 19.5%. There has been a reduction of Rape, Commercial Burglaries, Drug Offences, and Robbery which could be due in part to the pandemic and lockdowns, and the reduction in Stop And Search activity within the county. There have been notable increases in all Other Thefts, Public Order Offences, and Other Sexual Offences. From April 2020 to March 2021, 294 incidents of ASB were recorded, accounting for 25.9% of all reported ASB across Monmouthshire. The wards with the highest prevalence were St Mary's, Thornwell and St Christopher's, with a brief spike in Shirenewton. As of January 2021, there were 99 adults accessing support, 39 for alcohol and 60 for other substances. The highest recorded substances for which initial help is sought are heroin and alcohol. The Crime Volume in Chepstow of Violence Without Injury has increased from 270 to 294 and Criminal Damage has also increased from 121 to 142 incidents.

Thornwell in Chepstow has recorded the most domestic-related crime over the last three years. From January 2021 to November 2021, Thornwell made up 33% of all recorded crime in the Chepstow area.



## Cultural Well-being

Chepstow is one of Monmouthshire's historic market towns, and the area is bordered by Gloucestershire and Forest of Dean in England. The landscape of the area, with the river Wye, which has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world, and the natural beauty of the lower Wye valley are particular highlights.

Figures from the 2011 Census show that this area has the lowest level of Welsh skills (87% stated they have no Welsh skills). Additionally, the proportion of people who stated that they could speak Welsh (8.8%) and speak, read and write Welsh (6%) were the lowest in Monmouthshire, when comparing across the 5 areas. The Welsh society, Cymdeithas Cas-gwent, Cil-y-coed a'r cyffiniau, covers the area and regularly hosts themed evenings as well as Chat Clubs.

30% of the population stated they had no religion in the 2011 Census, the highest figure of the 5 areas; however, the area is consistent with other areas, with 62% declaring themselves as Christian.<sup>285</sup>

The area has a rich built heritage including Chepstow Castle overlooking the river Wye, Town Gate and Port Wall and the Old Wye Bridge. Tintern Abbey in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a heritage site of national and international importance and is one of the most instantly recognisable buildings in Monmouthshire. This is widely identified as an important British heritage site.

Chepstow and the surrounding area also host a number of festivals and arts events including an annual agricultural show, theatrical and other events and shows held at the Drill Hall, and Chepstow Museum, which displays the rich and varied past of the town.

Public transport travel time to a library in the area is also above the average for Wales, taking, on average, 56 minutes (45 minutes is the average in Wales). Travel time by private transport is 13 minutes, slightly above the Wales average of 10 minutes.<sup>286</sup>

Chepstow Racecourse is one of the more prominent sporting venues in the county, and hosts the Welsh Grand National every December, the biggest race day of the year in Wales. The racecourse also plays host to a range of live music and other sporting events each year, although these have been impacted by the pandemic.

**What would make the area better?**

*"Public transport is appalling"*

*"Better bus services. Currently bus services finish ludicrously early. E.g. last bus from Newport to Chepstow"*

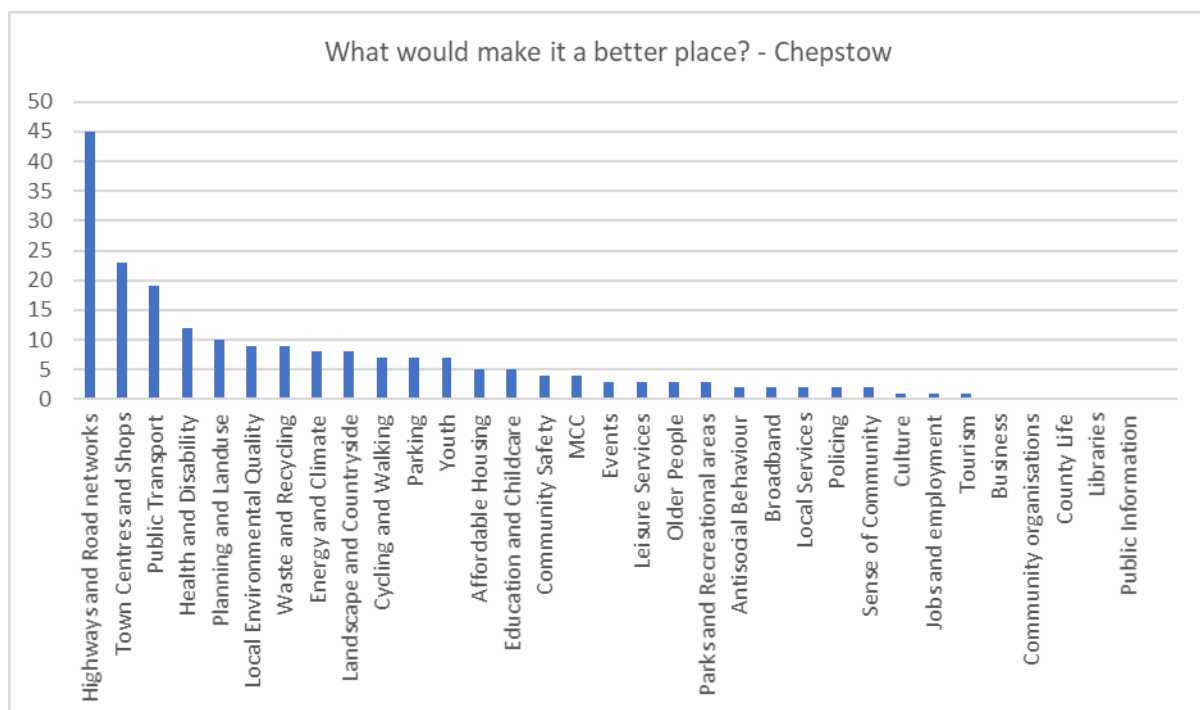
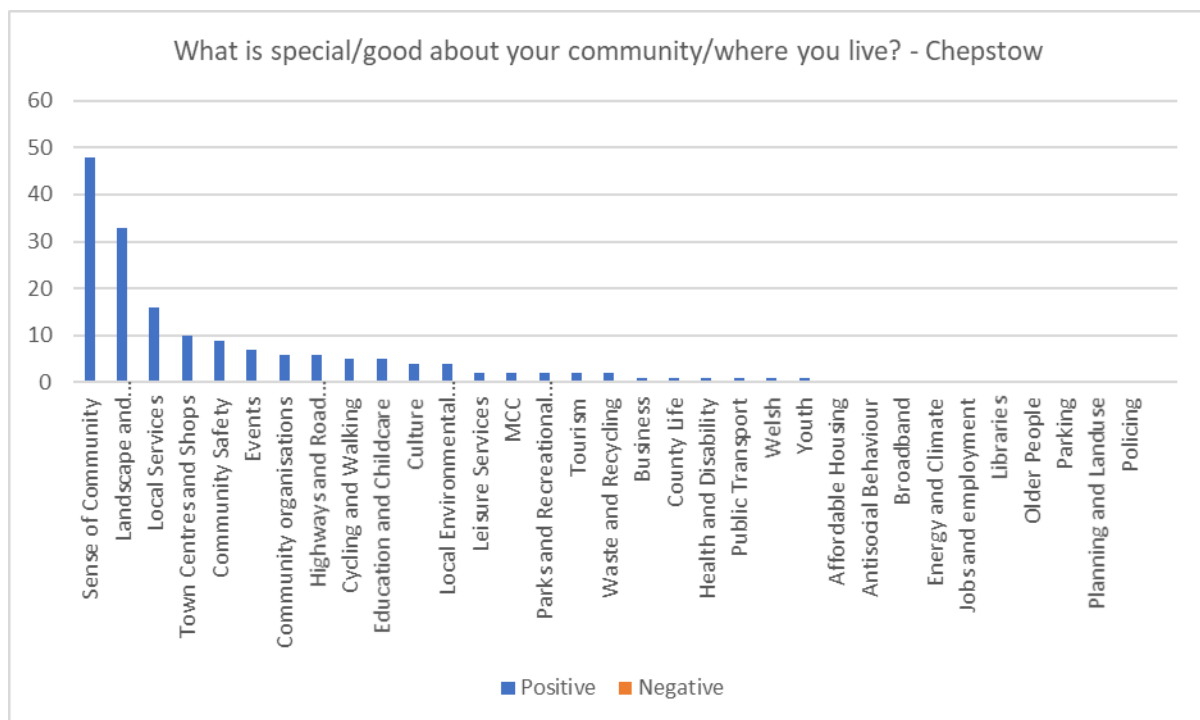
Travel time to a sports facility in the area on public transport is above the average for Wales, at 70 minutes (Wales Average, 52 minutes). On private transport it is 12 minutes, which is slightly higher than the average for Wales.<sup>287</sup> Chepstow has a train station, making it well connected to south Wales and England. However, feedback from residents during the engagement for the

assessment suggests that many are very unhappy with current public transport provision.

## 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.



# The heart of Monmouthshire

## Environmental Well-being

This area is characterised by rolling hills, productive farmland and many patches of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, some of them of significant size.

The area also includes steep hillsides marking the edge of the uplands of Brecon Beacons National Park to the northwest. The River Usk is a dominant feature, flowing through the centre of the area.

*"I really value the wide open spaces, green places, beautiful woodlands and scenery where I live"*

The area is largely rural, with the small market town of Usk being the largest settlement, followed by the large village of Raglan.

The River Usk is designated as a Special Area of Conservation for its clean and natural state and the important fish species it supports, although as described previously there are significant concerns about water quality in the River Usk from phosphates. Despite the River Usk's designation as a Special Area of Conservation, to protect the species in it, it is classed as Moderate quality under the EU Water Framework Directive. These waterbodies have to improve to at least 'good' by 2027.<sup>288</sup> The Olway and Gavenny tributaries face several diffuse rural pollution pressures.<sup>289</sup> Land in this area is mainly Grade 3 or 4 under the Agricultural Land Classification, and the relatively intensive agriculture in this rural area means that the county's largest Nitrate Vulnerable Zone has been designated near Raglan.<sup>290</sup> Under the EC Nitrates Directive, Nitrate Vulnerable Zones are designed to protect waters against nitrate pollution from agricultural sources, such as fertilizers and slurry, and are required to have an Action Programme.<sup>291</sup> There is also one Groundwater Source Protection Zone in the northwestern corner of this area along Mynydd Garnlochdy.

The area has 5 SSSIs of importance at a Wales level, including geological sites, a bat site and Llandegfedd Reservoir, the majority of which is in Monmouthshire and has become an important site for overwintering wildfowl since its construction in 1963. This is the largest body of open freshwater in the county.<sup>292</sup>

There are 161 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, mainly ancient woodland and neutral grassland. The woodland areas near Usk are relatively close together, and there is potential to improve their connectivity by linking them together.

Threats to habitats in this area include:

- The River Usk is subject to abstraction for water supplies and is at risk of low flows and quality as a wildlife resource in the future if pressure on it increases.
- Poor connectivity of woodland sites.
- Pollution from agriculture.
- Tree disease may cause further fragmentation of woodland parcels.

- Habitat loss due to development.

The town of Usk has 7 amenity greenspaces, so is well provided for, although there are only 2 natural green spaces, and the quality of amenity greenspace in Usk is generally low. Raglan has no parks or gardens and only one natural greenspace. So, despite the rural nature of the area around Usk, the provision of good quality greenspace is relatively low. Provision for outdoor sports is particularly deficient in these rural areas.<sup>293</sup> ~~There are 385km of public rights of way in the area enabling local people and visitors to explore the countryside.~~

The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal creates a valuable wildlife corridor with many trees with Tree Preservation Orders, and the A40 also has clusters of Tree Preservation Orders, as do trees at Goytre House and the nearby villages. Many trees around Usk benefit from protection, as they are important for the setting of the historic town and provide links to woodlands on the outskirts.<sup>294</sup>



Source: [www.uskinbloom.org.uk](http://www.uskinbloom.org.uk)

Also important to the visual amenity of Usk are the flowers planted as part of Usk in Bloom, and the more natural wildflower mixes sown as part of Monmouthshire's Pollinator Policy. Since its formation in 1982, Usk In Bloom has worked tirelessly to improve Usk through planting trees, shrubs, bulbs and floral displays, whilst addressing environmental issues and preserving wildlife, and working with young people. Due to these efforts, Usk has won gold for 38 consecutive years for the Wales in Bloom Large Village category.<sup>295</sup>

Bridge Street in Usk (A472) is one of only two Air Quality Management Areas in the county, with the area regularly exceeding nitrogen dioxide emissions caused by traffic through the town. Heavy goods vehicles travelling through the town and along the A472 contribute approximately 25% of the nitrogen dioxide.<sup>296</sup> The volume of traffic on Bridge Street in Usk is relatively high; queuing traffic, and the fact that the street is relatively narrow, give rise to the excess of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. Nitrogen dioxide harms health, causing and

exacerbating breathing problems.<sup>297</sup> An Air Quality Action Plan is in place and seems to be having an effect since 2019 was the fifth continuous year with no excess of the nitrogen dioxide annual levels.<sup>298</sup> Some measures were put in place during lockdown to allow residents to shop and use the pavements whilst still socially distancing. While the main elements of that have been removed, some elements such as a 20mph speed limit and stopping parking near the takeaway have gone some way to reducing congestion.<sup>299</sup>

The River Usk has a broad flood plain and is prone to flooding, and although development has traditionally avoided the natural flood plain, Natural Resources Wales class it as high risk of flooding, based on the number of properties in a community likely to be flooded.<sup>300</sup> Usk town is protected by flood defences, but several roads in the area are flooded by tributaries to the Usk such as the Olway at Llanllowell. A total of 2,164 people and 921 properties in this area are at low risk of flooding by rivers, and 26 properties and 120 people are at High or Medium risk of surface water flooding.<sup>301</sup> In February 2020, around 24 properties were flooded in Usk, 12 residential properties and 2 commercial properties in the Llanbadoc area were flooded, plus 11 properties in the Llanvihangel Gobion and Kemeys Commander area.<sup>302</sup>



Source: [www.jtallet.co.uk/usk/floods/photo\\_flood\\_52\\_page.htm](http://www.jtallet.co.uk/usk/floods/photo_flood_52_page.htm)

## Economic Well-being

House prices in this area are very high: its wards have the highest average price in Monmouthshire with 2 among the 10 most expensive in the county.<sup>303</sup>

Usk has experienced consistently high retail vacancy rates when compared to the other centres. However, as of 2020, only 9.8% of its units were vacant, the second-lowest of the 5 areas, and the lowest number since 2014. Usk is the only town in Monmouthshire that saw a fall in vacancy rates in 2020, while the rates in Raglan have remained at the same level as the year before.<sup>304</sup>

*"It's important to have more shops and facilities so we don't have to travel out of the village"*

*"I want to feel that the community and businesses are thriving"*

In this area, 4% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 6% considered to be income deprived. 20 people are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for unemployment, of which 5 are aged 16-24. 8.4% of children are in low-income families.<sup>305</sup>

Given these figures, Usk and Raglan have the lowest proportion of deprivation, compared to the other four areas of Monmouthshire. In this area, 15% of households are below 50% of the median income for the UK, and 20% are below 60%, as compared with 17% and 22% respectively for Monmouthshire, and 25% and 33% for Wales as a whole.<sup>306</sup>

## Social Well-being

The heart of Monmouthshire has a population of 10,476, the least populated of the five areas. The area has the smallest proportion of children, at 13.2%, and is home to the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over, at 29.3%.

None of the small areas in the Heart of Monmouthshire appears in the 20% most deprived areas in Monmouthshire, despite access to services being an issue, particularly outside the main town of Usk. Average travel time to several services in Heart of Monmouthshire, as classified by the Wales index for Multiple Deprivation, are amongst the highest in the county, and higher than the average for Wales, particularly for public transport travel times.<sup>307</sup>

In the heart of Monmouthshire, 81% of people's health is reported as good or very good. The community of Usk reports the lowest (73.4% in Usk 1) and the highest (85.7% in Usk 2) within this area. Goetre 2 has a higher than Monmouthshire average (589.6) rate of cancer incidence (683.3).<sup>308</sup>

Note that Community Safety data for the heart of Monmouthshire is included in the data for Monmouth and surrounding area.

## Cultural Well-being

The heart of Monmouthshire is another area where the built and physical landscape plays an important role in people's lives and culture. This includes the River Usk, Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and Goytre Wharf on the canal as well as many rural walks and stunning landscape.

The area also has a rich built heritage including Raglan Castle, Twyn Square, Usk Sessions house and many churches.

The heart of Monmouthshire has no Welsh medium educational provision. Access to this education requires an 11 mile journey to Abergavenny, or can be accessed in neighbouring authorities. Interestingly, this area has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion of population that can speak Welsh (10.2%), as well as those who can speak, read and write Welsh (7.4%).<sup>309</sup> With no Welsh language group based centrally in Usk, a journey to nearby Abergavenny would provide residents with the best opportunity to join in with such a group.

With 66.7% declaring themselves Christian, this is above the Monmouthshire average, and the highest of all 5 areas. 1.3% of the population stated that they were of a religion other than Christian. This area has the highest proportion of population in Monmouthshire declaring themselves as of white ethnicity (98.7%).<sup>310</sup>

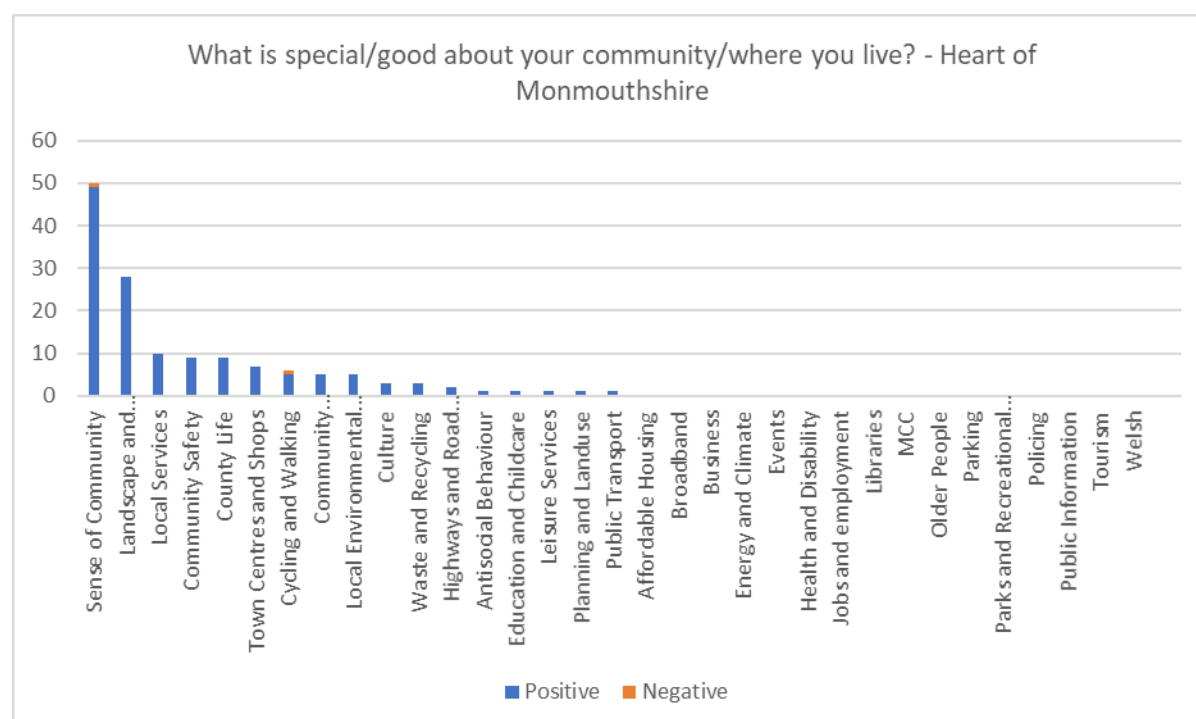
The area, mainly around the towns and villages has many local festivals, events and activities; Usk Rural Life Museum is also in the area. The Usk Show is a yearly one-day agricultural show that draws exhibitors, traders and visitors to the area every September.

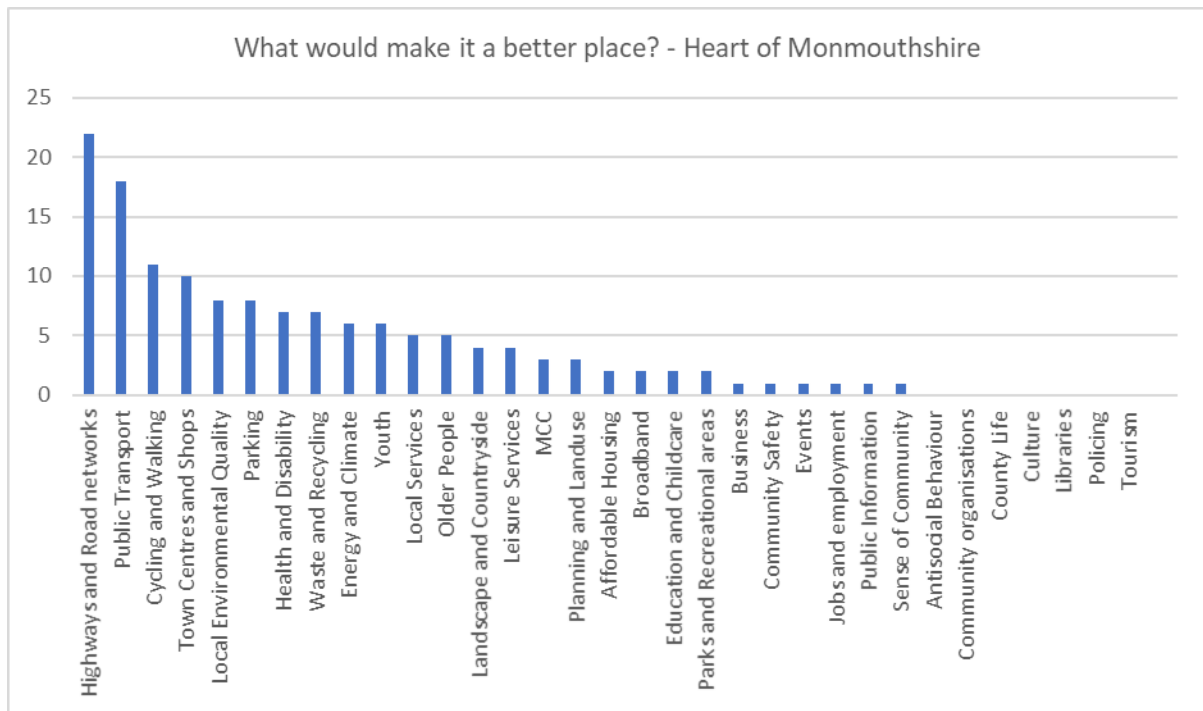
There is very limited public transport provision in the heart of Monmouthshire. Travel time to leisure facilities in the heart of Monmouthshire is poor; on average, it takes over two hours to travel to a sports facility on public transport (124 minutes), which is well above the average for Wales of 55 minutes. Similarly, private travel time of 26 minutes is well above the Wales average of 10 minutes.<sup>311</sup> Travel time to a public library is also long, taking 73 minutes on public transport and 14 minutes on private transport.<sup>312</sup> The average public travel time to a secondary school is 90 minutes, with the majority of children travelling to either Abergavenny, Monmouth, or Caerleon Comprehensive in Newport.

## 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.

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## 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.<sup>313</sup>

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.<sup>314</sup> 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.<sup>315</sup> 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.<sup>316</sup> In 2021, substantial areas of larch were felled in Trellech Common, for example.<sup>317</sup>

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.<sup>318</sup>

Urban tree cover in Monmouth town is 17.5%, higher than most other Monmouthshire towns. However, 5 hectares were lost between 2009-13.<sup>319</sup> 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.<sup>320</sup>

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.<sup>321</sup>

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.<sup>322</sup> This has been further developed with a detailed study of the Kingswood area, to seek funding to install the recommended measures.<sup>323</sup>

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.<sup>324</sup>

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.<sup>325</sup> 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.<sup>326</sup> 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.<sup>327</sup>

## 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.<sup>328</sup>

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.<sup>329</sup> 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.<sup>330</sup>

*"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.<sup>331</sup> 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.<sup>332</sup> Monmouth also includes Dixon 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.<sup>333</sup>

## 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.<sup>334</sup>

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.<sup>335</sup> Residents in some parts of Overmonnow are eligible for Flying Start for pre-school children.

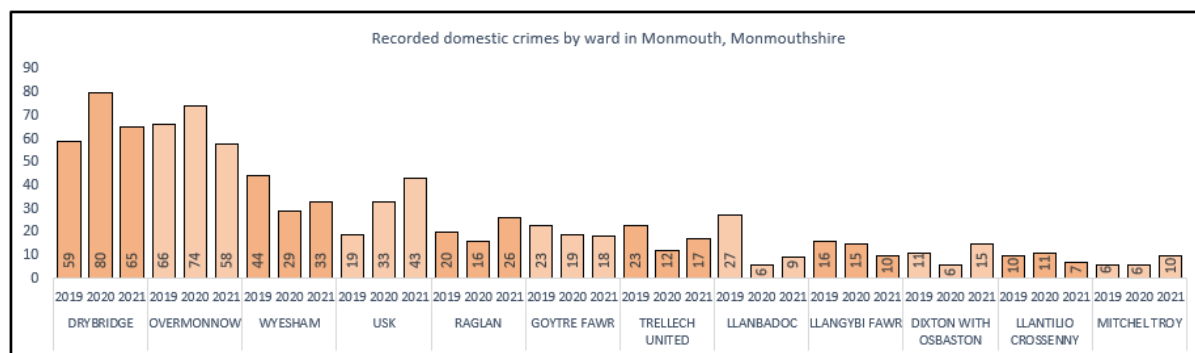
Access to services in the area around Monmouth is a key issue, with some areas being ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales. For example, Llantilio Crossenny is ranked the sixth most deprived area in Wales for access to services. In this area, two-thirds of households suffer from the unavailability 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.<sup>336</sup>

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.<sup>337</sup>

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 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mixed race population (0.7%) and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.<sup>338</sup>

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.

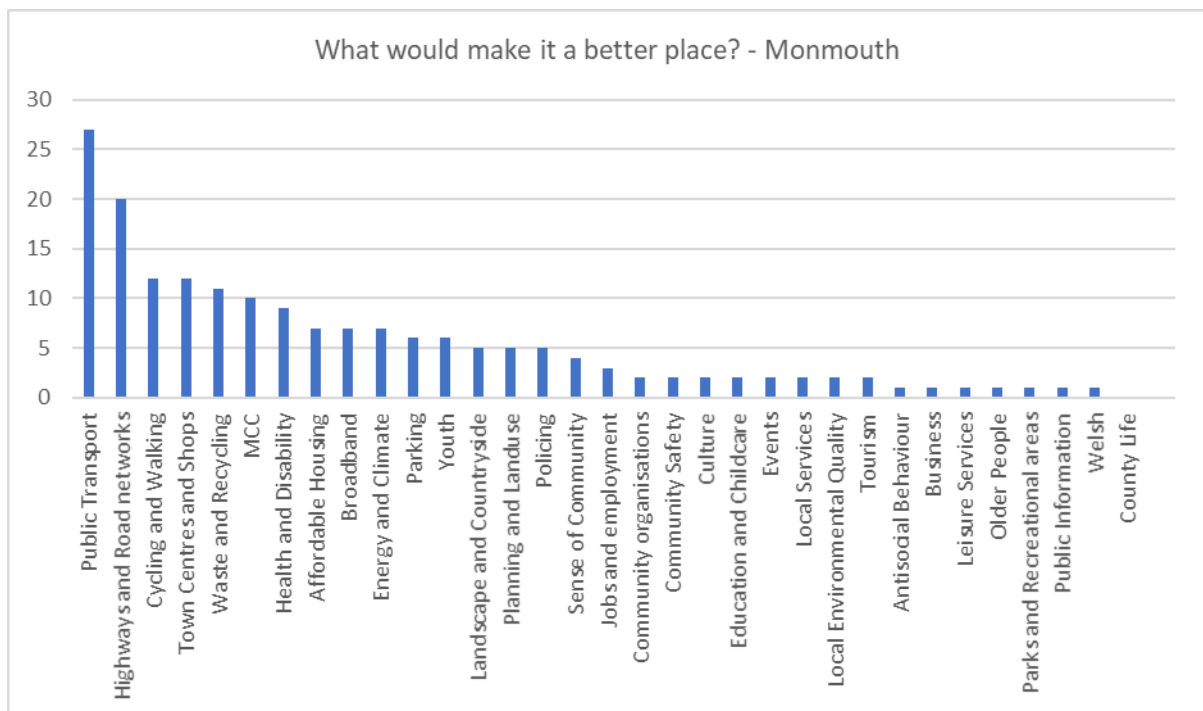
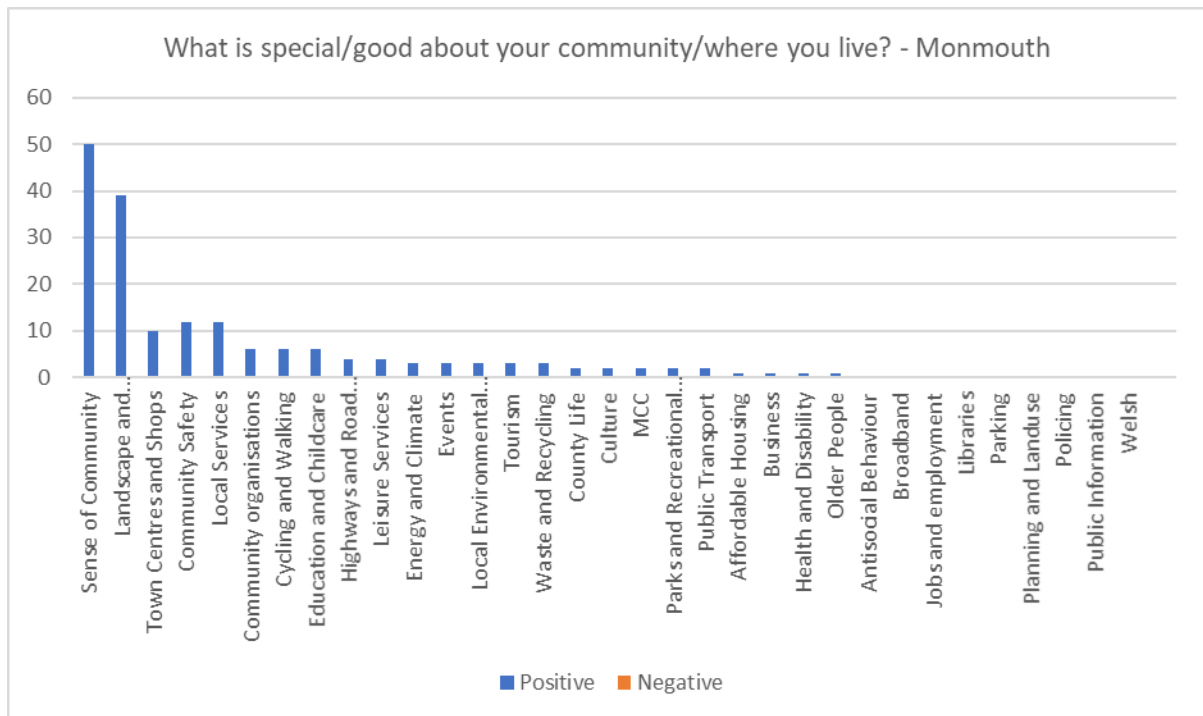
Following significant investment, the leisure centre in Monmouth has upgraded its fitness and sports facilities and also offers a play centre for primary school aged children. Monmouth Rowing Club is located beside the river Wye and caters for the membership of the club as well as the 3 school rowing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



## Severnside

### Environmental Well-being

The Severnside area includes several areas of population in the south of the county – including Portskewett, Caldicot, Rogiet, Magor and Undy – and also has the mainline railway to South Wales and the M4 motorway. The landscape along the coastal zone is primarily flat, with productive fields of Grade 2 and 3 agricultural lands, bounded by traditional reens to drain the low lying land, protected from coastal flooding by a flood bank.<sup>339</sup> The land rises to the north to a series of low hills before rising further towards Wentwood.

Severnside has extensive environmental assets, some of which benefit from international protection, and habitats include marine, freshwater, species-rich grassland and ancient woodland. As described in the Chepstow and Lower Wye section, the Severn Estuary is of international importance for wintering and passage waterfowl, saltmarshes, exposed sandbanks, fish feeding areas and an unusually large natural tidal range which influences the species that occur here. The estuary is protected as a Ramsar site, overseen by the United Nations, as well as a Special Area of Conservation protected by European legislation.<sup>340</sup>



*Severn Estuary*

There are 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest that protect the Gwent Levels area to create a large tract of well-connected land and associated reens. The SSSIs incorporate the estuary, woodland, wet farmland and drainage ditches, wetland and marsh and meadow.<sup>341</sup> The Gwent Levels SSSI has seen the successful reintroduction of water vole, which have spread far beyond the reintroduction sites. The Levels also support otters and many other species, and Gwent Wildlife

Trust is working on a Shrill Carder Bee Project to maintain Monmouthshire's population of this rare bumblebee. There are 31 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in this area, many of which are meadow and grassland and help to provide a flower-rich resource for this important species and other pollinators.

The Living Levels Partnership is a lottery-funded programme to promote and reconnect people to the heritage, wildlife and wild beauty of the historic landscape of the Gwent Levels.<sup>342</sup> This includes preserving and protecting approximately 5,700 hectares of land, including much of the Severnside area and is a mixture of habitats such as coastal floodplains, reens, saltmarshes and mudflats.

However, a major threat to environmental resilience in this area comes from further development, which would reduce the extent of the natural areas as well as potentially break up currently well-connected habitats. Concerns about further development as a result of the proposed M4 relief road have receded now that Welsh Government has turned down that proposal, removed the corridor for the route of a proposed highway, and reiterated their plans for no new major road-building schemes.<sup>343</sup>

Other threats to the wildlife, property and infrastructure of this area include flooding and inundation by saline water from the Severn Estuary. Much of the levels area is protected by flood defences, and discussions over the maintenance of these are ongoing with NRW. There is uncertainty about the extent of future sea-level rise, but with models anticipating between 22 and 28cm rise at Cardiff by 2050 and potentially 43-76cm by 2080 as a result of climate change, the risk of coastal flooding increases.<sup>344</sup> Rising sea levels are also a threat to the saltmarshes and mudflats that make the Severn Estuary so valuable for wildlife since research suggests that 77% of these face being 'squeezed' against existing sea defences causing a movement of sediment and habitat loss for thousands of wading birds.<sup>345</sup>

Parts of Caldicot are at risk of flooding where the Nedern Brook joins the River Severn. There are also a significant number of properties (138) and people (498) at high or medium risk of surface water flooding in the wider Severnside area, the largest number of people likely to be affected out of all of the 5 areas of Monmouthshire.<sup>346</sup> In February 2020, widespread surface water flooding occurred in and around the grounds of Caldicot Castle and the Severn Bridge Industrial Estate affecting numerous properties and businesses, as well as several roads, residential properties and gardens.<sup>347</sup>

The Nedern Brook has poor water quality, due to pollution from sewage misconnections.<sup>348</sup> In the Gwent levels, a unique reen and ditch network is under pressure from development and diffuse rural, industrial and sewage pollution.<sup>349</sup> There is also a large Groundwater Source Protection Zone covering most of Portskewett Ward, and half of Caldicot as far south as the Severn Estuary.<sup>350</sup>



*Caldicot Castle in the Gwent levels*

The Severnside area has some accessible green spaces, such as Magor Marsh, Caldicot Castle Country Park, the Nedern Brook Wetlands site, Rogiet Countryside Park and Black Rock. However, most of the towns and villages in the area are deficient in easily accessible natural or semi-natural greenspace.<sup>351</sup> Compared with elsewhere in the county, fewer people in Severnside said that the landscape and countryside are what is good about where they live. There is 74km of public rights of way

enabling people to explore the countryside, including access to the Wales Coastal Path.<sup>352</sup>

Many of the Tree Preservation Orders in this area are in urban areas, villages and around historic estates where they are important landscape features. Some areas of

woodland are also protected by Tree Preservation Orders.<sup>353</sup> However, in comparison with the rest of Monmouthshire, and Wales as a whole, Severnside has much less urban tree cover. Rogiet only has 8.4% tree cover and Caldicot has 8.7% (compared with a Welsh average of 16.4%), with a subsequent reduction in the benefits given by urban trees such as reducing runoff, increasing biodiversity and providing shading and cooling.<sup>354</sup>

*"Lots of open countryside around for walking and leisure"*

There are no Air Quality Management Zones in Severnside and no areas of particular concern for air quality. Although nitrogen dioxide and particulate levels are likely to be high along the M4 and M48 corridors, they are not located close to sensitive receptors such as homes or schools.

There is no local Transition Town group or similar. However, through the work of the Caldicot Town Team and other groups, there are small groups of people working together on a range of different sustainability projects. The council is working closely with volunteers to run the new TogetherWorks space in Caldicot, which will be the venue for several re-use and repair projects, such as a Library of Things, Repair Café and community fridge, so it is expected that this will become a focus for a range of community sustainability initiatives.<sup>355</sup>

## Economic Well-being

As with Chepstow and Monmouth, Severnside includes house prices that are among the most and least expensive in Monmouthshire. Overall, it is the second least expensive area of the county, though.<sup>356</sup>

Vacancy rates in the centre of Magor have decreased from 13.6% in 2019 to no vacant units in 2021.

However, rates in the central shopping area of Caldicot have risen compared to last year, to 13.4%.<sup>357</sup> Caldicot's easy access to the motorway and proximity to Newport means that there is a high trade draw away from the town for certain goods – mainly to Spytty Retail Park in Newport, but also Bristol's Cribbs Causeway and Cardiff.<sup>358</sup>

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

*"I would like it to be a community hub of cafes and independent shops"*

*"More variety of shops. People coming here because there's something here they want – one-off shops for instance"*

In this area, 7% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 10% considered to be income deprived. 200 people (1.1%) are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for unemployment, of which 40 are aged 16-24. 11.7% of children are in low-income families.

In the Severnside catchment area, 18% of households are below 50% of the median income for the UK, and 25% are below 60%, as compared with 17% and 22% respectively for Monmouthshire, and 25% and 33% for Wales as a whole.<sup>359</sup> The Elms has the joint second-lowest percentage of working-age people in income deprivation in the county, while Shirenewton has the joint lowest percentage of working-age people in employment deprivation.<sup>360</sup> Improvement work focussed on Severn Tunnel Junction will benefit Caldicot, Magor/Undy and Rogiet, by making it easier for people to travel by train.

## Social Well-being

Severnside's population of just over 20,000 includes the largest proportion of working-age residents, with 60.8% aged between 16 and 64 and the lowest proportion of people aged 65 and over (22.4%).<sup>361</sup>

3 of the 11 most deprived areas in Monmouthshire are located within Severnside: West End, part of Dewstow and Green Lane and part of Severn. For each area, the main category of deprivation is the physical environment which covers air quality and emissions, flood risk and green space.<sup>362</sup>

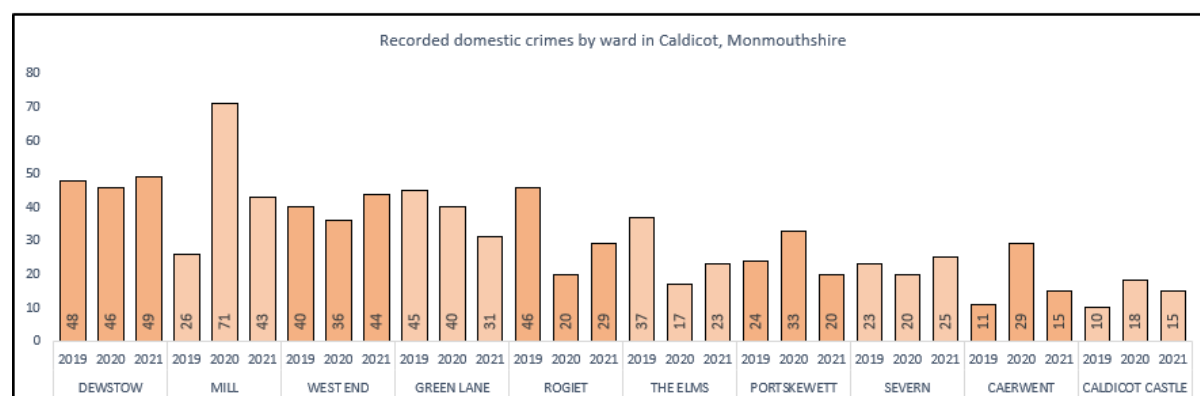
West End has the lowest percentage of key stage 4 leavers entering higher education, at 10.2%.<sup>363</sup> Flying Start is available to some residents and their young children in West End.

On average, travel times to several services are shorter when compared to other areas in Monmouthshire and are more in line with the Wales average, as classified by the Wales index for Multiple Deprivation.

81% of people in Severnside reported good or very good health in the 2011 census. Again, variations within the area are notable, ranging from 75% in Dewstow to 89% in The Elms. Dewstow & Green Lane 2, followed by West End, have the highest rates of people living with long term limiting illness in the Severnside area. West End also sees the highest rates of cancer incidence in the Severnside area.

From November 2020 to November 2021, overall crime in Caldicot remained the same, at 20.7% of the county's. There has been a reduction of recorded crimes for Shoplifting, Theft, and Commercial Burglaries. However, there has been a marked increase in Residential Burglary, which is up from 34 recorded incidents to 65. Other notable increases are in Criminal Damage and Arson, Rape, and Other Sexual Offences. From April 2020 to March 2021, 230 incidents of ASB were recorded in Caldicot, accounting for 20.3% of all reported ASB across Monmouthshire. The wards with the highest prevalence were Green Lane, Mill and Severn Wards. As of January 2021, there were 52 adults accessing support, 29 for alcohol and 23 for other substances.

Dewstow in Caldicot has recorded the most domestic-related crime over the last three years. From January 2021 to November 2021, Dewstow made up 17% of all recorded crime in the Caldicot area. There is a significant rise in the amount of recorded domestic abuse crimes in Mill in 2020; 37% of these crimes were recorded as Violence without injury.



## Cultural Well-being

Severnside is uniquely placed as being the landfall of the instantly recognisable new Prince of Wales Bridge in Wales. The area is bordered by the Severn Estuary coast line, including the Caldicot and Wentloog levels, and Magor Marsh is an important part of the landscape used by visitors and residents.

Severnside has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion of those declaring themselves as Christian (62.2%) as well as the lowest proportion of those stating they are of a religion other than Christian (1.1%). In terms of ethnicity, figures show the area has a lower proportion of the population who are mixed race and black ethnicity compared to the other areas, whereas the proportion of population of white ethnicity is 98.5%.<sup>364</sup>

The Severnside area is covered by the Cas-gwent, Cil-y-coed a'r Cyffiniau Welsh language society. Coffee mornings are held regularly in the Caldicot library. Severnside is one of 2 of the 5 areas with Welsh medium education, with Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin, located in Caldicot. This could be one of the reasons why figures for Welsh within Monmouthshire are at their highest in this area: 11.2% of the population of Severnside stated that they were able to speak Welsh as well as 8.3% saying they could speak, read and write in Welsh.<sup>365</sup>

In Severnside, Caldicot Castle and Country Park is of particular historical importance and is increasingly being used for festivals and events. Over the past few years, the Castle has hosted a range of events from music concerts to archery competitions. The area also has a number of other historically significant features.



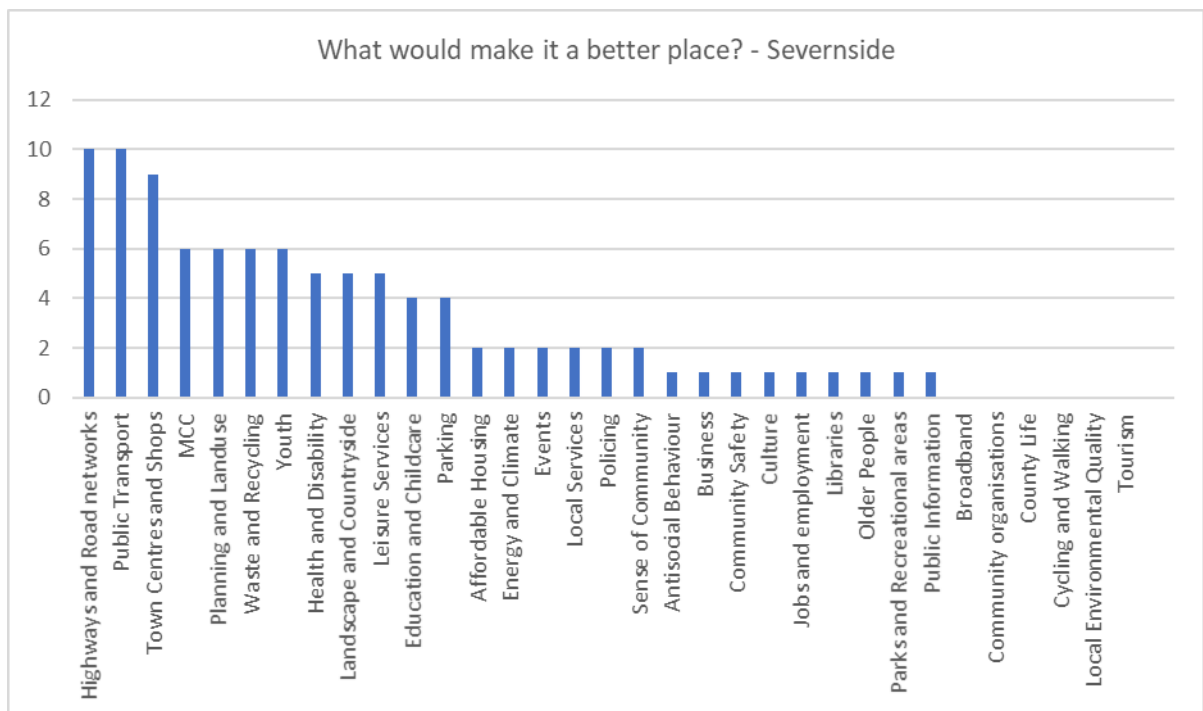
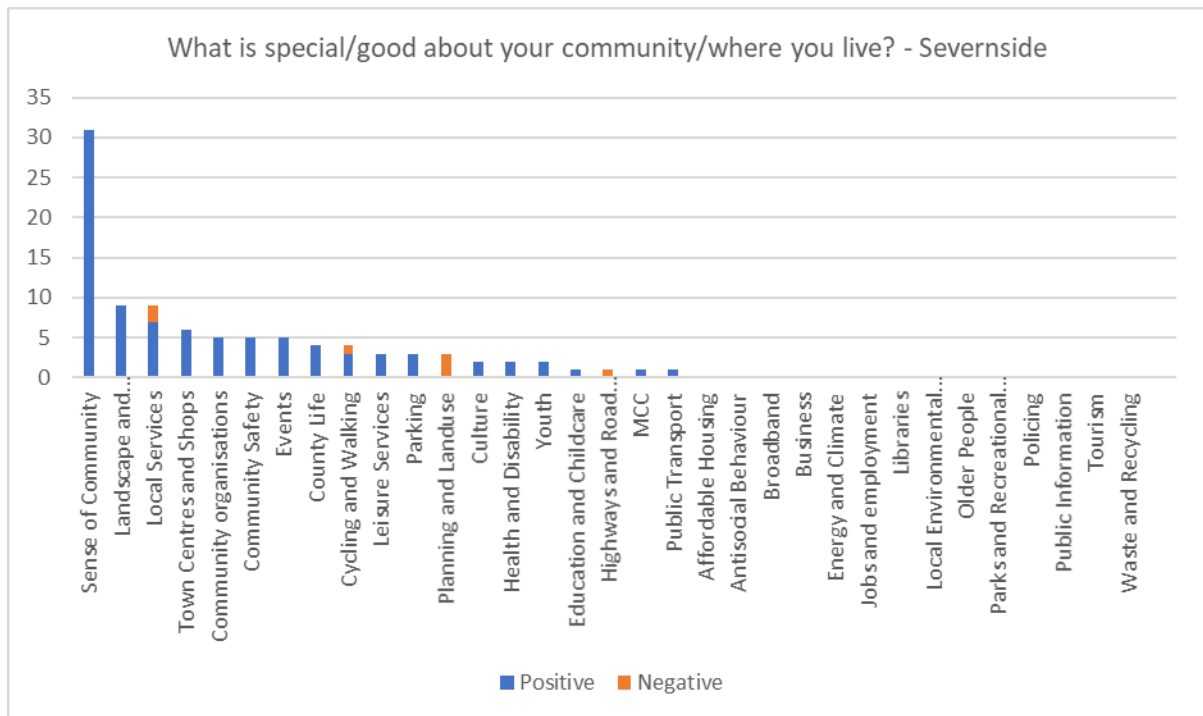
*Caldicot Castle*

Travel time to a leisure centre in the area is slightly higher than the average for Wales: on average it takes 68 minutes on public transport and 12 minutes on private transport.<sup>366</sup> Travel time to a library in the area is also slightly higher than the average for Wales, taking 55 minutes on public transport and 11 minutes on private transport.<sup>367</sup>

## 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.



# Future Trends

The Welsh Government Future trends report (2021) focusses on those big drivers of change where the trends are having an impact across all sectors and have the potential for wider effects across the economy, society, environment, and culture. It focusses on the intergenerational challenges that Wales will need to respond to, and the areas it can shape for a more sustainable future.

This report provides an overview of four big drivers of change: People and Population; Inequalities; Planetary Health and Limits; Technology. The report details the trends that have potential implications across Wales' society, economy, environment, and culture. Recognising the context in which Public Service Boards work, this report also provides an overview of two public service drivers: Public finances; Public sector demand and digital. The diagram provides an overview of the findings from the report:<sup>368</sup>



PSBs in Gwent have previously commissioned specific work to develop an understanding of Future trends that could affect well-being and delivery of public services in Gwent to inform the development of well-being plans. Informed by this, work has been progressed to better

understand what the likelihood and impact of future risks and opportunities might be at a local level and how they might be addressed by Public Services Boards (PSB).

Many future risks and opportunities are complex and therefore hard to define clearly, and are also difficult to plan for and manage. Developing a process to help further understand them aims to progress thinking beyond the shorter to the medium-term, in line with the long-term principle of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Some of the future risks and opportunities that have been identified that are particularly relevant to Monmouthshire include:

- Future Skill requirements: There is a risk of young people being trained in the wrong, or outdated, skills. There are opportunities to build a new training and education system which develops more flexible, creative, problem solvers.
- Jobs lost, jobs gained: There is a risk that some communities don't have access to the skills development to help individuals get jobs in the emerging economy. There are opportunities for business to become more efficient and to use AI to build new markets and value chains.
- Chronic ill health: People are living longer, which means society is changing and our health is changing with it. An ageing population means that the number of people with long-term health conditions has increased. There is a risk of increased morbidity, especially due to cancer, cardiovascular disease, strokes, diabetes and other conditions related to obesity. There is an opportunity to refocus healthcare towards well-being and preventative actions.
- Unequal society: There is a risk that there will be a further entrenchment of health inequalities, increased loneliness and isolation and mental health issues.
- Climate Change: There is a severe risk of rises in temperature, increase in sea levels, increased frequency of adverse weather events and increased frequency of flooding
- Loss of biodiversity: The natural environment provides us with the necessities of life – what we consume, our waste and pollution, cultural benefits and natural processes such as pollination.
- As a result of growing cities, industrialisation, intensive agriculture and climate change, natural habitats are threatened across the world and in the UK. There is a risk that nature no longer provides the range of system services that society relies on.
- Housing and Land pressures: Pressure on land will intensify, with competing demands – for agriculture, forestry, industry, mining, housing, recreation and amenity use. There is a risk that failing to build sufficient (and affordable) homes will increase inequality and reduce affordability and tenure choice

These will need to be continually reviewed and developed as evidence and the situation change. They were identified before the Coronavirus pandemic and any longer-term impacts will need to factor into the risks and opportunities already identified. It is likely that the ongoing pandemic

will lead to the acceleration of some existing trends and potentially create new trends. However, how the evolving effect of the pandemic will shape medium and long-term trends globally and for Wales is far more uncertain at this stage.<sup>369</sup>

Further work will be required to develop a greater understanding of the future trends impact on Monmouthshire, to consider suitable responses and develop Well-being Plans accordingly. This will include exploring collaborative responses where appropriate.

# Monmouthshire Engagement Responses



## **What was our approach to community engagement for the well-being assessment?**

Involvement is a key principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The engagement as part of the well-being assessment, which in Monmouthshire was built on the previous 'Our Monmouthshire' engagement, helps us to understand people's views on well-being in the county to consider this alongside the data and evidence available.

The community engagement has been undertaken using a consistent framework across Gwent and a common set of questions. During the Summer of 2021, Monmouthshire, along with neighbouring Gwent areas published a questionnaire which asked residents to answer a series of questions on their experiences with their local area. As well as asking whether the current Monmouthshire well-being plan objectives remain important, we wanted to understand more about residents' views on current well-being and to draw on the strengths and assets of the county. The compiled responses have helped us to understand the issues that matter to people in Monmouthshire.

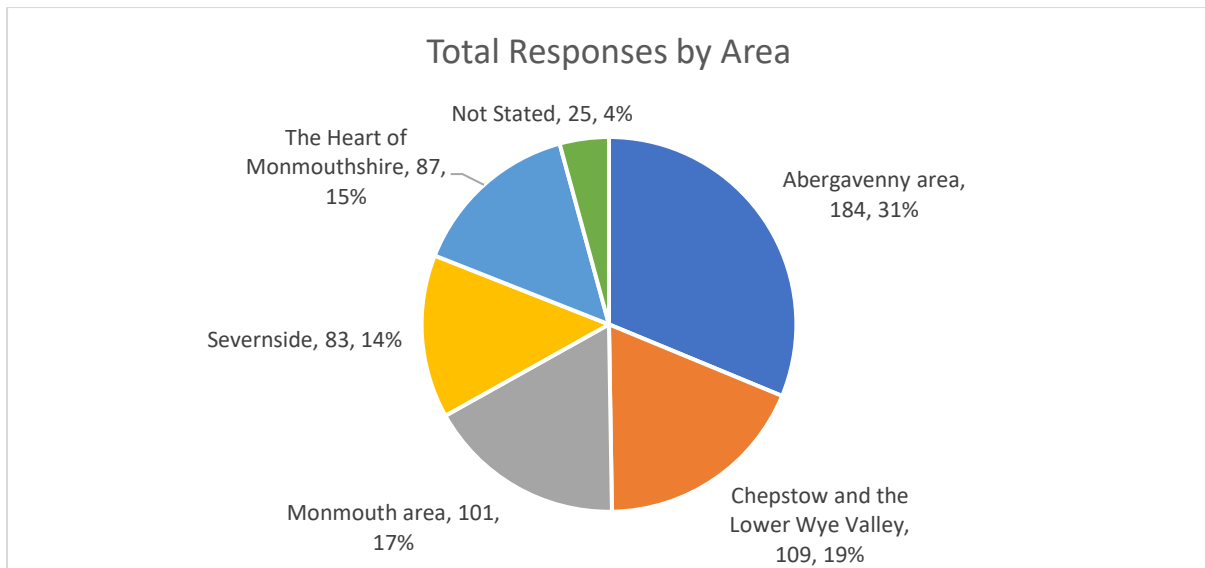
The questions asked included:

- What is special / good about your community / where you live?
- What would make it a better place?
- What things are important to you and your family?
- What would you like your community to look like in the future?

We were conscious that although data and statistics may tell us one story, people's perception and understanding of well-being may be different.

The questionnaire was publicised through a number of social media platforms to try and engage with as many people as possible, including Twitter and Facebook pages. Alongside the questionnaire, a range of different engagement methods were used including young people's workshops and stalls at a community event. The ongoing pandemic reduced the range of opportunities available to undertake the engagement. Effort was made to involve people from as wide a cross-section of the community as possible.

A total of 589 responses to the questionnaire were received. The chart below shows the proportion of responses that came from each of the 5 areas in Monmouthshire:

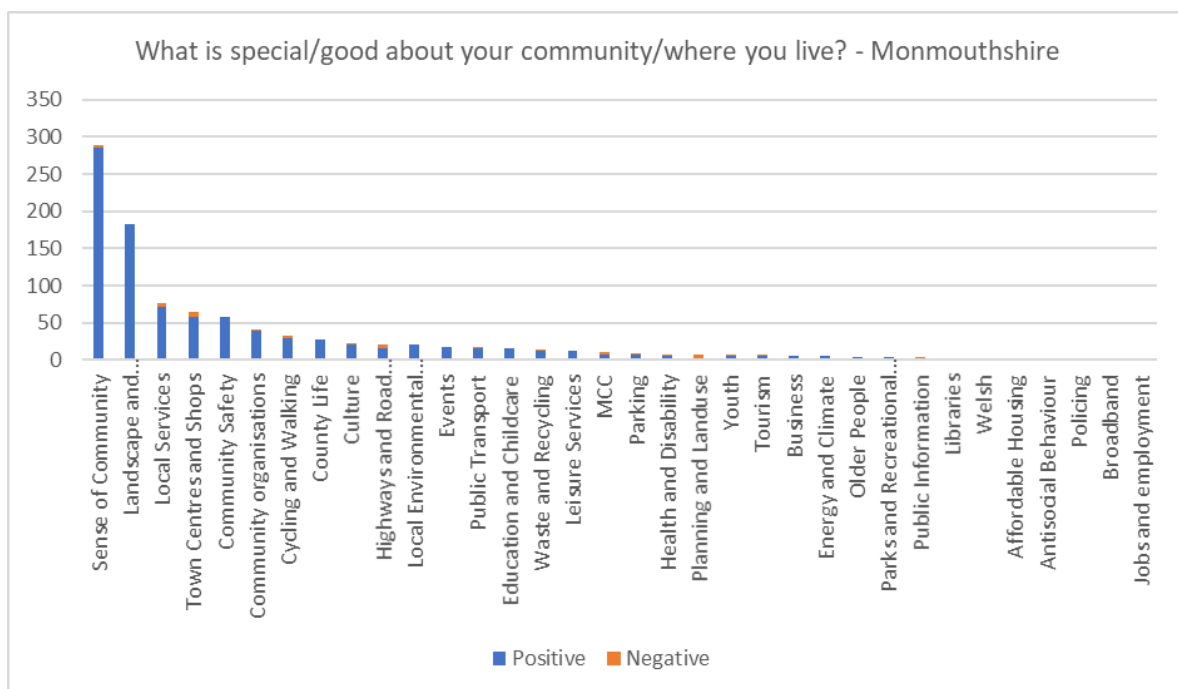


### What have people talked about as part of *Our Monmouthshire*?

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 mentioned. A summary of the responses across Monmouthshire to some of the questions is provided. The well-being issues raised in response to the engagement also reveal some variation by location, with some issues being more prevalent in some areas than others.

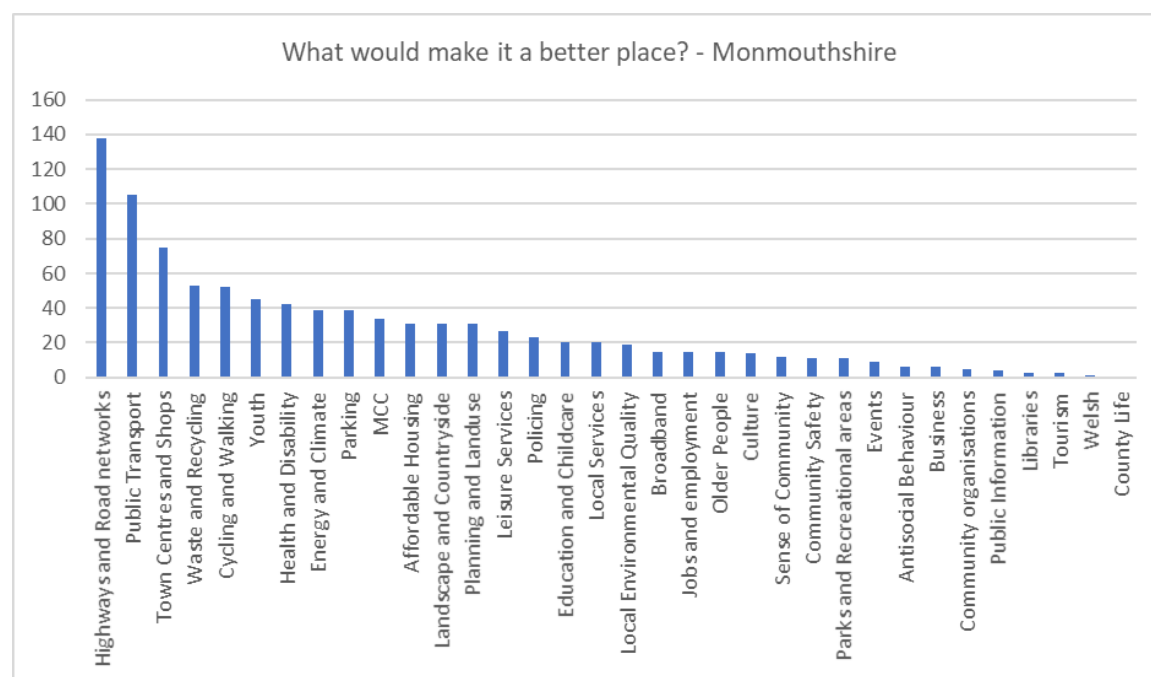
The following graphs show the themes that were used to categorise the comments, and where appropriate, whether these were more positive or negative in response is provided.

#### Question 1. What is special/good about your community/where you live?



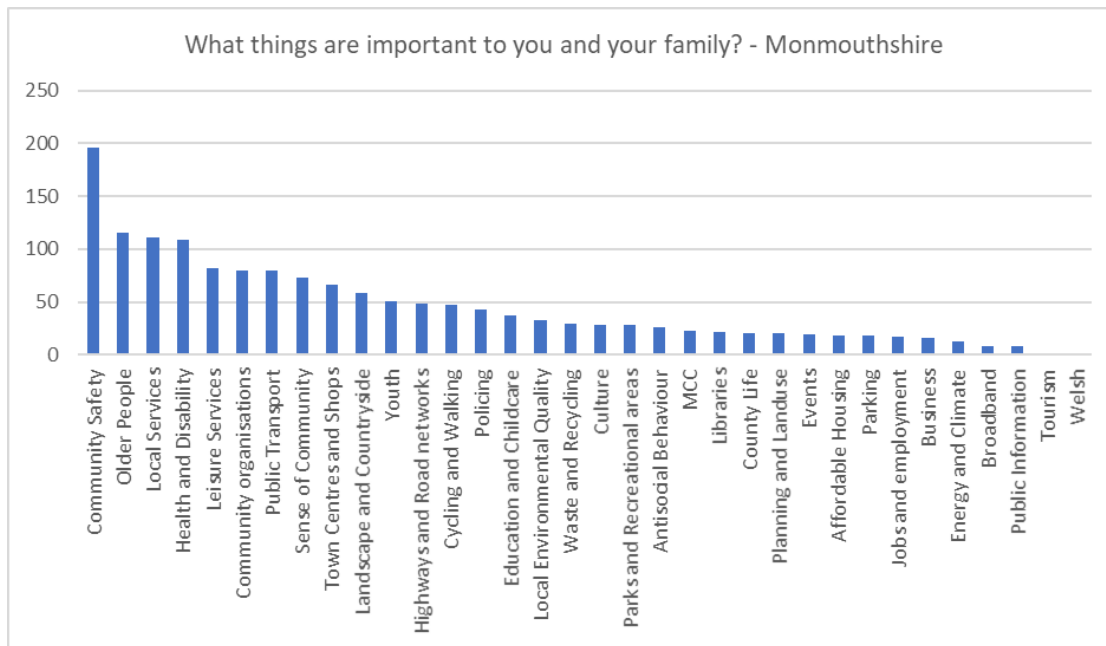
Most comments could be categorised under Sense of Community, which includes comments on how friendly the area is, highlighting neighbourliness and community spirit. Landscape and Countryside was the next most popular category, capturing comments such as those on natural beauty and green spaces. Local Services, Community Safety and Town Centres and Shops were also amongst the most commented themes. Whilst the vast majority of comments were positive, some concerns were raised in the comments on areas such as Highways and Road networks, Local Services, Planning and Landuse, and Town Centres and Shops.

## Question 2. What would make it a better place?



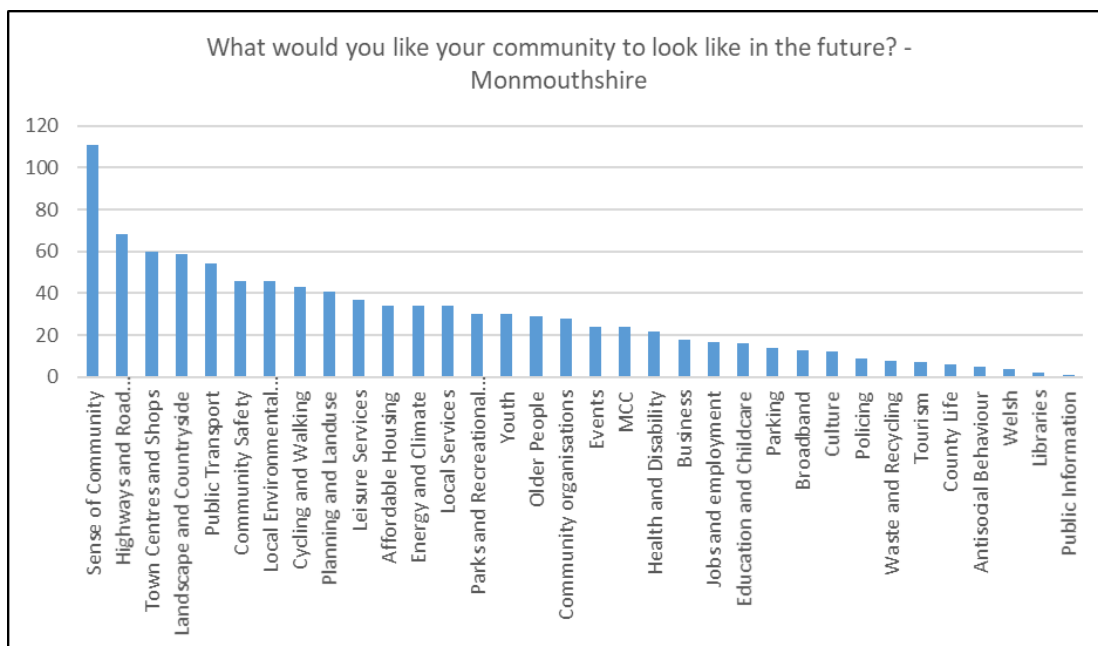
Responses covered a wide range of categories. Some of the areas with a higher number of responses included Highways and Road Networks, including volumes of traffic and speeding. The Public Transport category contained many references to bus and/or train services available, and the Town Centre and Shops comments tend to focus on having a greater variety of shops available locally.

## Question 3. What things are important to you and your family?



Many of the responses focussed on the examples provided in the question including places, local services, local facilities, community groups/activities, safety and support and care for older people.

#### Question 4. What would you like your community to look like in the future?



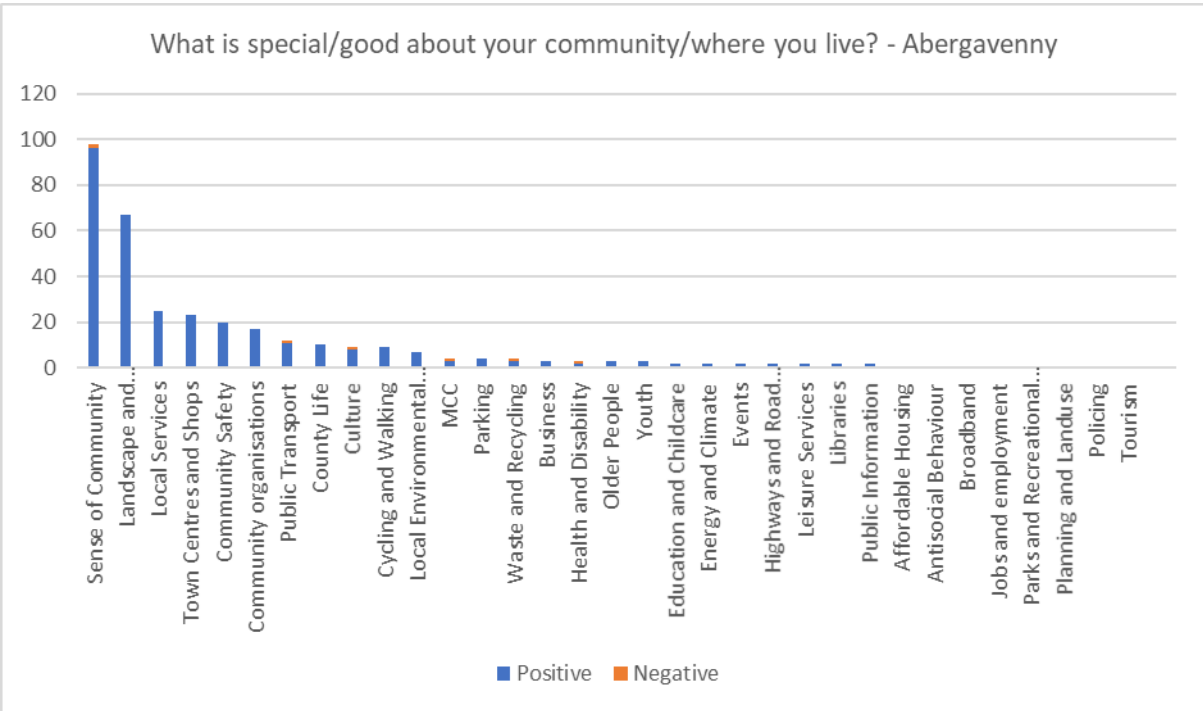
Many comments related to a sense of community, with respondents' desire for friendly communities, with people looking out for each other. Highways and Road Networks were raised frequently, including traffic, along with vehicle pollution and speeding. Landscape and Countryside was also raised often, common themes included a desire for more greenspace and areas to walk and cycle. Town Centres and Shops were amongst the highest 12 category of

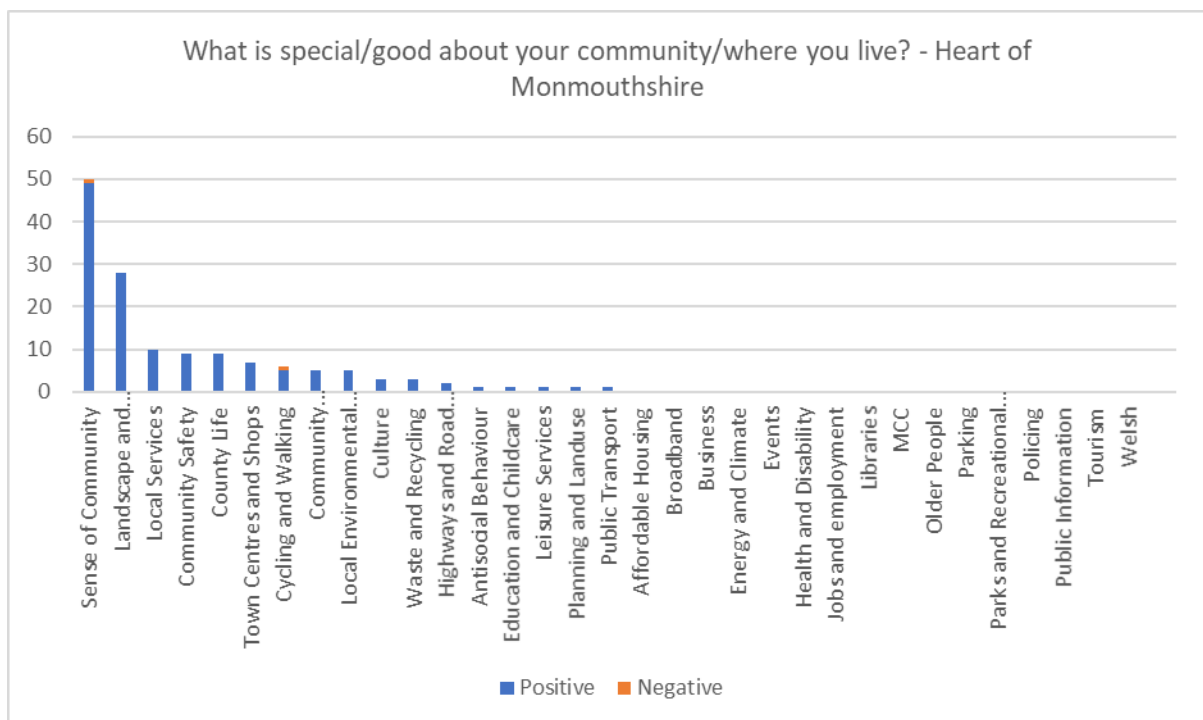
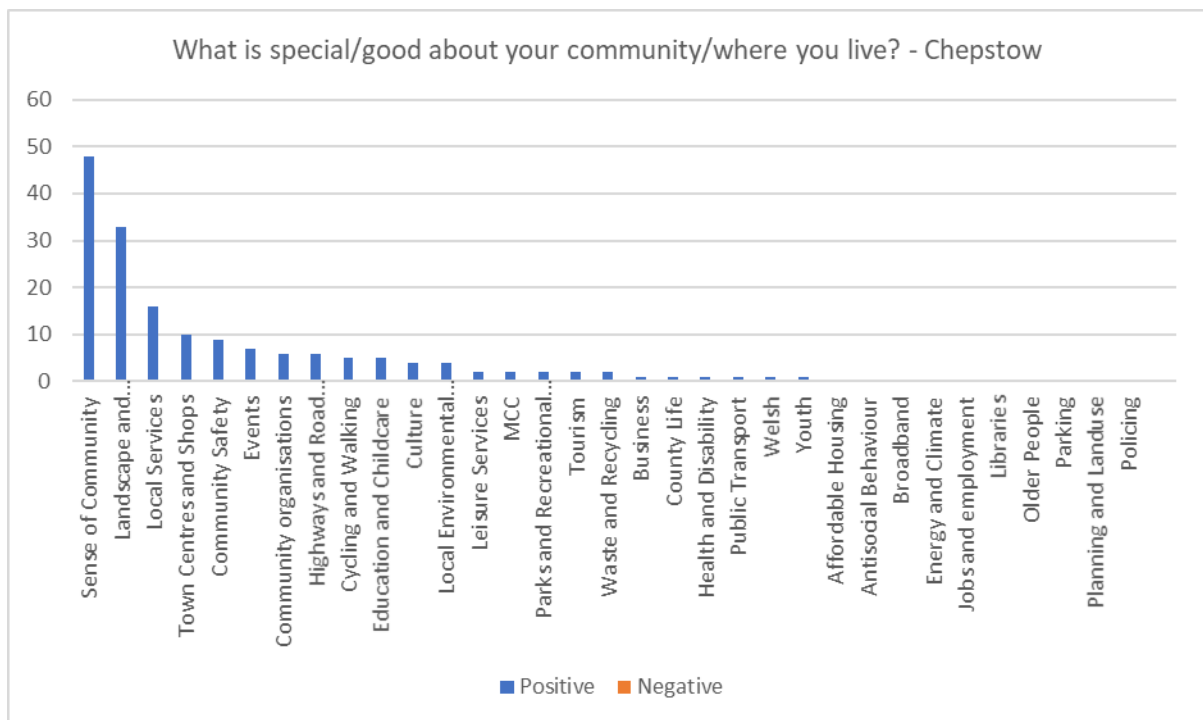
responses: many respondents were keen to see a thriving high street with a high variety of shops that encourages people to shop locally.

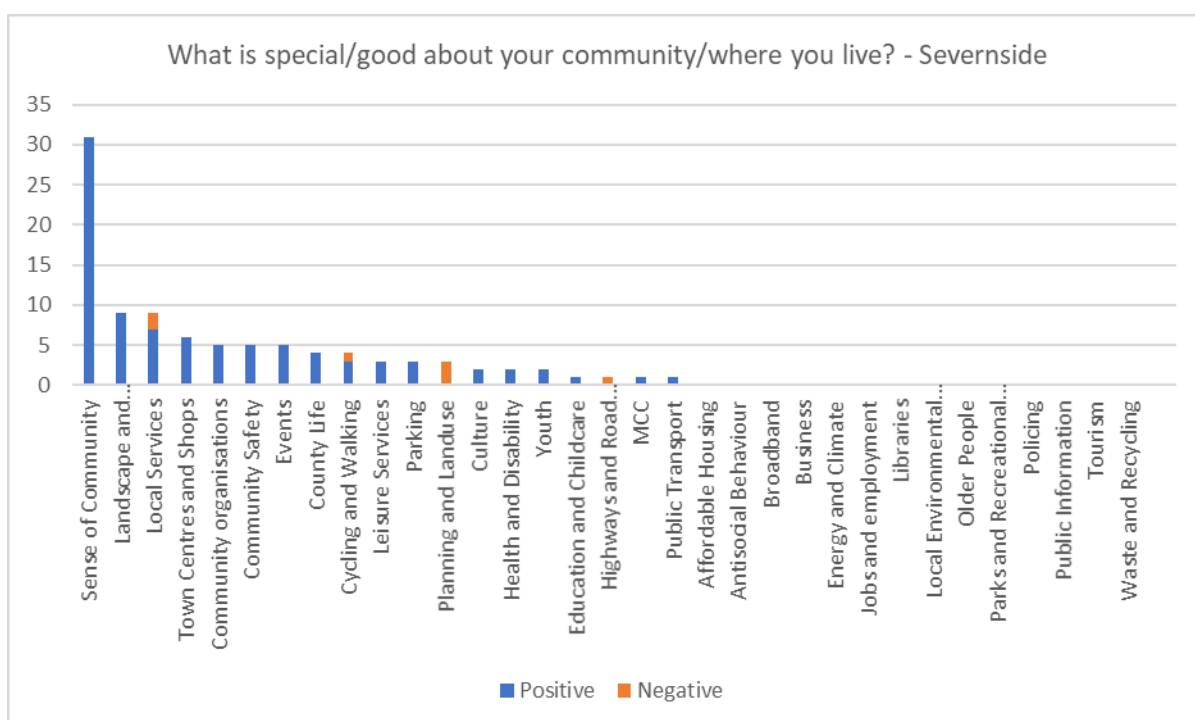
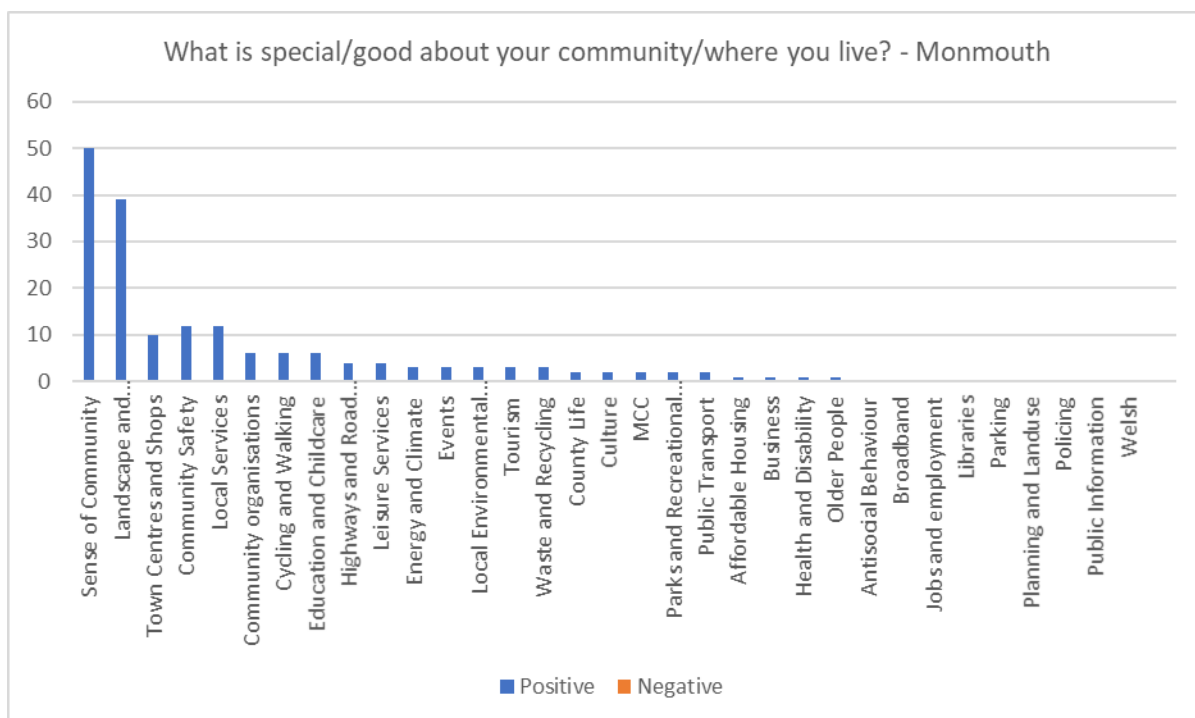
**Five Local Monmouthshire Community Areas**

A breakdown of responses by the five local community areas in Monmouthshire is provided. There was variation in the total number of responses received in each area. This breakdown shows that some of the well-being issues raised vary by location, with some issues being more prevalent in some areas than others.

**Question 1. What is special/good about your community/where you live?**

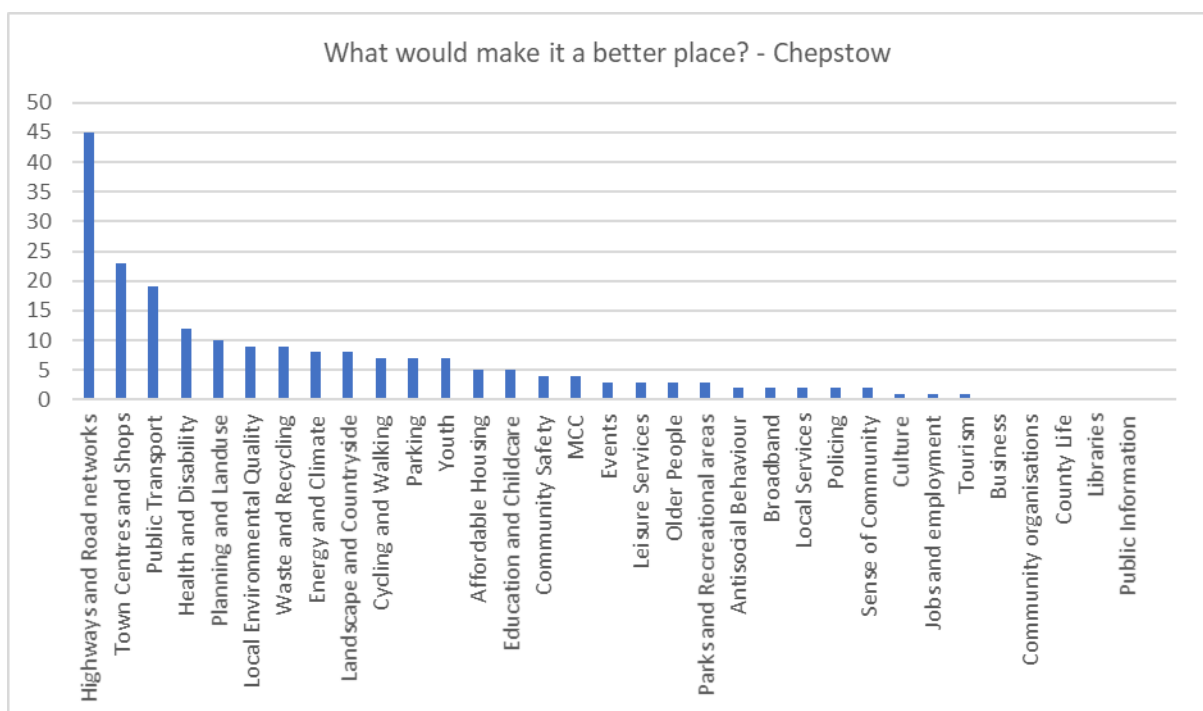
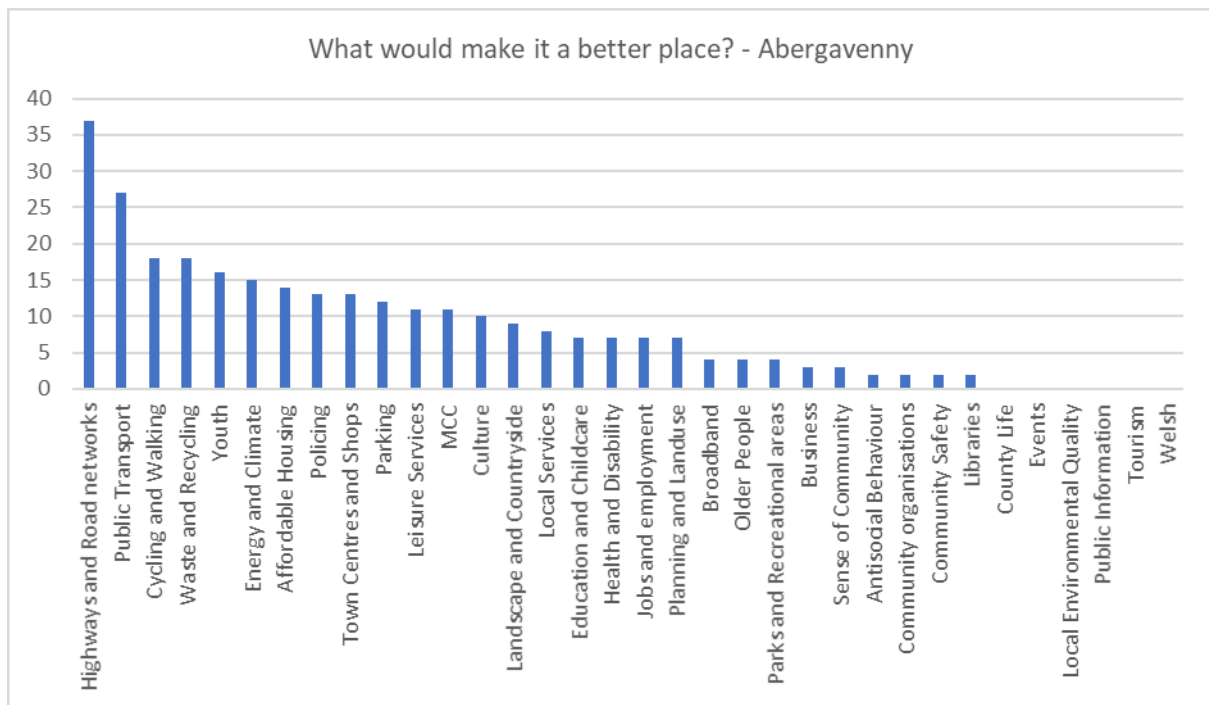


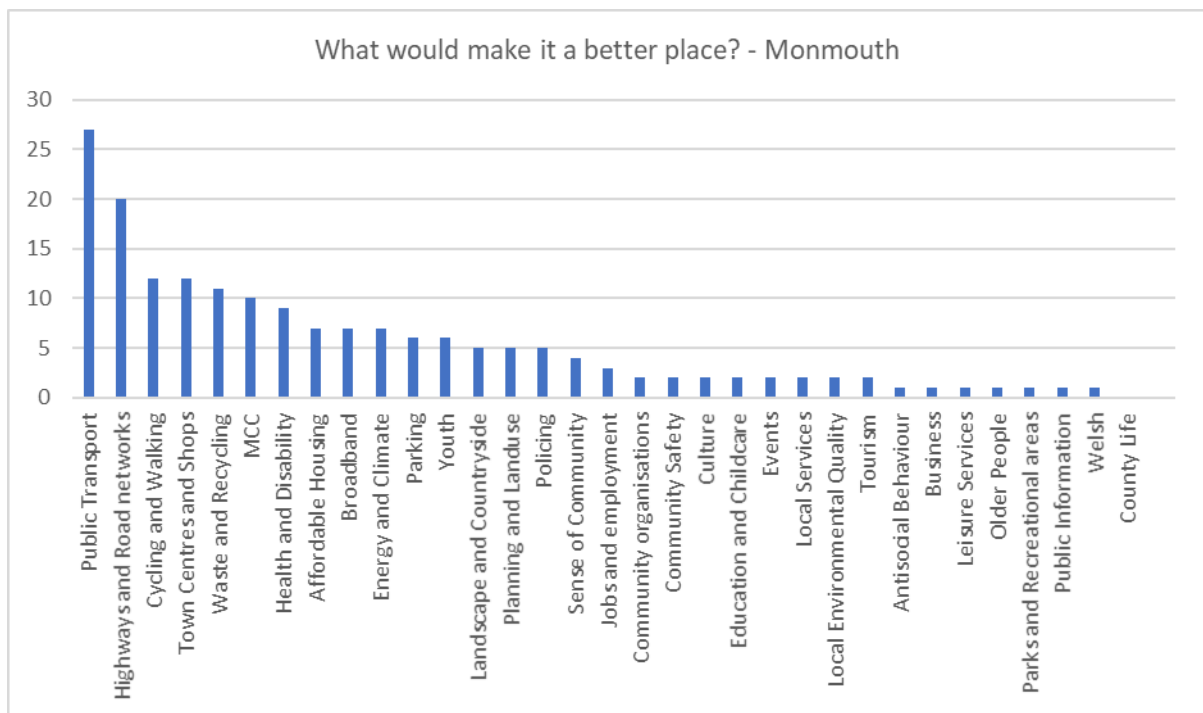
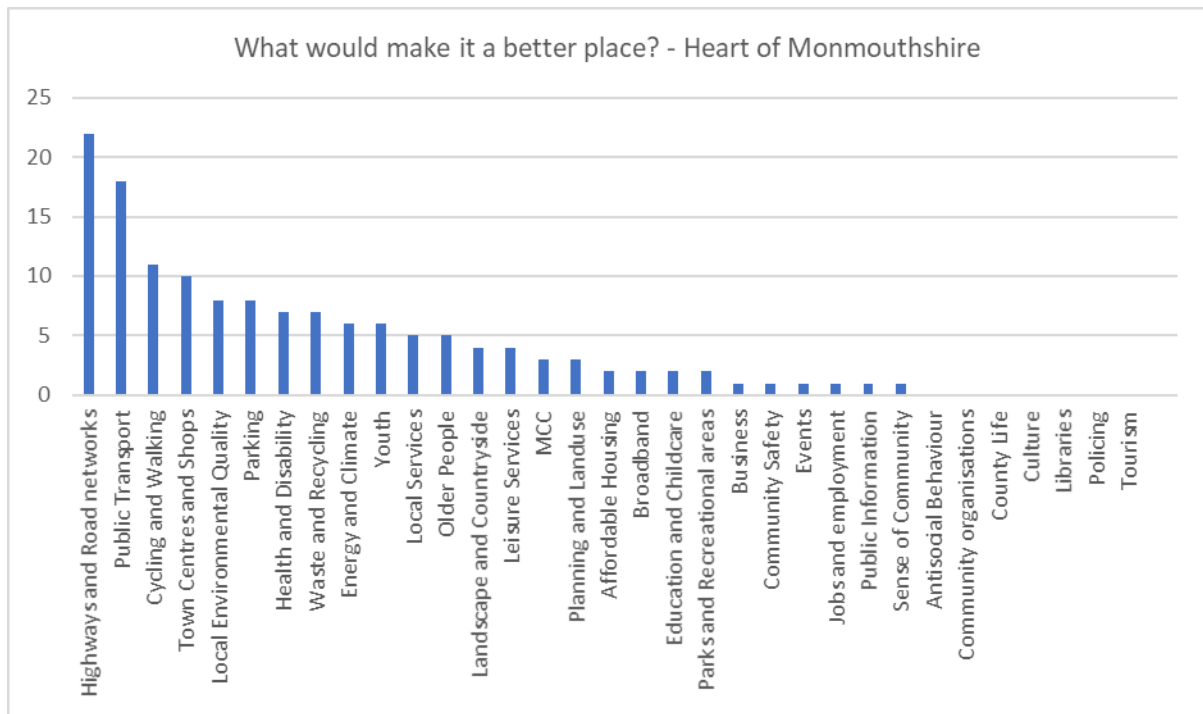


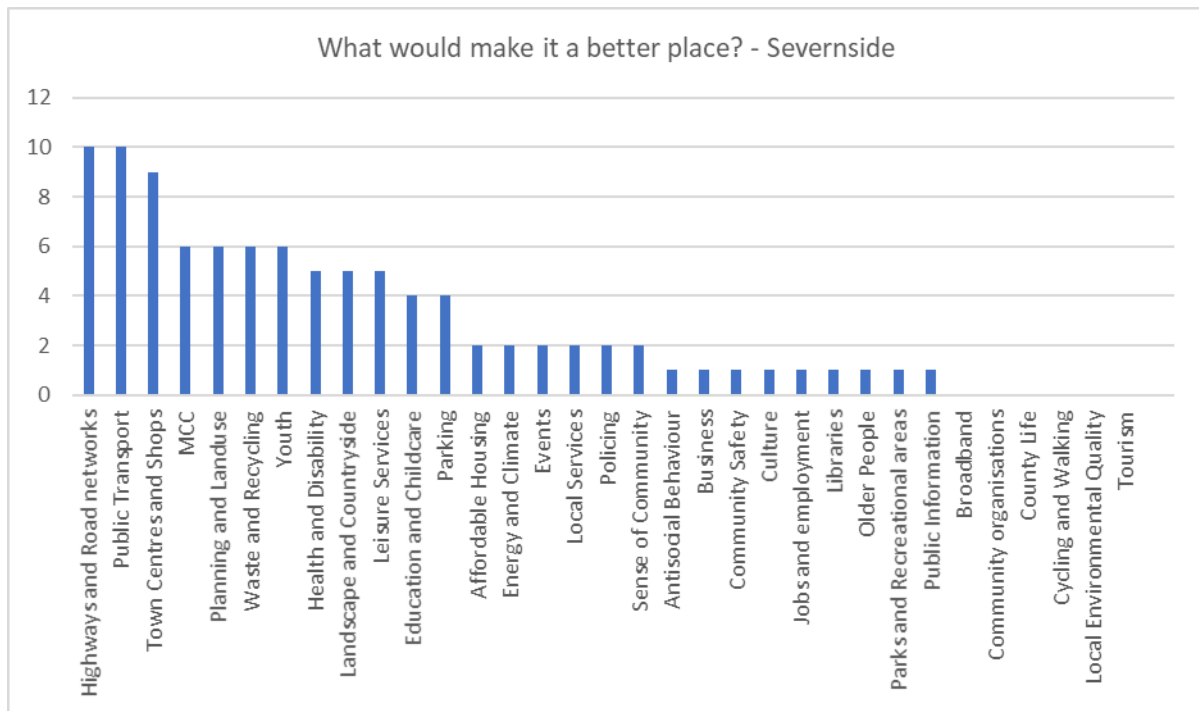


Across the five areas, as seen in the Monmouthshire analysis, both Sense of Community and Landscape and Countryside were the most frequent themes. Local Services, Community Safety and Town Centres and Shops were also amongst the most commented themes. Whilst the vast majority of comments were positive, there were some differing concerns raised within the respective areas on issues such as Highways and Road networks, Local Services, Planning and Land use, and Town Centres and Shops.

## Question 2. What would make it a better place?







Responses covered a wide range of categories. Most of the categories with a higher number of responses in the five local areas were consistent with Monmouthshire overall. These include Highways and Road Networks, including comments on speeding and traffic issues. The Public Transport category contained many references to transport links and affordability, including bus and/or train services available, and the Town Centre and Shops comments tend to focus on having a greater variety of shops available locally.

There were some variations in issues raised within areas, for example, in the Abergavenny area Cycling and Walking was amongst the most prominent issues. In the Chepstow area, Highways and Road Network and Town Centres and Shops featured particularly prominently in the responses.

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