

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



# Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Assessment



# Version Control

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A summary of this full Well-being Assessment is also available. To see view the summary document, see [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire)

We're interested to know if we have reflected the main issues facing current and future generations and welcome comments and feedback. Responses should be received by Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. You can complete the questionnaire at [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire) or get involved on twitter using the hashtag #OurMonmouthshire. You can also share your thoughts on [Monmouthshire Made Open](#).

Alternatively, written comments can be sent to:

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or e-mailed to [improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:improvement@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

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# Introduction

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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.

This well-being assessment has been produced following an extensive engagement with people and groups across Monmouthshire. It 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 assessment is currently in draft form. It has been based on extensive engagement, however with such a big exercise there is still a chance the assessment may not have captured all of the issues. We are interested people's views on it and are consulting between 17<sup>th</sup> January to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. In particular:

1. Have we identified the most important issues that reflect economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in Monmouthshire?
2. Have we accurately reflected well-being in the five local areas?
3. Do you agree with the conclusions that have been drawn?

You can share your views at <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire> or [www.monmouthshire.madeopen.co.uk](http://www.monmouthshire.madeopen.co.uk)

The assessment will be signed off by the Public Service Board at the end of March 2017. The PSB will then use the assessment to develop a set of well-being objectives for Monmouthshire. These will be published as part of the Well-being Plan in spring 2018.

# Context

## The Well-Being of Future Generations Act

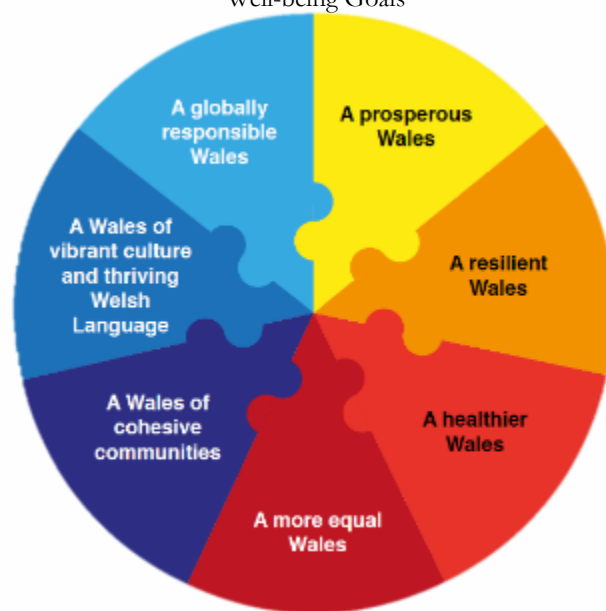
In April 2016 Welsh Government introduced The Well-being of Future Generations Act. This ground breaking piece legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our nation, our county and the communities that make it what it is.

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 change of creating a place that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

To make sure that public services are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals which you can see in Figure 1.

The public bodies that are bound by the Act need to set their own well-being objectives by 31 March each year. They must also come together as a Public Service Board and set well-being objectives for the county as a whole. This is done every five years with the first set being produced in spring 2018.

Figure 1: Well-being of Future Generations Act: Well-being Goals



## The Public Service Board

The four statutory members of the Public Service Board, or PSB, are the Local Authority, Local Health Board, Fire and Rescue Authority and Natural Resources Wales. Other organisations are also invited, in Monmouthshire this includes Gwent Police, Monmouthshire Housing Association, Melin Homes and voluntary organisations represented through the Gwent Association of 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 Monmouthshire Public Service Board's first well-being assessment and it will describe well-being in the county based on a broad range of evidence.

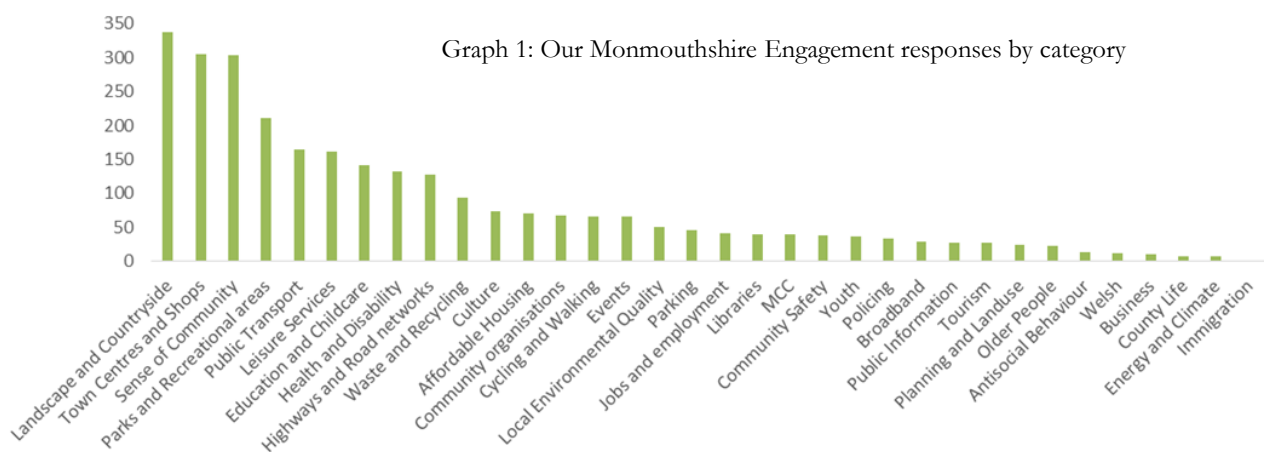
## The Well-being Assessment: Our Approach

The Public Service Board is required to prepare and publish an assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area no later than a year before it publishes its local well-being plan<sup>1</sup>. This gives us the evidence on which the PSB will make decisions about what it needs to prioritise.

The assessment captures the strengths and assets of people and their communities rather than focusing purely on need. An asset based approach recognises the contribution of individuals, community organisations and the importance of relationships. Rather than a purely data driven approach the assessment is built from an extensive range of sources including census and statistical data; qualitative evidence which captures people’s opinions and perceptions as well as giving context to quantitative data and academic research. We also make comparisons with other geographies, sometimes within the county and sometimes at a regional or national level.

Collaboration is an important principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and so we worked with other PSBs in the Gwent area to ensure that there was some consistency in the data we used as many of the partners involved such as Gwent Police and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board span all five council areas in Gwent. Data Unit Wales were commissioned to produce a set of core data items and this was supplemented locally with data from a wider range of sources. You can see these data throughout the report and there is a compendium of key items shown at appendix 1.

These were used as part of an extensive community engagement exercise to test whether the data reflected peoples’ lived experiences – we called this *Our Monmouthshire*. Between August and December 2016 staff from a range of public services in Monmouthshire attended over 80 events speaking to more than a thousand people to get their views about what is good about Monmouthshire and what would make it better. Visual displays including maps and future trends postcards were used to help people to think about how they would like Monmouthshire to be in the long term and to frame the questions within a broad context. The chart below shows the topics that people mentioned most often. You can see a full summary of our approach to engagement and the issues people were talking about at appendix 2 and a summary of responses in Graph 1.





Involving people from as wide a cross section of the community as possible has been important as part of working towards a more equal Wales. The Older People’s Commissioner for Wales<sup>2</sup> and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales have both stated the importance of ensuring that the voices of older and younger people are heard, so efforts were made to ensure that we involved young<sup>3</sup> and old and people with protected characteristics<sup>4</sup>.

Academic reports and policy papers were identified and key messages drawn out to help understand some of the broader issues and opportunities. The assessment also includes some predictions of likely future trends in the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the area using a range of national research and local intelligence.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act emphasises the importance of working in an integrated and joined up way. Although this well-being assessment is structured around economy, society, environment and culture, it is important that issues or problems are not dealt with in isolation. For example, the environment can have a positive or negative impact on health, and culture and heritage can contribute significantly to the economy.

The following matrix, figure 2, shows how the themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals:

	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							
Worklessness and inequality							
Education and skills							
Health and Well-being							
Transport and access to services							
Isolation							
Child Development							
Emotional Health							
Ageing Well							
Population Needs Assessment							
Landscape and Countryside							
Air and Water Quality							
Climate Change							
Waste and Recycling							

Language					Dark Red	Dark Blue	Blue	
Faith and Religion					Dark Red	Dark Blue	Blue	Light Blue
Landscape and Heritage	Yellow	Orange	Red			Dark Blue	Blue	Light Blue
Community and Social Action	Yellow		Red			Dark Blue		
Cultural Attractions	Yellow						Blue	
Sport and Leisure			Red				Blue	

Figure 2: Themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals

## 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.

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>5</sup>.

This is really important to make sure 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

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## Overview of the county

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 92,476<sup>6</sup>.

It is a predominantly rural county. 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 AONB 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.

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. There are a higher than average proportion of older people in the county and these are forecast to rise further. In contrast the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2036.

Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous area offering a high quality of life for its residents. This is reflected in the 2014 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation with none of the lower super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 20% in Wales<sup>7</sup>. However, as is highlighted elsewhere in this assessment these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when they are juxtaposed with areas of relative wealth.

# Economy

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## Jobs and Employment

The strength of the local economy is an important contextual measure of well-being. Monmouthshire is often perceived as a relatively affluent area and indeed on many measures it is. A higher proportion of people of working-age are economically active than most other parts of Wales with less people claiming out-of-work benefits. The county has a large proportion of residents in managerial, professional and technical professions which is borne out in wages. With an average salary of £32,557 per year residents earn well above the British average. The county also performs well in terms of gross value added and business start-ups.

There are over 4,000 active businesses in the county, per head of working age population this is higher than any part of Wales or UK regions outside of London and the South East.<sup>8</sup> While there are a lot of start-ups they tend to be micro-enterprises, these are a vital part of our economy, however they offer fewer opportunities for the wider population<sup>9</sup>. We do acknowledge that businesses have had little involvement in the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement process, so there may be specific view of business that have not been able to inform this section.

These headline measures mask some clear disparities. Some 34% of our working population commute out of the county to earn a living and distances travelled to work are relatively high. The wages on offer in Monmouthshire are some 10% below the UK average and only marginally above the average for Wales<sup>10</sup>. The largest employment sectors inside our borders include health and social work, wholesale and retail, manufacturing and tourism and food. These are all sectors that tend to suffer from low pay. Tourism plays a significant part in the Monmouthshire economy particularly in assisting the diversification of the rural economy.

Tourist expenditure amounted to £186.64M supporting 2,744 full-time jobs. As many as 82% of these jobs were generated directly through visitor expenditure, with the remaining 18% being supported through the supply chain and further rounds of expenditure within the economy including employee spend. Tourism spend supports the most employment in the accommodation and food & drink sectors. In addition, a significant number of self-employed people in Monmouthshire earned a living from tourism.<sup>11</sup>



Monmouth Town Centre

Some programmes are already in place to address this, for example Abergavenny is now part of a ten-country funded EU network called Agri-Urban to share best practice in the field of agricultural food production and digital innovation<sup>12</sup>. This has the potential to increasing competitiveness and create more jobs in the food sector. Retail is also a major employment sector in Monmouthshire. The number of vacant units within a town centre is often considered as an indication of how well a town is trading. Overall vacancy rates within the Monmouthshire have risen since the low level recorded in 2005, however, more recently there has been a decline in vacancy levels. Trend data across the main towns is shown in Table 2<sup>13</sup>.

Vacancy Rates	Abergavenny	Caldicot	Chepstow	Monmouth	Usk
2000	6.6	8.9	15.6	8.9	7.0
2002	7.9	5.7	15.5	9.5	7.0
2003	7.1	4.3	13.8	9.9	7.0
2005	4.1	4.3	9.7	6.1	12.3
2006	6.7	2.9	8.5	5.1	6.6
2007	6.9	1.4	8.5	8.9	14.5
2008	8.6	7.2	12.8	6.7	11.1
2009	6.6	6	11.9	5	10.0
2010	6.9	4.5	11.3	7.9	16.9
2012	7.3	11.9	12.4	6.1	8.5
2013	7.7	10.1	12	7.3	10.9
2014	5.1	9.2	8.8	8.3	7.8
2015	5.8	7.6	10	7.9	11.1

Table 1: Town centre Vacancy rates

Latest data shows over 3,000 businesses in the County have rateable premises. Recently draft business rates revaluations have been undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency, with 65% of rateable values increasing some by significant amounts. Some businesses have raised concerns about being able to cope with these increases and the impact it could have on business, enterprise and job opportunities. Liaison on business rates between business representatives, the council, officials of the Valuation Office Agency and Welsh Government is ongoing.

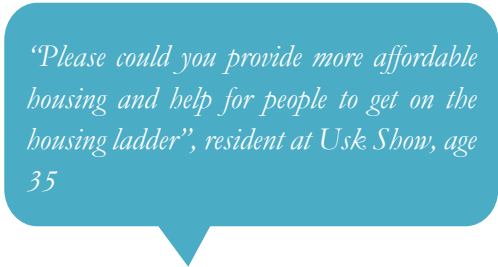
There are over 70 hectares of employment land available for future development in the county. The majority of this is in Magor linked to the M4 corridor with the Local Development Plan indicating a shortage of sites in other areas. There has historically been a slow uptake of development land

It's important to remember that for many people local authority boundaries do not equate to their own sense of local place for example, people think about job opportunities within a certain travel to work area. Challenges and opportunities to economic well-being need to be recognised not only in the context of the Cardiff Capital Region but also Bristol and the south west.

Transport has a significant impact on economic prosperity. Limited public transport means that many people are dependent on private cars to get to work<sup>14</sup>. This presents challenges for young people who often face higher insurance costs. Severn Bridge tolls also impact disproportionately

on residents in the south of the county as it can restrict access to the job market in Bristol and the South West.<sup>15</sup> The Cardiff Capital Region is likely to be the fulcrum of transport improvements in South East Wales with significant investment earmarked for the metro scheme. The proposed development of the M4 relief road has the potential to shorten commute times for those travelling outside the county for work, it will also have significant implications for communities in the south of the county affected by the development.<sup>16</sup>

Feedback from residents highlights a number of concerns about employment. This is closely related to concerns about the affordability of housing. At an average of £218,000 Monmouthshire house prices are amongst the highest in Wales and also above the UK level. This creates challenges for people who live and work locally and in turn could impact on the long-term viability of some communities which could become dormitory villages for commuters who work, enjoy leisure time and shop elsewhere. The problem is particularly acute for young people who are more likely to be out of work and once in work will be at the early phase of their careers where earnings are likely to be lower.



*“Please could you provide more affordable housing and help for people to get on the housing ladder”, resident at Usk Show, age 35*

Superfast broadband has become a standard requirement for businesses operating in the digital age. Poor internet connectivity is seen as a key barrier to economic growth in rural areas. Three years ago take up and availability in Monmouthshire was low. Since then, superfast wireless broadband services have been made available to at least 36,400 premises and there is an increased uptake with Monmouthshire’s figures now standing at 19.8%. The majority of businesses now have access to superfast broadband which presents them with further opportunities, although there remain a small number of properties in “not –spot” areas who do not have access to superfast broadband.

An analysis of the digital maturity of businesses in the county found the majority of small and medium sized enterprises, or SMEs, are classed somewhere between Novice Entrants and Value Orientated Players with some Growth Focused Players and Digital Experts.

Broadband is clearly about more than the needs of business, children require full access to a quality internet connection to ensure successful home learning and it allows households to access a variety of services and more competitive prices for things like utilities and shopping. Monmouthshire residents have high demand for broadband services. Ofcom figures indicate a 74% adoption rate in comparison to 72% in neighbouring Torfaen and Newport and Powys at 66%. There remains a significant skills issue exists in the county, 19% of Monmouthshire households don’t have internet access and 20% (approximately 14,363) adults in Monmouthshire don’t use the internet.

## Worklessness and Inequality

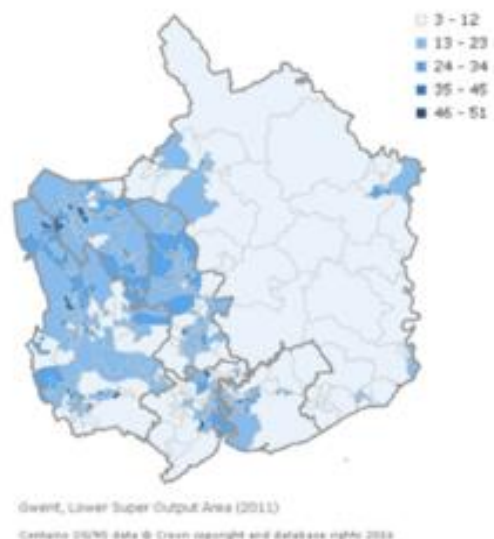
Rural communities can be more prone to poverty than urban areas. The things that contribute to this include the poor access to employment opportunities, low pay, a lack of affordable housing and social isolation. The prevalence of low paid and fragile employment contributes to the risk of in-work poverty while infrequent public transport means that it can be difficult for those without private transport to travel for work. A lack of affordable and available childcare in rural areas and limited access to the internet are also seen as barriers to employment.<sup>17</sup> Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) is currently conducting research into what works in tackling rural poverty.

Unlike neighbouring local authority areas, and indeed Wales as a whole, Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the percentage of children living in workless households rising from 4.9% in 2009 to 6.6% in 2015. However this is still much lower than the Wales average of 13.6% and neighbouring areas of Gwent where the figure ranges from 14.7% to 21.7%. 14.2% of children in Monmouthshire live in low income households. Where poverty exists in the county it can be all the more stark where it features alongside significant affluence. Figure 1 shows that while poverty is not as pronounced as in neighbouring counties there are still pockets of income deprivation. There are four foodbanks in the county including one in Monmouth – often perceived as a wealthy area.<sup>18</sup>

Work carried out by the Public Policy Institute for Wales shows that expansion of jobs in sectors characterised by low pay is unlikely to have a significant impact on wages and in-work poverty unless there are improvements in the levels of pay they offer. When policies are explored to address the findings of this assessment it is important that they focus not only on creating more jobs, they must be the right type of job. The so called gig economy where people get paid for individual tasks rather than regular employment and the rise of zero hours contracts mean that while people may be in work they are not necessarily able to get out of poverty. Of particular importance is what could happen in the coming years and what that means for the well-being of future generations.

One area where Monmouthshire stands out as significantly worse than neighbouring areas is the difference in earnings between men and women with the latter having a median wage some £126 below male workers in 2014-15. While this problem is not unique to Monmouthshire it is significantly worse here than in neighbouring local authority areas and Wales as a whole where the average gap is £87. At this point in time the reasons behind this are not fully understood and will need to be explored further.

Figure 3: % Population in Income Deprivation, 2013-2015



A further difference in earnings is likely to emerge between generations. Millennials, those currently under 35s, are at risk of being the first generation to earn less over their lifetime than their parents and be less likely to own their own home.<sup>19</sup>

Research has shown a strong correlation between things such as life expectancy, mental health and crime levels and how equal a society is with more equal countries having much better outcomes<sup>20</sup>.

## Education and Skills

Monmouthshire has 31 LEA funded primary schools including two Welsh medium primary schools, four secondary schools, one special school and a pupil referral unit. Pupils at Monmouthshire’s state schools perform well above the Wales average at foundation phase and key stages 2. This is broadly in line with where they would expect to be when the socio-economic factors are taken into account. There is a tailing off of performance at key stage 3 as shown by the following charts. The challenge is to identify how good performance in primary can be maintained through KS3 and KS4<sup>21</sup>.



Graph 2: Percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Core Subject Indicator

Key stage 4 attainment is above the Wales average with 67.0% of pupils achieving the level 2 threshold of 5 good GCSEs including English or Welsh and Mathematics. Following significant progress the rate of improvement has slowed in comparison to other Welsh Local Education Authorities when measured over the past three years.

There is a significant gap in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not eligible at Key Stage 4. This gap has not narrowed markedly and over the last 5 years there has only been a 6 percentage point increase in the cohort’s performance compared to a 12 point increase for non-free school meals pupils.

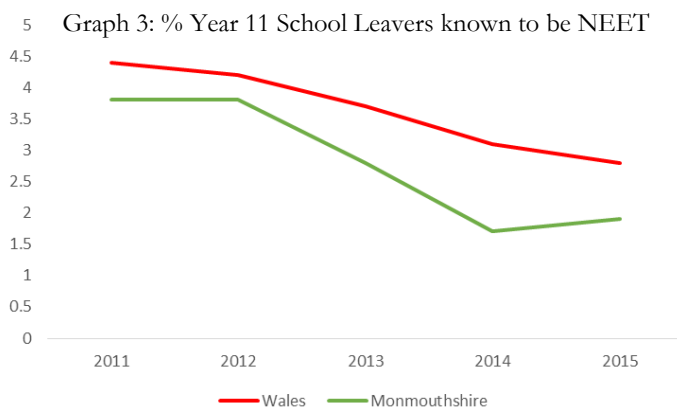
The educational attainment of those known to social services is significantly lower than the all pupils figure achieving the level 2 threshold of 67.0% of the wider cohort. The gap in attainment tends to increase as pupils move through key stages suggesting that if the right solution could be found then earlier intervention could go some way to reducing this disparity. As things stand



this group will find it harder to succeed in the employment market further impacting on their life chances.

There is no in county Welsh medium secondary provision which is a barrier for parents considering a Welsh language education for their children. A further assessment of Welsh language is provided in the Culture section.

The percentage of Year 11 school leavers who are not in education, employment or training



(NEETs) in Monmouthshire has decreased and is 1.9%, lower than the rate across Wales. Reducing the chances of young people becoming NEET is important to make sure that all young people successfully move into immediate post- 16 education, employment or training and are supported in their learning to reach their potential beyond 16.<sup>22</sup>

The numbers of young people claiming out of work benefits is considerably lower than the Wales average and marginally below the Great Britain average. However some young people have reported that there are a lack of employment opportunities locally. There is a sense that this, alongside the high living costs in the county, is contributing to a brain drain as highlighted by this fifteen year old consulted during the production of this report.

*“I would stay until I move to university. I want to go where there are more job opportunities”, Monmouth resident, age 15*

A further challenge is whether young people are being equipped with the skills for a changing job market. Monmouthshire and Wales are part of a global economy and Wales Pisa, or Programme for International Student Assessment, results show the nation is lagging behind others in maths reading and science compared to countries like Singapore, Finland and Estonia.<sup>23</sup> The future of work is not certain, however analysts forecast significant changes brought about by computerisation and artificial intelligence affecting jobs like legal services and accountancy. This will have implications for inequality as those at the very top of the income distribution are less likely to be affected. There are also questions about whether the schooling system in the UK is equipping young people with the skills they need to thrive in the job market of the future.

41.6% of Monmouthshire population are qualified to NVQ level 4 or above which is higher than both the Wales and UK averages while the level of people without any qualifications also compares favourably.

It’s important to consider the contribution made by people of all ages to make Monmouthshire the place it is. The Older People’s Commissioner has carried out an extensive engagement work with older people on the issues that matter to them. This included the importance of ensuring

that they do not live in poverty. The contribution that older generations make to the local economy cannot be under-estimated, data for Monmouthshire shows that there does not appear to be a significant problem of unemployment amongst older people with 41.9% of people aged 50 and above in employment compared to 39.1% for Wales as a whole<sup>24</sup>. Employment opportunities for older people was not raised as an issue during the engagement work carried out in the preparation of this assessment and it is recognised that these headline figures can sometimes conceal more localised issues.

# Society

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

## Health and Well-being

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.

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 areas, 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.

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 20%. However, social deprivation and in particular access to services shows high deprivation levels are widespread across rural areas of Wales, including Monmouthshire<sup>25</sup>.

80% 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>26</sup>. Healthy lifestyles contribute towards good health and improved well-being and results from the Welsh Health Survey shown in Table 1<sup>27</sup> show Monmouthshire compares with the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area and Wales as a whole.

<b>Table 2: Healthy Lifestyle Indicators</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Gwent</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Percentage of adults who reported being physically active on 5 or more days in the past week	30%	28%	31%
Percentage of adults who reported drinking above guidelines on at least one day in the past week	46%	40%	40%
Percentage of people who report being a current smoker	18%	21%	20%
Percentage of adults who reported eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables the previous day	35%	29%	32%
Percentage of adults who were overweight or obese	53%	61%	59%
Percentage of adults who were obese	19%	26%	23%

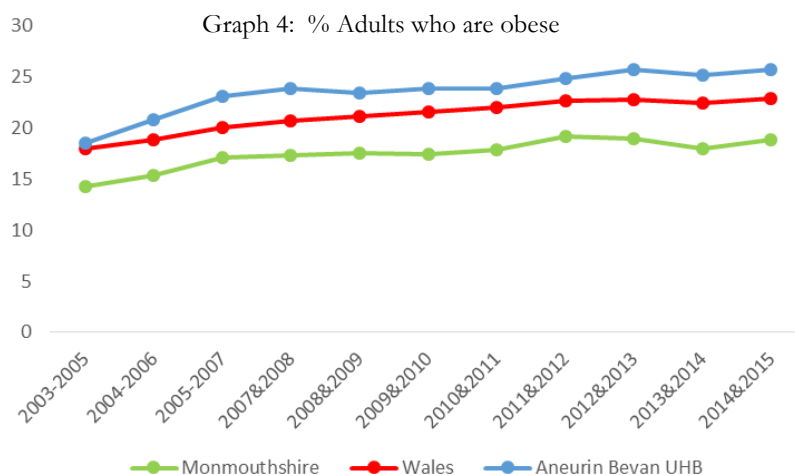
While the number of smokers in Monmouthshire is low compared to other areas it cannot be ignored. Children are particularly vulnerable to secondary smoke making them more susceptible to conditions triggered by second-hand smoke. There are correlations between smoking and deprivation and smoking is the largest single cause of ill-health and death in Wales with high costs to the NHS and the economy.

Monmouthshire has the highest proportion of adults in Wales who report drinking alcohol above the recommended guidelines on at least one day in the past week.<sup>28</sup> Alcohol misuse not only poses a threat to the health and well-being of the drinker, it can also cause harm to family, friends and communities. Alcohol related admissions to hospitals from Monmouthshire are amongst the lowest in Wales<sup>29</sup>. It seems likely that the problem is more hidden in Monmouthshire and could have less immediately visible effects including loss of productivity.<sup>30</sup>

Unhealthy lifestyle behaviors are linked to chronic diseases. However, regular exercise can reduce the risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer by up to 50% and lower the risk of early death by up to 30%. Research shows that physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing the risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

People’s lives are increasingly sedentary, partly as a result of technology making lives easier. Fewer people are doing manual work, and many jobs involve little physical effort. People aged over 65 are more likely to spend 10 hours or more each day sitting or lying down, making them the least active age group<sup>31</sup>.

The World Health Organisation reports that 74% of men and 64% of women in UK to be overweight (a Body Mass Index of between 25 and 29.9) or obese (BMI of 30 and above) by 2030. Currently over half of adults in Monmouthshire are classed as overweight or obese and Monmouthshire has an estimated 100 classrooms of obese children with 21.1% of 4 and 5 year olds in the county classified as overweight or obese<sup>32</sup>. Obesity harms children in the short term and between 55% and 80% will go on to become obese adults<sup>33</sup>. Obesity in childhood has been linked to a range of social and economic consequences in adulthood even once other factors are controlled for. Rising obesity levels amongst adults are shown in graph 4.



Obesity is the most potent risk factor for Type 2 diabetes. Public Health Wales warn of a Type 2 diabetes epidemic, across Wales rates of diabetes have increased from 5% in 2003/04 to 7% in 2015/16 with 7% of Monmouthshire residents currently being treated.

## Transport and Access to Services

The need for better public transport comes across clearly in the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement undertaken to help prepare this assessment. Many services such as hospitals, supermarkets and schools are in urban areas or designed to be accessed by car. Rural areas suffer from poorer public transport than urban areas, and it is often the elderly, the young and the unemployed who are most reliant on public transport. Overall 21.4% of areas in Monmouthshire are ranked amongst the most deprived areas in Wales for access to services.

15.2% of households in Monmouthshire have no car or van<sup>34</sup>. This is lower than the Welsh average of 23% but given the rural nature of Monmouthshire and the relatively further distances to travel to services, the impact of poor public transport on carless households is significant.

The report ‘A guide to analysing deprivation in rural areas’ by Welsh Government states that rural areas are more deprived in terms of *Access to Services* than more urban areas<sup>35</sup>. The difficulty of accessing services by public transport is evidenced in deprivation data, Table 3, which shows that Monmouthshire residents face longer average travel times to a variety of basic services for compared to those in Gwent and Wales

<b>Table 3: Average public travel time to Services<sup>36</sup></b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Gwent</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Average public travel time to food shop (minutes)	27	13	19
Average public travel time to GP surgery (minutes)	35	19	27
Average public travel time to primary school (minutes)	26	15	16
Average public travel time to secondary school (minutes)	48	30	35
Average public travel time to post office (minutes)	33	17	20
Average public travel time to public library (minutes)	49	28	35
Average public travel time to pharmacy (minutes)	40	21	27
Average public travel time to leisure centre (minutes)	60	37	41

Aside from difficulty in accessing and limiting choice of services, poor public transport limits people’s ability to travel for work and can lead to isolation of communities and groups of residents.

Vibrant town centres play an important role in the social and economic wellbeing of areas. The retail offer in the county’s main towns over recent years has reflected many of the development pressures and market changes experienced within retailing nationally. The continued decline of independent grocers, the pressures for out of town supermarkets, town centre redevelopments and proposals for non-food retailing have all been experienced within the county to a greater or lesser extent.

Resident’s views of town centres are generally positive although there are variations. In Abergavenny opinions over the old livestock market site are divided with some eager for the development to begin while others question the need for another supermarket. Generally in Monmouth, the vibrancy of the town centre and variety of shops was viewed positively although there were some calls for more affordable shops. In Caldicot the general consensus was that

there needs to be some regeneration of the town centre. At present the Town Team are working on proposals using the funding that was obtained following the development of the supermarket in the town

The rural nature of Monmouthshire and its road network have led to concern over ambulance response times, particularly to the most rural communities. The most recent data available on a local authority level for emergency responses shows that 50.3% of calls in Monmouthshire were responded to within 8 minutes, only Powys was lower with 50%. Further, 7.2% of calls took 30 minutes or more to respond to, Monmouthshire had the highest proportion of calls exceeding half an hour in Wales<sup>37</sup>. More recent data available for October 2016 for the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area tells us that 80.5% of emergency responses to red immediately life-threatening calls arrived at the scene within 8 minutes.

Hospitals with emergency care are located in the north of the county at Nevill Hall in Abergavenny, the south of the county at the Royal Gwent in Newport. Welsh Government has announced plans for a new 'super hospital' on Monmouthshire's border at Llanfrechfa Grange which is likely to bring changes to existing services when the new hospital opens in 2022.

The National Survey for Wales reports that 45% of Monmouthshire children travel over 1 mile to primary school and 80% of secondary pupils travel over 1 mile both higher than the Welsh average. Children who travel over a mile to school are far more likely to be driven to school which means they are missing the opportunity to benefit from regular exercise and to learn road safety. This also results in substantial costs for home to school transport for parents and the local authority.

Access to the internet can help alleviate some of the difficulties with accessing services. 79% of households in Monmouthshire have internet access<sup>38</sup>. The ONS 2016 report into internet access tells us that there has been an increase in daily internet access and that use of smart phones to access the internet has nearly doubled since 2011. The growth in use of smart phones is important to bear in mind when planning digital services.

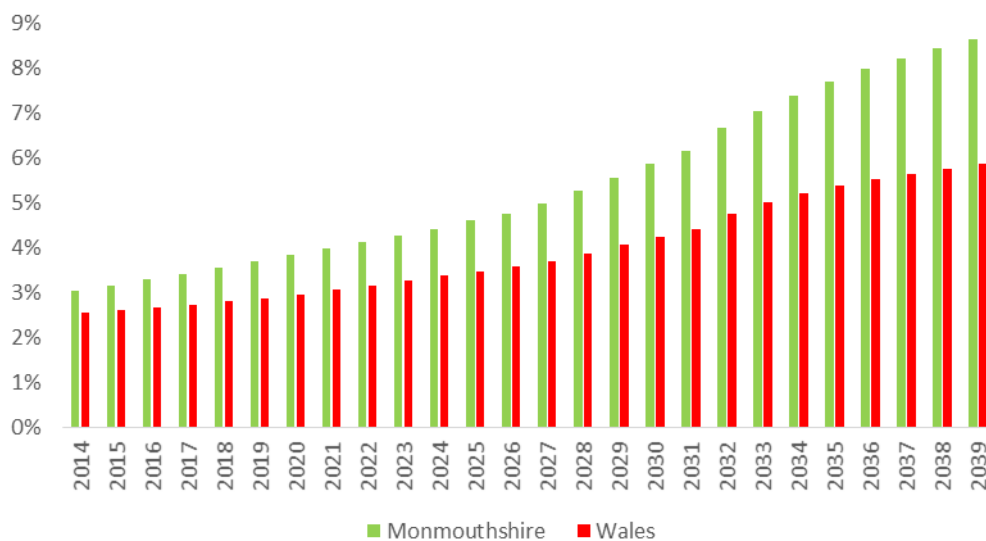
Internet access varies depending on household composition. Nearly all British households with children have an internet connection (99%). Access to the internet by single adult households varies considerably depending on age. For households with one adult aged 65 or over, only 53% had internet access. As well as the financial benefits that internet access bring, Age UK<sup>39</sup> identify "It can now be said that the weight of evidence shows that internet use helps older people combat social isolation and there is some good evidence of its positive effects on loneliness."

The Older People's Commissioner notes that 35% of people aged 50+ in Wales are digitally excluded<sup>40</sup>. Over time this will change and tomorrow's older people will be made up of digital natives who have grown up with this technology. For now public services need to be very mindful of digital exclusion.

## Isolation

An increasingly older population is the single most significant factor in the increasing prevalence of rural isolation. An ageing population is a feature of the UK and Wales but particularly in Monmouthshire. Currently 24% of the population of Monmouthshire is aged 65 and over and 3.1% is aged 85 and over.<sup>41</sup> Population projections show that Monmouthshire can expect the proportion of residents aged 65 and over to increase to 37% by 2039 and the population aged 85 is projected to increase to 8.7%, both above the rate for Wales, graph 5.

Graph 5: proportion of population aged 85+



5,515 people aged 65 and over in Monmouthshire live alone<sup>42</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 impact on rural isolation. An important factor is the closure of local village shops and services such as post offices which often act as community hubs and provide a place for daily interaction.

Age UK are clear that “Loneliness and isolation are not the same thing: the causes of loneliness are not just physical isolation and lack of companionship, but also sometimes the lack of a useful role in society.”

Almost nine out of every ten Monmouthshire residents agree they have a feeling of belonging to their local area<sup>43</sup>. This is one of the highest in Wales and is echoed by engagement findings with many positive comments made on the community spirit, friendly people and feeling of safety.

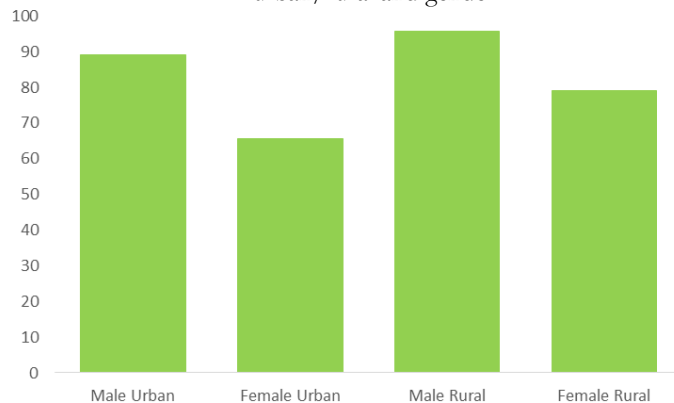
*“People are so friendly and helpful, I only came here for two years and have stayed 46”, 73 year old Raglan resident*

Monmouthshire County Council conducts a questionnaire of adult recipients of social care. Results from the questionnaire tell us that 53 % of people feel they can do the things that are important to them and 50% feel part of their community. The same questions were asked of

carers for adults where 33% people feel they can do the things that are important to them and 40% feel part of their community<sup>44</sup>.

The National Survey for Wales asked people across Wales whether they felt safe walking alone after dark. Graph 6 shows that generally males felt safer walking alone after dark than females and that people in rural areas felt than those in urban areas.

Graph 6: Feeling of safety walking alone after dark, by urban/rural and gender



## Housing quality

A report by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology on Housing and Health says that the quality of the home has a substantial impact on health; a warm, dry and secure home is associated with better health.<sup>45</sup> 45% of accidents occur in the home and cold homes are linked to an increased risk of a number of illnesses and diseases. The elderly are particularly at risk of health problems relating to accidents and excess cold in the home. Older people who have retired may also be financially vulnerable.

The report also concludes that although social sector housing has improved, less than 50% of private rented homes housing people on benefits in England and Wales were considered decent in 2008. 1.29% of Monmouthshire's population live in households with no central heating and 3.89% live in overcrowded households.<sup>46</sup>

The Public Policy Institute for Wales report into Rural Poverty in Wales says that people living in rural areas spend more, on average, on heating fuel than their urban counterparts. 42% of rural households in Wales experience fuel poverty (where more than 10% of the household expenditure is spent on heating a home to an adequate standard) compared to 22% in urban areas<sup>47</sup>. More homes in rural areas are reliant on the use of liquid gas petroleum and oil as they are not connected to the mains gas supply. In addition, rural houses are often older and larger than urban houses and less likely to have cavity wall insulation.

A 2008 study of Small Area Fuel Poverty Indicator for Wales<sup>48</sup> by the University of Bristol produced fuel poverty maps of Wales. In Monmouthshire, fuel poverty is highest in parts of Abergavenny and the larger rural areas including many small settlements such as Raglan, Skenfrith and Mitchel Troy.

## Community Safety and Crime

Crime in Monmouthshire is low compared to the five other local authority areas covered by the Gwent force and to Wales as a whole. In the twelve months to April 2016 there were 4117 recorded crimes in the county, a rate of 44.6 per 1000 population. Monmouthshire accounts for 10.9% of all crimes in the Gwent area. When compared with areas with similar demographic, social and economic characteristics which relate to crime Monmouthshire has a just above



average crime rate. Table 4<sup>49</sup> shows a breakdown of recorded crime in Monmouthshire and Table 5 shows total crime in Monmouthshire split by crime type.

<b>Table 4 – Recorded crime in Monmouthshire</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>Rate per 1000</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
Caldicot	707	877	40.21	21.3%
Chepstow	737	854	48.24	20.7%
Monmouth	955	1010	37.73	24.5%
Abergavenny	1584	1376	53.24	33.4%
Monmouthshire	3983	4117	44.70	100%

<b>Table 5: Crime type in Monmouthshire</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
Violence without injury	452	657	205	45.4	16.0
Criminal Damage & Arson	625	577	-48	-7.7	14.0
All other theft	586	513	-73	-12.5	12.5
Violence with injury	346	442	96	27.7	10.7
Vehicle Crime	414	367	-47	-11.4	8.9
Shoplifting	371	347	-24	-6.5	8.4
Burglary - Non dwelling	320	315	-5	-1.6	7.7
Burglary - Dwelling	209	220	11	5.3	5.3
Public Order Offences	186	199	13	7	4.8
Drug Offences	236	162	-74	-31.4	3.9
Other Sexual Offences	84	107	23	27.4	2.6
Misc Crimes Against Society	46	65	19	41.3	1.6
Bicycle Theft	35	43	8	22.9	1.0
Theft from The Person	17	35	18	105.9	0.9
Rape	37	35	-2	-5.4	0.9
Possession of Weapons	11	18	7	63.6	0.4
Robbery	7	11	4	57.1	0.3
Homicide	1	1	0	0	0.0
<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>3983</b>	<b>4117</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>3.4</b>	

There are links between substance misuse and crime such as domestic violence. Drug offences have decreased however, as referred to earlier Monmouthshire has a high proportion of residents drinking above recommended limits which can have implications for crime as well as health. Monmouthshire saw a 19.1% increase in domestic violence in the year to April 2016. Although there is a concern that domestic abuse – elder abuse in particular – is likely to be under-reported. Domestic abuse features in 26% of children receiving care and support from Monmouthshire social services and is the most prevalent parental factor<sup>50</sup>.

Anti-Social Behaviour or ASB can be anything from cold calling and poor parking to vandalism and nuisance neighbours. Incidents across Monmouthshire have decreased from 2,677 to 2,239 over the last year, a 16.4% reduction, as shown in table 6. This is the largest reduction across

Gwent where ASB incidents have also significantly reduced. Rates per 1000 population have reduced from 29.31 to 24.31 over the same period remaining the lowest rate in Gwent.

<b>Table 6: Anti-Social Behaviour incidents</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>Rate per 1000</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
Caldicot	578	550	25.25	24.6%
Chepstow	673	575	32.49	25.7%
Monmouth	548	453	16.92	20.2%
Abergavenny	878	661	25.57	29.5%
<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>2677</b>	<b>2239</b>	<b>24.31</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most common classification of ASB during the most recent period has been nuisance, accounting for 60% of all incidents. Personal incidents have accounted for 33% and Environmental incidents account for just 7% of all incidents. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent has recently consulted on a set of priorities, 80% of Monmouthshire residents who responded to the survey agreed that ASB should be a priority.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales<sup>51</sup> asks people about their experiences of a range of crimes in the past year. 61.5% of the public in Gwent agree that the 'Police deal with community issues'. Gwent's direction of travel is improving over the past four surveys and is now 1.3% better than the most similar group average and almost level with the national average of 61.8%. However a higher proportion of residents Gwent perceive that their risk of crime to be higher than residents elsewhere in England and Wales.

During *Our Monmouthshire* engagement a number of responses suggested that the police were not always visible on the streets. This is consistent with feedback received by the Police and Crime Commissioner who has suggested a high number of residents are raising this concern.

Looking to the future there are growing concerns about Cybercrime. There is no definitive explanation available of what it involves however it has links with harassment, child sexual exploitation/grooming and fraud. More emphasis needs to be placed into education and awareness of the issue. Policing this type of crime needs a very different approach to the routine patrols which people often associate with feeling safer in their community.

South Wales Fire and Rescue attended a total of 1038 incidents in Monmouthshire during 2015/16. Of those, the majority (454) were to automatic fire alarms, although this number has reduced by 16.5% compared to the previous year.

Crews attended a total of 209 fires during 2015/16. This is a declining trend and the lowest in the five years of available data. This is a rate of 22.6 per 10,000 population and almost half that of the rate across South Wales of 43.7. There were 7 fatalities and injuries from fires during the year and all of these were caused by accidental fires. The percentage of dwelling fires with no alarm fitted increased by 14% compared to 2014/15.

Fire and Rescue attended 114 road traffic incidents in 2015/16, an increase from 94 during 2014/15. The rate per 10,000 population is 12.3 and higher than the rate of 8.8 across South Wales. Monmouthshire consistently has a higher rate of road traffic incidents attended than South Wales for the five years of data available. Highest incidents numbers over five years are recorded in Llangybi Fawr (53), Llanover (48) and Raglan (39).

## 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 their outcomes and those of future generations.

Teenage pregnancy is strongly associated with the most deprived and socially excluded young people. Monmouthshire has a rate of 28.3 conceptions under the age of 20. This is far below the Welsh average of 40.3 and second lowest in Wales.

The health and lifestyle of a mother during pregnancy has a major influence on the unborn baby. Smoking during pregnancy is harmful to mothers and their unborn babies and can lead to longer term health problems for babies. The latest available data shows that in Wales, the proportion of mothers smoking during pregnancy was 16% in 2010, a fall from 22% in 2005<sup>52</sup>. Wales has also seen a decrease in the proportion of mothers drinking during pregnancy from 55% in 2005 to 39% in 2010.

Birth weight is an important determinant for future health where babies born weighing less than 2,500g are at increased risk of problems. Monmouthshire had 4.9% of low birth weight live single births in 2015 compared to the Welsh average of 5.6%<sup>53</sup>. Using data available at a smaller geographical area, it appears that the rates are higher in parts of Abergavenny – Mardy, Priory, Croesonen, Llanover.

Mind state that around one in five women will experience a mental health problem during pregnancy or in the year after giving birth. Depressed mothers may be less responsive to a babies attempts to engage and this may affect how babies and mothers bond. Failure to establish a close bond with one parent or carer can affect a child's development and behavioural outcomes.

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's Early Years programme for families with children less than four years of age. The programme's aim is to improve the life chances of our youngest and most disadvantaged young children. Core elements of the programme are: free quality, part-time childcare for two-three year olds; an enhanced health visiting service; access to parenting programmes; speech, language and communication support. The Monmouthshire Flying Start service is available to families in defined areas of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Chepstow and Caldicot. 200 children benefited from Flying Start nursery provision in 2015/16. Half of children on the Flying Start scheme reached or exceeded their development milestones at 3 years.

The Acorn project delivers evidence based parenting programmes, informal structured groups and drop in support and worked with a 241 families during 2015/16. Of those, 91% of parents

reported an improvement in parenting skills and 88% reported improved confidence in supporting their children after receiving Acorn Project support. 100% of parents reported an improvement in their child's development.

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 in order to work or to undertake training or education or to prepare for work.<sup>54</sup>

The Local Authority has a statutory duty under The Childcare Act 2006 to ensure there is sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents. Childcare in Monmouthshire has been assessed in January 2017, providing a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare in the area and identifies any gaps in the market and plans how to support the market to address them. The assessment concluded 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 and an Action Plan has been drawn up in order to address highlighted gaps and to reduce barriers to accessing childcare that have been identified<sup>55</sup>.

The main oral disease of childhood is dental caries (tooth decay) and like many other diseases it is associated with social deprivation. Dental caries is largely preventable. On average Monmouthshire children aged 5 have 1.14 decayed, missing or filled teeth, just below the Welsh average of 1.29. At age 12, the average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for Monmouthshire children is 0.6, below the Welsh average of 0.81 and third lowest in Wales.

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).

Exposure to ACEs can alter how children's brains develop. Children who experience stressful and poor quality childhoods are more likely to adopt health-harming behaviours for example smoking, problem drinking, poor diet and low levels of exercise. This can lead to increased risk of non-communicable diseases such as mental health illnesses, cancer, heart disease and diabetes later in life.

ACEs can also lead to individuals developing anti-social behaviours, impact their ability to gain qualifications and ultimately their contribution to the economy. Monmouthshire educational attainment for pupils who are receiving care and support from social services is significantly lower than all pupils' performance, a more detailed assessment of educational attainment is provided in the Economy section.

ACEs tend to be 'passed down' through families and lock successive generations of families into poor health and anti-social behaviour. There are long-term, inter-generational benefits from breaking the cycle. Preventing ACEs in future generations could reduce levels of substance misuse, incarceration, violence perpetration, unintended teen pregnancy high-risk drinking and poor diet.

Data for Monmouthshire is not available. However as figure 2 shows, 47% of adults in Wales suffered at least one ACE during their childhood, and significantly 14% suffered 4 or more.

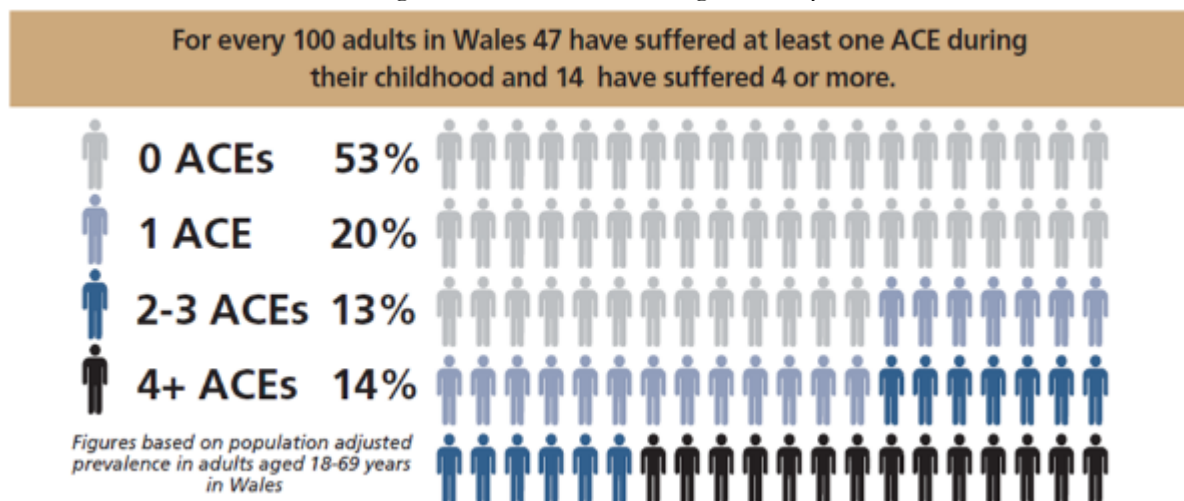


Figure 4: % of ACEs by Wales population

It is also known that those living in areas of deprivation are at greater risk of experiencing multiple ACEs. Prevalence of harmful behaviours increases with the number of ACEs experienced, even after accounting for socio-demographic. Table 7<sup>56</sup> shows how many times more likely people with 4 or more ACEs are than people with no ACEs to undertake certain activities.

ACEs have a major impact on the development of health-harming behaviours which can affect health across the life course. Their prevention is likely not only to improve the early years' experiences of children, but also reduce levels of health-harming behaviours throughout the life course, and across generations. Investment in the early years is crucial, as interventions can be more effective to address issues as early as possible in life.

Table 7: Number of times more likely people with 4 or more ACEs are than people with no ACEs to undertake certain activities	Number of times more likely
High-risk drinker	4
Had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy	6
Smoked e-cigarettes or tobacco	6
Had sex under the age of 16 years	6
Smoked cannabis	11
Victim of violence over the last 12 months	14
Committed violence against another person in the last 12 months	15
Used crack cocaine or heroin	16

## Emotional Health

Nearly a quarter of diseases in the UK can be attributed to mental health problems, a larger share than any other single health problem, including cardiovascular diseases (16%) and cancer (16%). 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, 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.

Mental well-being is measured using a Mental Component Summary (MCS) score<sup>57</sup>. Higher scores indicate better health. The average MCS score for Monmouthshire residents (50.6) is better than the ABUHB area (48.9) and Wales as a whole (49.4). This is consistent with high level data on deprivation, however the impact on those affected by it cannot be under-estimated.

Approximately 50% of people with enduring mental health problems will have symptoms by the time they are 14 and many at a much younger age, demonstrating that mental illness can affect people across the course of their lives.

There has been pioneering research in Wales into the association between of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and mental well-being within the adult population. This research was carried out by Public Health Wales in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University. Adults with 4 or more adverse childhood experiences were five times more likely to have low mental well-being than those with no ACEs.

Promoting well-being and preventing mental health problems is a crucial element of wider public health strategy, since a person's mental health influences and is influenced by a broad range of social, economic, cultural, environmental and wider health factors. An effective approach to population mental well-being includes a combination of interventions across the life course.<sup>58</sup>

According to the Mental Health Foundation 70% of children and young people experiencing mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions early enough<sup>59</sup>. A review of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which provides specialist mental health services to children and young people in Wales recognised the service was under pressure with an over 100% increase in referrals in four years. Many of the children and young people waiting did not need such highly specialised support. As a result a National Programme called Together for Children and Young People (T4CYP) was launched in 2015 to provide timely access for children.



*"Need better mental health services especially for children and young adults"*

*Chepstow resident, age 34*

Alcohol dependence is the most common form of substance misuse, but drug use also falls into this category. While most forms of substance abuse can provide a temporary feeling of well-being or of being in control, most ultimately damage health. Also to be considered is the harm caused to other individuals through substance and alcohol misuse. A pilot study conducted by the Public Health Institute at Liverpool John Moores University<sup>60</sup> found that 59.7% of adults in Wales had experienced harm from someone else's drinking in the previous year. Amongst other harms, these included, drink driving, concern for a child and physical assault. Parental substance

or alcohol misuse was present in one quarter of children receiving care and support from Monmouthshire children's social services.<sup>61</sup>

In the Aneurin Bevan area, there were 4,464 referrals to substance misuse services during 2015/16, exceeded only by Betsi Cadwaladr area<sup>62</sup>. Across Wales, The referral rate for men (1,048 per 100,000 population) was double that for women (508 per 100,000 population). Self-referrals accounted for 38% of the referrals (44.6% for all alcohol referrals and 37.2% for all drug referrals). The largest number of people referred were in the 30-39 age bracket (4,577 of 16,609 individuals)<sup>63</sup>

Depression is the most common mental health disorder in Britain, according to the Mental Health Foundation. The Rural Services Network<sup>64</sup> points at evidence that seems to suggest mental health is probably better in rural areas. 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. Farming is high pressure, with long hours, few days off and subject to market pressures. Those that develop mental illness in rural areas seem less likely to seek treatment compared to their urban counterparts.

Across the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area there were 151 formal admissions and 1,384 informal admissions of patients to Mental Health Facilities during 2015/16.

A census of patients in mental health hospitals and units in Wales with a mental illness shows 169 patients in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Of these, 63% were male. Across Wales a total of 1430 patients were recorded on the census, of which 56% were male. The majority of patients in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board were aged 18-44 (40%), in Wales generally, the majority were aged 65 and over (45%).

Many of these data sources are unavailable on lower geographical areas therefore it is difficult to understand the situation in Monmouthshire.

Latest data from ONS reports that the UK suicide rate was 10.9 deaths per 100,000 population or a total of 6,188 in 2015. Of the total number of suicides, 75% were male and 25% were female, the highest female suicide rate in a decade. In Wales between 2013 and 2015, the suicide rate was 12.3 deaths per 100,000 population. In Monmouthshire over the same period the rate was slightly higher than the rate in Wales, at 12.9. The number of suicides in Monmouthshire in 2015 was 16 and the highest since 2002.<sup>65</sup>

Self-harm is one of the top five reasons for medical admission in the UK and results in significant social and economic burden due to the impact on health services, particularly unscheduled hospital care. The UK has one of the highest rates of self-harm in Europe.<sup>66</sup> The true scale of self-harm is estimated to be 1 in every 130 people. The age and pattern of self-harm shows that young women aged 15-19 have the highest prevalence with some evidence of an increase in males over 85.

## Ageing Well

Monmouthshire's population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 61% and, more significantly, those aged 85 and over by 185% by 2039. All too often, when discussing an ageing population, the focus is on health and social care but it is a misconception that these are the only issues that matter to older people. Older people and their contribution to their communities are often undervalued.



Volunteer at Mardy Park

The Older People's Commissioner has highlighted that older people are a significant asset to Wales, worth over £1bn to the Welsh economy annually. The Commissioner goes on to say:

*“Many older people remain economically active past retirement age, participating in full or part-time employment and continuing to pay tax, volunteering and providing invaluable childcare services for friends and family. They have a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience and, provided with adequate services and facilities and infrastructure, they can continue to make a significant contribution to their communities and the wider economy”.*

Age UK report there can be strong community spirit in rural communities at the heart of which are many older volunteers; over 30 per cent of people aged 65 or older in rural areas volunteer at least once a year compared to 20 per cent of older people in urban areas. It was estimated by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action in 2015 that 63.3% of adults volunteered formally in Monmouthshire<sup>67</sup>, the highest in Wales. Further assessment of volunteering is provided in the culture section.

As the population ages, so too does the number of unpaid carers. There were approximately 5.8 million people providing unpaid care in England and Wales in 2011, an increase of 600,000 since 2001, which is an increase faster than population growth. The highest percentage increase in unpaid carers in Wales between 2001 and 2011 occurred in Monmouthshire<sup>68</sup>. Further, Age UK identify that the growth in number of carers is most pronounced in older carers.<sup>69</sup> These numbers will continue to grow as the population continues to age.

Older carers providing 20 or more hours of unpaid care a week report being in poorer health than non-carers of the same age, suggesting that the impact of providing a lot of care takes its toll on older people. 48% of carers aged 85 or over who are providing 20 or more hours of care a week say that they feel anxious or depressed.<sup>70</sup>

Monmouthshire County Council's survey of carers for adults reports that 33% of carers feel they can do the things that are important to them and 40% feel part of their community, both were



lower than responses from recipients of social care and support. This may suggest a detrimental effect of caring on the quality of life of 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 frequently found reason for hospital attendance<sup>71</sup>. Elderly fallers account for 10% of all 999 calls to the Welsh Ambulance Service<sup>72</sup>.

Monmouthshire has integrated health and social care teams with a mix of skill sets which aim to provide people with the most appropriate professional when needed. Hospital discharge workers aim to arrange care at home so that hospital patients are able to return home as soon as they are medically able. Between April and December 2016, there were 16 Monmouthshire residents delayed in hospital because social care arrangements had not been made to allow them to leave hospital<sup>73</sup>.

Reablement is a vital service delivered by the integrated teams over a six week period which aims to restore people back to independence at home after a fall or other crisis event. During 2015-16 Monmouthshire's reablement service supported 515 people, of which 52.5% were independent with no requirement for long term services at the end of reablement.

During 2015, dementia overtook heart disease as the leading cause of death in England and Wales, in part because people are living longer but also because of improved detection and diagnosis<sup>74</sup>. Dementia and Alzheimer disease mainly affect people aged over 65. With people living longer and surviving other illnesses, the number of people developing dementia and Alzheimer disease is increasing.

Daffodil Cymru projects an 87% increase in Monmouthshire's population aged 65 and over with dementia by 2035. This is above the increase projected across Wales of 72% and the second highest increase in Wales after Flintshire.

It becomes even more important to remain active in older age in order to stay healthy and remain independent. Engaging in physical activity carries very low health and safety risks for most older adults. In contrast, the risks of poor health as a result of inactivity are very high.<sup>75</sup>

Across Wales 24% of people aged 65 and over exercise 3 or more times a week, however 58% of this age group report doing no frequent physical activity<sup>76</sup>. In Monmouthshire, 29% of people aged 65 and over exercise 3 or more times a week. Further assessment of activity rates is provided in the culture section.

When asked about leisure and culture activities, half of Welsh residents aged 65 and over had visited the countryside in the past four weeks, 45% had visited the seaside or coast and 30% had visited a park or country park. This data is not available on a local authority level.

## Population Needs Assessment

As part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, a population needs assessment has been completed at a regional (Gwent) level. This document will not replicate all of the issues arising from the population needs assessment - instead both assessments should be read as complementary - some of the key issues however are detailed below.

Social services in Monmouthshire are facing challenges associated with an ageing population. A growth in the number of older people brings huge benefits but also places increased pressure on services as people require care and support later in life.

We anticipate we will be supporting more people across our county and we have invested in the support and training of the adult social care workforce so that we can support people with dementia to live well.

In the same way there will be a need to develop increased understanding and awareness of mental health in the community and to develop a primary mental health care pathway for young people.

More people will be taking on caring responsibilities for family or friends whilst perhaps ageing themselves. A new carer's strategy is in place to ensure that carers are identified and offered support.

Monmouthshire has low numbers of people in local authority funded residential care and a lower than average proportion of people requiring long-term care packages, in part because of the success of integrated working with health and reablement services, in place since 2008.

The approach to care at home has been re-modelled and is now based upon strong and trusted relationships rather than time and task based transactions and the council is working with private sector care providers to see if this approach could be adapted to work in a commercial environment.

Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the number of children who are looked after in recent years. There are some preventative solutions in place such as the Team Around the Family (TAF) that, over time, should reduce the number of young people who enter the care system. The most important thing is to ensure the best possible outcomes for all young people irrespective of the start they have had in life.

Work is ongoing, across all sectors, to develop a placed based approach, supporting individuals and communities by working together, sharing resources and developing a collective understanding of the needs and desires of the specific places we live and work within.

Our support is focused upon what matters most, helping people to live the lives they want to lead, doing the things they want to do, when they want to do them and with the people they want to be with.

# Environment

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Natural resources and ecosystems are at the heart of everything we do. 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. They also help us to reduce flooding, improve air quality and supply materials for construction. They provide a home for wildlife, give us iconic landscapes to enjoy and boost the economy through tourism.<sup>77</sup>

However, our natural resources 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

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is undoubtedly the 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 landscape is an integral element of the County's green infrastructure network, sustaining a range of social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits. Access to high quality landscapes and biodiverse green spaces contributes to social well-being and tourism in the county.<sup>78</sup> Landscape comprises of a unique blend of visual and sensory, ecological, historical, cultural and geological elements that have merged over time to create the landscape that we see today.<sup>79</sup>

The benefits of the natural environment and landscape for health and well-being are well documented, both physical health<sup>80</sup> and mental health.<sup>81</sup> Landscapes provide places and opportunities for access and enjoyment, enticing healthy lifestyles and reducing stress in all age groups. 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>82</sup> The *Our Monmouthshire* engagement highlighted landscape and countryside as being greatly valued. This is explored further in the Culture section later.

*"I was born in Abergavenny and love it here. Just to see the Sugar Loaf Mountain from my house, fills me with joy. It is a place of great beauty."*

*Abergavenny resident, aged 71*

Green infrastructure (GI) is a term used to refer to high quality natural and semi-natural areas, which together make a living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. Examples of this include trees, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, amenity grassland, woodlands, rivers and wetlands.<sup>83</sup> Using a Green Infrastructure approach helps to deliver a well- connected multifunctional network of high quality green and blue spaces and links that offer many benefits for both people and wildlife, by helping to improve social, economic and environmental well-being.<sup>84</sup>

People enjoy the landscape of Monmouthshire for many reasons, but often for its tranquillity.<sup>85</sup> Many people commented on the peace and/or quiet of the county (84 respondents to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement), which is directly linked to its rural character.



Cyclist on the Bloreng

The rural landscape of Monmouthshire also contributes to astronomy related tourism, with 5 sites in Monmouthshire registered as Dark Sky Discovery Sites for stargazing: Abergavenny Castle, Black Rock, Caldicot Castle & Country Park, Goytre Wharf and Skenfrith Castle.<sup>86</sup>

Landscape and countryside are also an important contributor to the economy in Monmouthshire. Welsh landscapes are worth £8 billion/year (with £4.2 billion from tourism).<sup>87</sup> As well as the natural environment, the historic and cultural landscapes are also important factors in bringing tourists into the area – this is explored more in the Culture section. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Monmouthshire economy, so it is clear that the unique Monmouthshire blend of landscapes has a significant contribution to make to economic well-being.<sup>88</sup>

Agriculture is an important part of the Monmouthshire economy which is both shaped by and shapes the natural environment. 77% of Wales' land area is currently used for agricultural production. The agricultural and food industry in Wales contributes £17.3 billion turnover and accounts for 170,000 jobs.<sup>89</sup> Data shows that there are 705 agriculture, forestry and fishing enterprises in Monmouthshire, 16% of the total number of enterprises in the county, the second highest number after “professional, scientific and technical”.<sup>90</sup> Census data shows that 2.8% of the population are employed in agriculture, food and fisheries.<sup>91</sup>

Forestry resources are also economically important for the county. Across Wales, woodlands provide £499.3 million of benefits, and produce 1.5 million tonnes of green timber per year.<sup>92</sup> However, there is a potential future timber shortage due to lack of planting 50 years or so ago and very little incentive economically to plant woodlands.<sup>93</sup>

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 also give an important indication of environmental well-being. Agriculture has a significant impact on environmental well-being, with the way farmers manage their land having a direct impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity, habitats and landscape.

Monmouthshire has large numbers of sites with local, national, European and international recognition of their value for wildlife and biodiversity. At an international level the Severn Estuary has international importance as it is designated by the United Nations as a Ramsar site for its importance for waterfowl, saltmarshes, fish feeding areas and tidal range. Named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands was signed, these sites are recognised as being internationally important. At a European level Monmouthshire boasts 7 Special Areas of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive, including estuarine, river, woodland and bat sites. There are 2 woodland National Nature Reserves of UK importance, 85 Sites of Special Scientific Interest important within Wales, 1 Local Nature Reserve of county importance and 589 locally important Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.<sup>94</sup>

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 in the north of the county, outside Abergavenny, parts of the county 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>95</sup>

However, despite these designations, there are still numerous threats to environmental well-being. It is important not to become complacent about our environmental assets, assuming that they are just “there in the background” and don’t need looking after or enhancing. The emphasis on prevention within the Well-being of Future Generations Act highlights the importance of acting now to prevent problems in the future and not just acting to tackle the immediate short term problems. So although the natural environment is seen as a strength and asset to the county, it is important that we act carefully to keep it that way.

This is especially important, since the State of Natural Resources Report for Wales shows how biodiversity in Wales is vulnerable to changes in habitat quantity and quality. These changes are directly related to changes in the intensity of management regimes. Across Wales, the condition of many habitats is classed as “unfavourable” with many priority species in decline.<sup>96</sup> Welsh Government have recognised this and so the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires public bodies to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build the resilience of ecosystems.<sup>97</sup>

Some of the threats to the natural environment in Monmouthshire include tree disease, causing fragmentation of ancient woodland parcels, pollution and over abstraction on the Rivers Usk and Wye and their tributaries (removing too much water from rivers for water supply) and development pressures reducing habitats and increasing habitat fragmentation, which means that

wildlife cannot easily move from one area to the next. 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 a number of Gwent Wildlife Trust partnership projects such as the Trothy Project. Initiatives such as Bee Friendly Monmouthshire and the Monmouthshire Pollinator’s Policy are examples of work aiming to improve biodiversity and protect pollinators.<sup>98</sup>

Invasive Non Native Species are another threat, such as American signal crayfish, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed. As well as being detrimental to native wildlife, there is also a significant financial impact. Research suggests that the financial impact of such species costs Wales £125 million per year from damage to crops, ecosystems and livelihoods.<sup>99</sup> Future threats are numerous and include Asian hornet which targets honeybee colonies and arrived during summer 2016. Maintaining healthy populations of pollinators such as bees is vital, since twenty percent of the UK cropped area contains crops which are dependent on pollinators. A lot of wild flowering plants also rely on insect pollination for reproduction. The value of pollinators to UK agriculture is over £430 million per year.<sup>100</sup>

The resilience of ecosystems means how well ecosystems can deal with disturbances – either by resisting them, recovering from them, or adapting to them. Resilient ecosystems are able to carry on delivering services and benefits despite these disturbances. Building resilient ecosystems is an important part of Wales’ approach to managing natural resources.<sup>101</sup>

Ecosystem resilience is significantly affected by “landscape connectivity”. This means how well habitats are joined up with each other. So for example, if the climate gets warmer, species may need to migrate further north where it is cooler. But if habitats are all separated from each other by developments, roads etc then species may not be able to make that migration. Although there are some important wildlife corridors in Monmouthshire such as the Rivers Usk and Wye and the Severn Estuary, 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

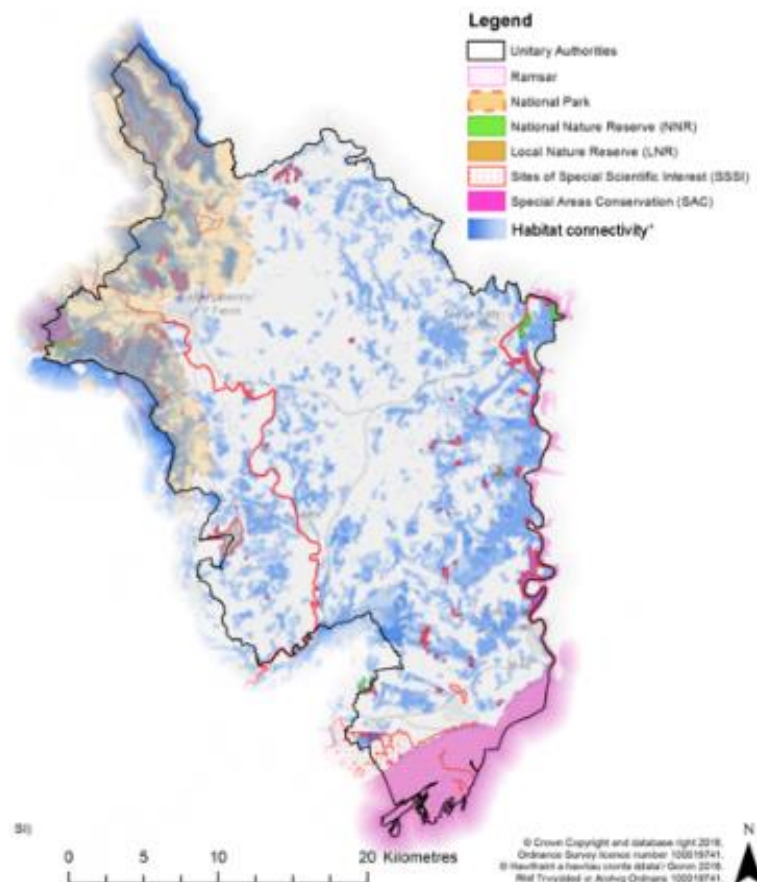


Figure 5: Map showing habitat connectivity – the blue areas are well connected to other similar habitats

loss of overall biodiversity. The map in Figure 3 shows how poorly connected many habitats are.

Loss of woodland and tree cover is also an issue of concern in Monmouthshire, which impacts on 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%). As well as the importance of woodlands for biodiversity, they are also important for our local economy through tourism and recreation and employment, for building resilience through carbon storage, reducing flooding, stabilising soils, and to improve health and well-being by, improving air quality, reducing noise and providing green space for recreation.<sup>102</sup> 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, small size and are fragmented.

Trees are also an essential component of our urban Green Infrastructure. They make our towns more attractive to live and work in as well as removing air borne pollutants. 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, and in Monmouthshire 100% of towns lost tree cover between 2009 and 2013 (County tree cover has fallen by 1.2% between '09 –'13),<sup>103</sup> reducing the many benefits they bring.

With there being so many protected areas for biodiversity and landscape and such value placed by residents on their green infrastructure, it would be easy to make the assumption that everyone has easy access to green spaces. However, this is not necessarily the case.

Monmouthshire has 2028 kilometres of public rights of way, mostly public footpaths, including several long distance paths such as the Wales Coast Path and Offa's Dyke trail. An extensive network of public rights of way enables movement between settlements, the wider countryside and landscapes beyond the County boundary.

However, only 8% of the county is open access land, compared with 20% of Wales, so areas of open space that can be wandered around rather than sticking to paths is a lot less than nationally.<sup>104</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>105</sup> This can mean that unless people are willing to walk on rural lanes or footpaths across farmers' fields,

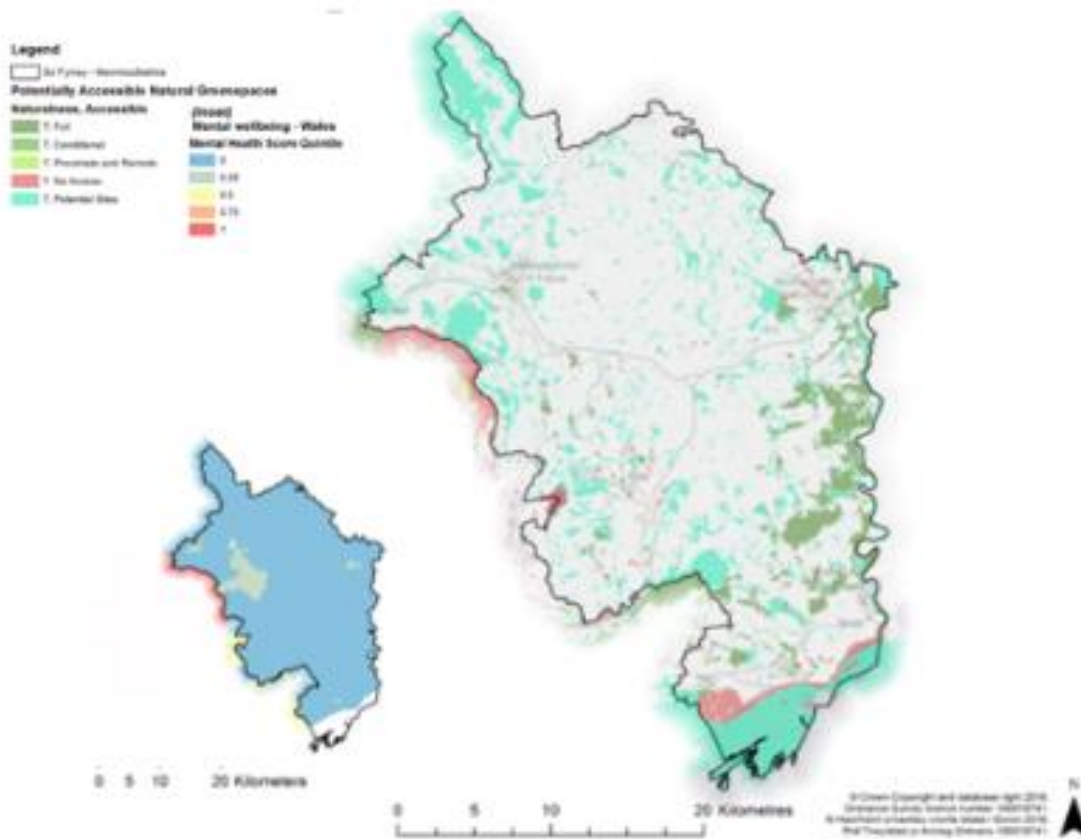


Figure 6: Map showing accessible natural greenspace – the green areas have either some or full access, the blue areas are potential sites for access

people living in rural areas may not have access to the health and well-being benefits that accessible green space can bring.

The map on this page shows how large parts of the centre of Monmouthshire have a deficit of accessible natural greenspace – the white spaces do not have accessible green space, nor the potential to make areas accessible.<sup>106</sup>

## Air and Water Quality

Air quality is important because it has a significant impact on human health. The burden of particulate air pollution in the UK in 2008 was estimated to be equivalent to nearly 29,000 deaths at typical ages and an associated loss of population life of 340,000 life years lost. The economic cost from the impacts of air pollution in the UK is estimated at £9-19 billion every year.<sup>107</sup>

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. Air quality concentration scores for 2012 give Monmouthshire a score of 52 out of a potential 100, based on pollutants that could have negative effects on human health and/or the environment.<sup>108</sup>



Monmouthshire does not have significant industrial contribution to air quality, and so 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>109</sup> Indeed, maps from NRW clearly show higher levels of pollution focussed along the main roads.<sup>110</sup> Monmouthshire has two Air Quality Management Areas, the details of which are given in the area chapters.

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 continue to impact on these attractive landscapes.<sup>111</sup>

Water pollution from rural sources, particularly phosphates, nitrates and sediment, is identified by NRW as the most significant threat to wildlife and plants within the county.<sup>112</sup> Monmouthshire has 3 designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) where groundwater has or is at risk of high levels of nitrates. The main area is in the Raglan area, 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.

The rivers Honddu and Clydach and the Nedern Brook are all poor quality under the EU Water Framework Directive. 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. They are assessed on a combination of ecological and chemical monitoring. The Honddu and Clydach are failing due to fish numbers, since the steep nature of these streams means that there are natural barriers blocking access for fish further upstream. Urban pollution from sewage and misconnections impacts on the Nedern Brook, which is failing due to the poor water quality, and sewage issues also exist in Abergavenny town. In the Gwent levels, a unique reed and ditch network is under pressure from development and diffuse rural, industrial and sewage pollution. Other water bodies are only of moderate quality and face diffuse rural pressures, particularly around the Olway, Trothy and Gavenny catchments.<sup>113</sup>

As a result of the pollution threat to water supplies, Monmouthshire has a total of 19 Groundwater Source Protection Zones which seek to protect underground aquifers which 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>114</sup>

In contrast the Rivers Usk and Wye are both of good quality and have well established and nationally significant rod fisheries for salmon, brown trout, grayling and coarse fish.<sup>115</sup> The River Wye is also highly valued for recreation and navigation. There are a number of partnerships that work together to balance demands on the rivers and catchments.

The Severn estuary is of international importance for wintering waterfowl and migratory birds, but there are some historical chemical inputs evident.<sup>116</sup>

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, condition which are predicted to become more frequent with climate change.<sup>117</sup> As a rural county, Monmouthshire has around 1000 properties with private water supplies.<sup>118</sup>

## Climate Change

When considering climate change, it is important to consider both how Monmouthshire is contributing to climate change, but also how resilient is the county to the likely impacts of climate change. Climate change is a global issue and 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 2013, carbon dioxide (the main man-made contributor to climate change) emissions per Monmouthshire resident were 8.6 tonnes.<sup>119</sup> This is the second highest figure in Gwent. 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>120</sup> Comparison with other Gwent authorities using 2012 data demonstrates the impact that transport has:

Local Authority	Industrial and Commercial	Domestic	Transport	Total (tonnes CO2 per person)
Blaenau Gwent	2.1	2.2	1.1	5.4
Caerphilly	1.9	2.2	1.3	5.4
Monmouthshire	2.7	2.4	3.8	8.9
Newport	4.4	2.1	3.0	9.5
Torfaen	2.7	2.1	1.4	6.2

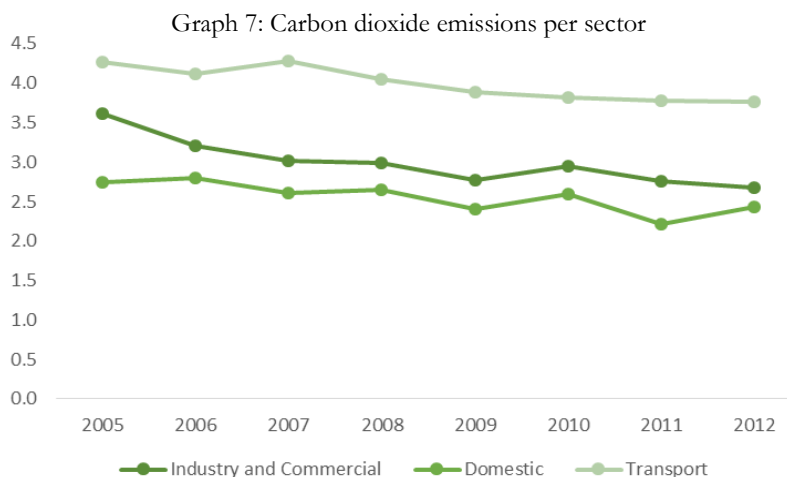
Table 8: Tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per person, 2012

The Active Travel (Wales) Act aims to make active travel the most attractive option for shorter journeys. Enabling more people to undertake active travel will mean more people can enjoy the health benefits of active travel, help reduce greenhouse emissions, tackle poverty and disadvantage and help our economy to grow. Maps across six areas (Abergavenny, Chepstow, Gilwern, Monmouth, Caldicot-Magor and Usk) show key walking and cycling routes for everyday journeys such as to work, school or the shops or services.<sup>121</sup> However, the rural nature of the county makes active travel difficult. 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 high carbon dioxide emissions.

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 also 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.<sup>122</sup>

The high levels of carbon emissions in Monmouthshire means that overall, Monmouthshire's carbon footprint per person for 2011 was 11.5 tonnes, the highest in Gwent and the 6<sup>th</sup> highest in Wales. It is also likely to be a contributing factor to Monmouthshire having the highest ecological footprint in Gwent at 3.42 global hectares per person in 2011<sup>123</sup>, the sixth highest in Wales and higher than the Welsh average of 3.28.<sup>124</sup> For both carbon and ecological footprints, the local authorities with the highest scores are generally all the rural counties, probably as a result of the contribution of transport.

However, despite these negative statistics about carbon emissions, overall carbon dioxide emissions are going down. Graph 7 shows a steady decrease in carbon emissions from all sectors between 2005 and 2012, with an overall reduction in emissions over that period from 11 to 9.2 tonnes carbon dioxide per capita.<sup>125</sup>



This reduction could be for a number of reasons, including an increase in uptake of renewables, better energy efficiency of vehicles and equipment or better insulation.

Steps are being taken to reduce emissions through the roll out of renewable energy technologies across the county. In 2015, 61,204 MWh of electricity were generated through renewables in Monmouthshire. The bulk of this (45,592 MWh) came from one biomass plant, with a significant amount also coming from solar photovoltaic panels (15,800 MWh). Contributions from onshore wind, hydro, anaerobic digestion and sewage gas is relatively low in comparison. Monmouthshire has a good number of solar PV installations (3321, with a total number of households in the county at 38,793, which amounts to almost 9% of properties).<sup>126</sup>

However, the UK Government reductions in Feed In Tariffs means that this figure is not likely to grow significantly in coming years. This is a potential threat to energy security in the UK, since by 2050 50% of the UK's oil will come from potentially unstable countries and 80% of fuels will come from overseas.<sup>127</sup>

*“Develop a practical action plan... to achieve the required improvement in energy performance of existing buildings in line with the 2050 targets envisaged in the Climate Change Act (2008) – all buildings need to be moving towards zero carbon emissions.”*

*Transition Monmouth*

Although only a small number of individuals responding to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement made specific reference to energy and climate change, there were comprehensive responses from Monmouthshire’s Community Climate Champions network and the county’s three very active Transition Town groups. There is much third sector activity going on by these groups and others to reduce carbon

emissions, build resilience and prepare for peak oil. One of Monmouthshire’s greatest assets is its strong culture of volunteering and active third sector involvement, and this includes environmental and sustainability groups. These range from groups working at a very local level as “Friends of” groups looking after local parks or green spaces to Fairtrade Forums working locally in 4 of Monmouthshire’s towns to improve quality of life for farmers and producers globally, whilst generating local action to maintain Monmouthshire’s Fairtrade County status.<sup>128</sup>

The 2012 Climate Change Risk Assessment for Wales anticipates hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and more extreme weather events.<sup>129</sup> With an increase in winter rainfall and rising sea levels, flooding is likely to increase, and this will be a particular issue of concern in Monmouthshire.

Data shows that 1.1% of Monmouthshire properties are at a high risk of flooding (the highest in Gwent). Overall flood risk score, based on the risk from river and coastal flooding is 47.6, (the second highest in Gwent)<sup>130</sup>. This score (between 0 and 100) considers the proportion of households at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea (but not surface water flooding, based on predicted frequency, rather than the level of damage caused by flooding. The following map from Natural Resources Wales show Usk and Monmouth to be 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.

There are numerous examples already of where these communities have flooded in the past. One only has to search the internet for Monmouthshire and flooding to find numerous press releases and photos which demonstrate the impact of flooding on local communities.

These figures don’t take surface water flooding into account though, so risk of flooding is actually higher. Monmouthshire’s Flood Risk Management Plan data estimates that 1344 people and 292 properties are at high (1 in 30 year) or medium (1 in 100 year) risk of flooding from surface water, clustered mainly around Caldicot, but also Abergavenny, Monmouth and Chepstow.<sup>131</sup>

The impacts of flooding are significant, costing the UK £1 billion per year and making it difficult for some people to get insurance. As well as having a negative impact on economic well-being, it also has a significant impact on physical and mental well-being.<sup>132</sup>

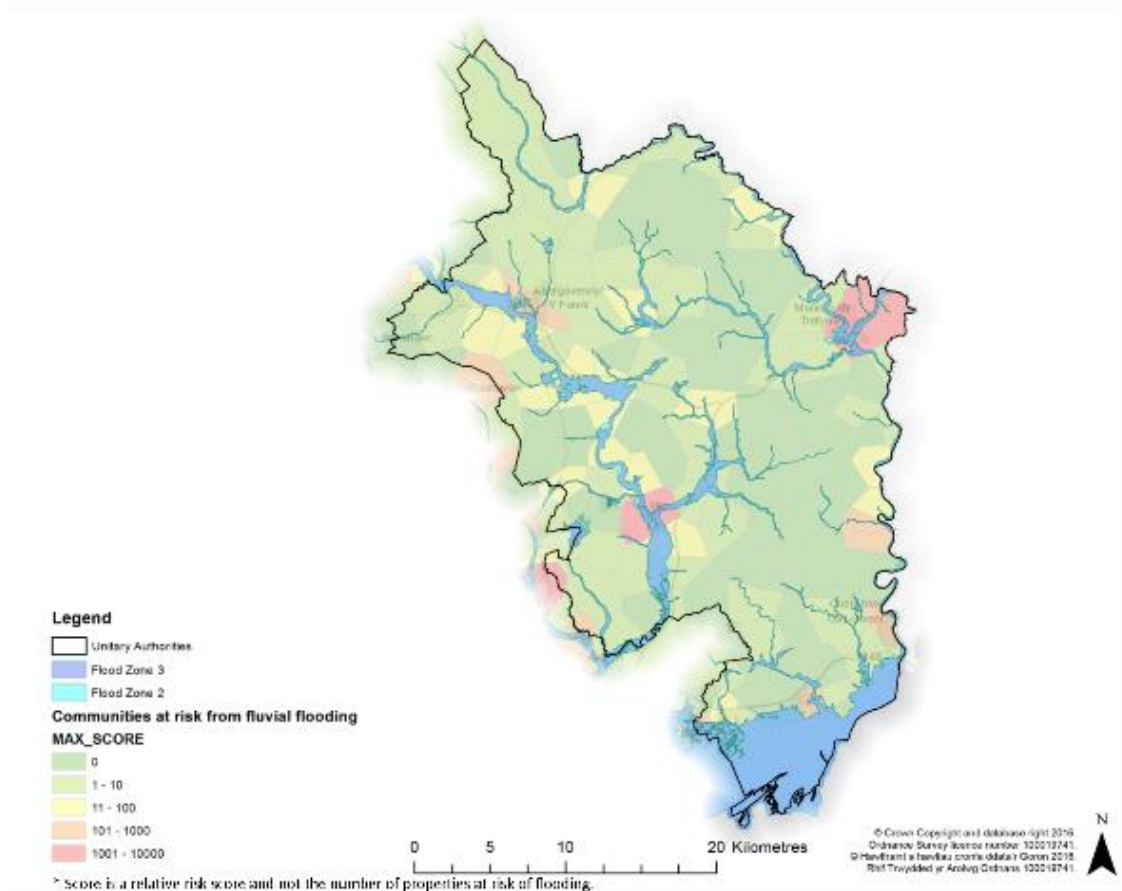


Figure 7: Map showing flood risk – areas in red are at high risk of flooding

As well as the impact on homes, flooding impacts on business can be significant, and damaged infrastructure can cause huge disruption to business and community life (e.g. destruction or damage to bridges, water and sewage pumping stations, electricity sub-stations, rail lines etc.). Impacts such as these could prove very costly to Monmouthshire County Council and others in terms of road and bridge and underground drainage damage.

## Waste and Recycling

Monmouthshire’s recycling rates are amongst the highest in Wales. In 2014-2015 63.2% of municipal waste was sent for reuse, recycling or composting, higher than the Welsh average over this period of 56.2%.<sup>133</sup> Recycling rates have increased steadily, with the first quarter of 2016/17 reaching over 70% (the Wales target for 2025).

Monmouthshire is fortunate to have a great deal of goodwill from the public about recycling, which has resulted in our good recycling rates. There were many

*“The recycling service is excellent, regular and easy to use. Thanks”  
Caldicot resident, aged 70*

positive comments about recycling from the public through the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement.

Monmouthshire County Council began a pilot in the Abergavenny, Gilwern, Govilon and Goytre areas trialling some changes to glass recycling in 2016, an area designed to be as representative of the county as possible. About 8000 households took part, and evaluation of the scheme showed that no significant changes in average participation rates in food waste and dry recycling pre and post changes. An average of 82% participated in food waste recycling and 92% in dry recycling.<sup>134</sup>

Analysis of the contents of 1.1 tonnes of black bag waste collected at the kerbside was carried out. The analysis shows that despite the very high rates of participation in food waste scheme there is still a large proportion of food collected in the black bags. With almost 7000 tonnes of residual waste collected at the kerbside the 20% of food waste collected in black bags equates to 1400 tonnes or 3% recycling towards the 70%. Whilst this is relatively low compared to the all Wales average it is clear that future advertising campaigns will need to continue to focus on food waste as the main priority.<sup>135</sup>

Whilst recycling performance is good, overall amount of municipal waste collected has increased year on year, from 46,000 tonnes in 2012/13 to over 50,000 tonnes in 2015/16. This may well be as the economy has generally recovered and people are spending more or throwing out old things and buying new.<sup>136</sup>

*“Very bad litter problems along main roads but has improved since the plastic bag ban”*  
*Chepstow visitor*

It appears that whilst there is public perception that there is a lot of litter and flytipping, the actual statistics suggest that the perception is greater than the actual problem. Flytipping incidents in Monmouthshire have decreased steadily year on year from 846 incidents in 2006/07 to 303 incidents in 2015/16, with a subsequent reduction in clearance costs year on year.<sup>137</sup>

*“Is it just me, or is there more litter and flytipping than there used to be?”*  
*Penallt resident*

There is dissatisfaction about levels of litter in the county. In 2014/15 only 56% of those surveyed agreed that Monmouthshire was free from litter and rubbish, less than the Welsh average of 62%.<sup>138</sup> In the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement, 27 people commented about litter in their community. However, despite this, actual levels of street cleanliness are high, with 99% of highways and relevant land inspected of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness.<sup>139</sup>

# Culture

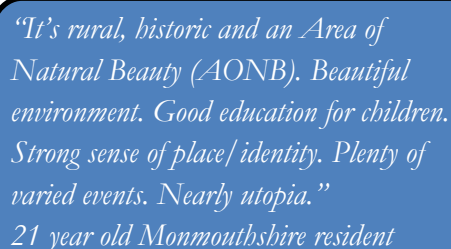
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The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and statutory guidance does not seek to define “cultural” well-being, in research cultural well-being is a difficult term to define<sup>140</sup> with a range of factors influencing culture and an individual’s perspective on what cultural well-being entails for them.

The act considers improving cultural well-being aimed at achieving the well-being goals and the broad areas of well-being related to culture that contribute to their achievement in

Monmouthshire has been considered in the assessment, along with strong connections and interactions between cultural well-being and social, economic and environmental well-being.

Many of the elements of cultural well-being in Monmouthshire are well summed up by a resident’s view of Monmouthshire from the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement work.



*“It’s rural, historic and an Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). Beautiful environment. Good education for children. Strong sense of place/ identity. Plenty of varied events. Nearly utopia.”*  
21 year old Monmouthshire resident

## Language

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 Monmouthshire was one of only 2 local authorities in Wales to see a rise in Welsh language speakers between the 2001 and 2011 Census from 9.7% to 9.9%. A major contributing factor to this rise can be assigned to the growth of the 2 Welsh medium primary schools, based at either end of the County. Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni, located in Abergavenny has 221 pupils on roll (out of a possible 235), having recently increased their capacity in recognition of increasing demand for places. Ysgol Y Ffin, Caldicot, having opened in 2001 currently has 143 pupils on roll (out of a possible 180).

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, Raglan, Usk, Chepstow, Caldicot and Magor. 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 allowing the language to thrive at an early age.

There is currently no in-County Welsh medium provision at secondary school level. With pupils having to travel to Pontypool or Newport, this lack of local provision is a barrier for some

*“Welsh secondary provision – could be better”  
Chepstow resident*

parents in sending their children to Welsh medium schools, as reflected in the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement responses.

Welsh language community groups exist within each of the towns. The groups hold regular meetings for various activities such as coffee mornings and reading groups and allow Welsh speakers as well as learners an opportunity to socialise through the medium of Welsh. Other groups with regional/national footprints are also active within Monmouthshire, the Urdd and Menter Iaith BGTM work with schools and within communities to promote the use of the language. With active Welsh language groups also located in neighbouring authorities, they are easily accessible to Monmouthshire residents many of whom take this opportunity to use/learn or develop their skills.

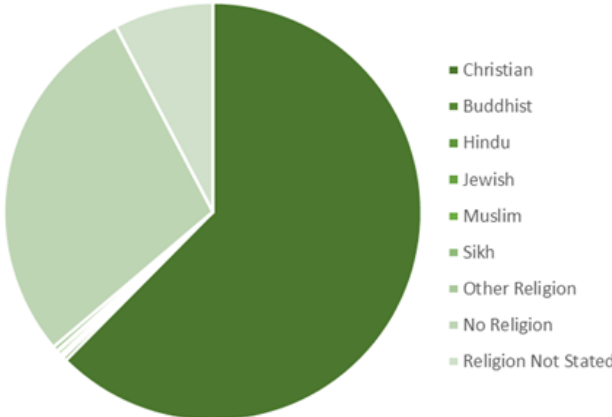
The hosting and organising of the Eisteddfod provided a glimpse of what the community spirit of Monmouthshire can achieve, four fundraising groups, raised over £200,000. The Eisteddfod helped promote the learning and use of Welsh language in Monmouthshire. Many positive comments were received during the engagement exercise of the Eisteddfod’s success. There is ongoing popularity of Welsh for Adult education provision, particularly since the Eisteddfod, and there is now a shortage of Welsh speaking tutors such is the demand.

Some consultation responses demonstrate that there is some negativity towards the Welsh language within Monmouthshire.

### Faith and Religion

Figures from the most recent Census on religion in Monmouthshire shows 62.5% of residents are Christian – this is close to 5 percentage points higher than that of Wales. The other major

Graph 8: Religion in Monmouthshire



religions were represented by figures of less than a percentage, as shown in graph 8.

Monmouthshire has a Buddhist Centre located in Raglan, however the nearest Mosque is in Newport and many of the nearest houses of worship for other religions are in Cardiff or Bristol.

Census figures from 2011 show 98% of Monmouthshire’s population are of white ethnicity. With those who consider themselves of Asian ethnicity the next

most common with 1% of the population (900 persons).

Interestingly, besides English and Welsh, the next most common language in Monmouthshire is Polish (0.23% determine Polish is their main language), with Tagalog/Filipino the next most



common, with 0.14% of the population. In total, the Census 2011 results state that 1.35% of Monmouthshire's population have an alternative language than English/Welsh as their main language.

Many people in Monmouthshire have a strong sense of belonging to their local area, in 2014/15 the National survey for Wales showed there has been an increase in the percentage of people with a feeling of belonging to their local area in Monmouthshire to 88% which places Monmouthshire as 6th compared to other local authorities in Wales.<sup>141</sup> The survey also shows 81% of Monmouthshire residents agree people in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration, which places Monmouthshire as 12th compared to other local authorities in Wales<sup>142</sup>, and 89% agree people in the local area from different backgrounds get on well together, ranking Monmouthshire 3<sup>rd</sup> in Wales.<sup>143</sup> Many people responding to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement refer to a sense of community in Monmouthshire as something which is good about where they live, with the majority highlighting the friendliness and community spirit that exists in the County.

## Landscape and Heritage

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. The Europe landscape convention defines Landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” and acknowledges that the landscape contributes to local culture and is an important part of quality of life.<sup>144</sup> The Landscape in Monmouthshire is a significant factor in the County's identity locally by residents but also, nationally and internationally, landscape and environment is assessed in detail in the environment section of this report. When we asked people in Monmouthshire what was good about where they lived, the most popular response was the countryside and beautiful landscape on their doorstep. Around a half of all the positive comments about what people think is good that were received as part of the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement, were around how much people enjoy and value the landscape and countryside.

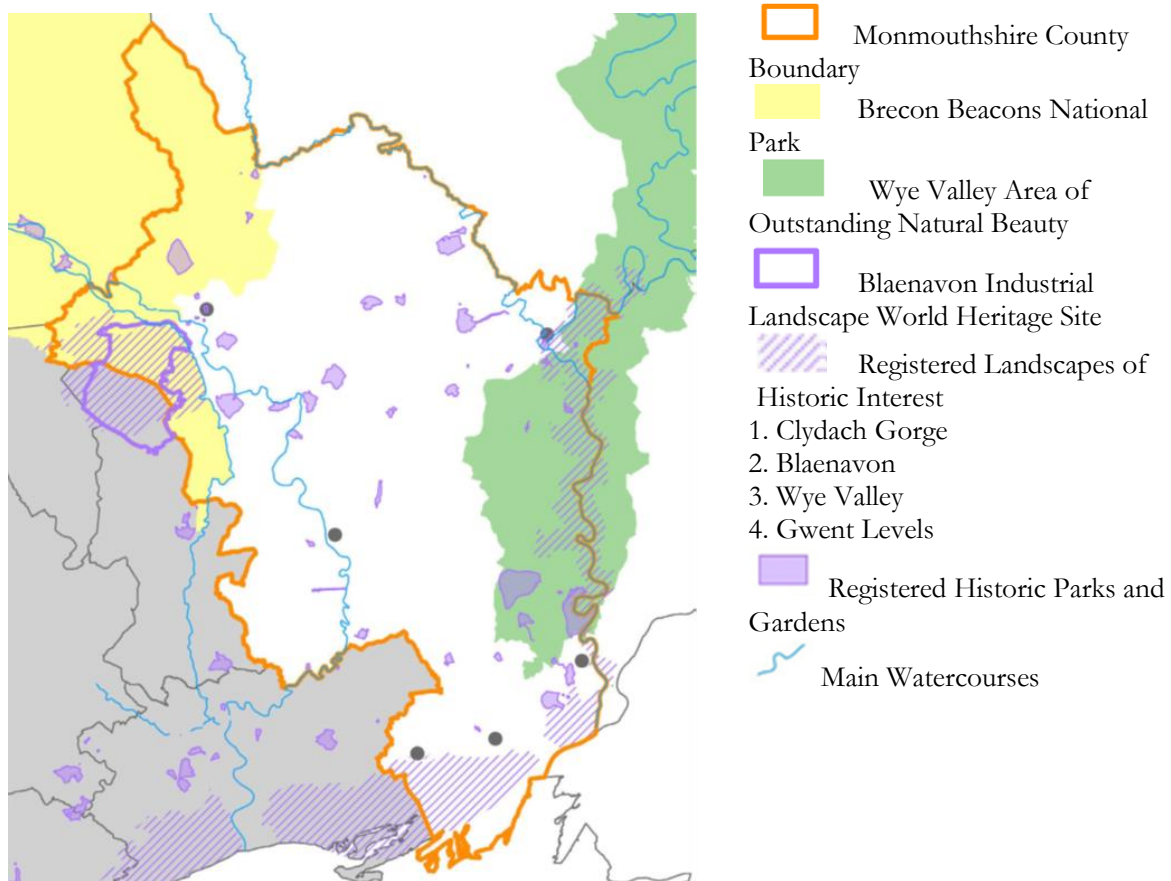
The varied landscape of the County of Monmouthshire is both the product of natural and human influences over thousands of years, Figure 6<sup>145</sup> provides a map of the key landscape assets in Monmouthshire. This has left a number of features on the landscape that remain of cultural value in the present day including, prehistoric burial mounds and hill forts, Roman villas, deserted medieval villages and industrial monuments with further important features also lying buried or only partly visible. Many features and areas of historical and cultural value in Monmouthshire are recognised as important heritage assets including 31 conservation areas designated for their special historic or architectural interest, 40 registered Historic Parks and

*“What is good about Monmouthshire is the countryside and beauty of the landscape, community and neighbours, history and heritage, sacred rites and ancient mythology...”*

*Maesygartha resident, age 59*

Gardens, 169 scheduled ancient monuments, approximately 2,146 Listed Buildings. As well as archaeologically sensitive sites including: Tintern Abbey an iconic heritage site; Blaenavon World Heritage Site (partially in Monmouthshire) and Big Pit National Coal Museum; a significant number of castles and many churches.

Figure 8: Key landscape assets in Monmouthshire



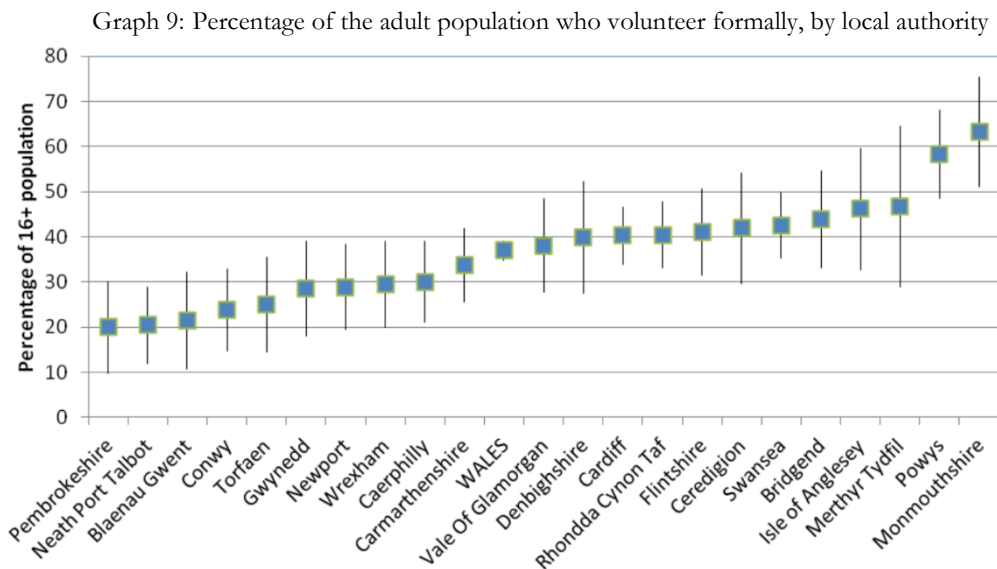
In 2014/15 64% of Monmouthshire residents said they have visited an historic place in Wales.<sup>146</sup> Many responses from the *Our Monmouthshire* Engagement stressed the importance of residents to promoting and protecting this landscape for future generations, not only for its importance to Monmouthshire’s heritage, but for its recognised contributions to the economy, environment and health and well-being in Monmouthshire, as identified in the other sections of this assessment.

*“The Landscape is beautiful. Don’t destroy this for future generations”*  
*Abergavenny resident*

## Community and Social Action

Monmouthshire has a long and healthy history of volunteering and local social action in the county. 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 and provide an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge.<sup>147</sup> It was estimated by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action in 2015 that 63.3% of adults volunteered

formally in Monmouthshire, graph 9<sup>148</sup>, the highest in Wales and 77.4% were estimated to volunteer informally, the second highest in Wales.<sup>149</sup> Volunteering has been shown to have a positive impact on social networks and inclusion within communities. The Council's "A County that serves" volunteering strategy, which was led by Monmouthshire County Council in collaboration with Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and contributions from a cross sector working party recognises the social capital in Monmouthshire that can be further developed and supported to assist people in the county to take ownership and to create the conditions that enable people to help each other.<sup>150</sup>



The economic benefits of Tourism are assessed in the Economy section. The 2012/2013 tourism visitor survey showed 94% visitors would recommend Monmouthshire to others and that Scenery/landscape (58%) and history/heritage (51%) seem to have the biggest influences on people's decision to visit.<sup>151</sup> There is already work continuing on managing the tourism offer and the physical and built environment that plays such an important role to the industry in Monmouthshire. Including the Monmouthshire Tourism destination management plan<sup>152</sup>, which is being reviewed in 2016 and Green Infrastructure<sup>153</sup> approach to further develop the heritage and countryside offer for residents and visitors.

## Cultural Attractions

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. Responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement show that generally there is a great sense of pride and community identity with these events in Monmouthshire. There is increasing research showing an association between engagement with sport and culture and an individual's subjective well-being measured as happiness.<sup>154</sup> Key findings from research by The Department for Culture Media and sport showed arts engagement, frequent library use and sport participation were all associated with higher well-being<sup>155</sup>.

There is limited data to fully assess the situation of arts and events and its subsequent link to well-being in Monmouthshire. The Arts Council for Wales identifies across Wales that time, cost, family commitments, local availability and lack of arts activities of interest, as well as the arts generally lacking appeal were the main barriers to (increased) attendance/participation.<sup>156</sup>

In 2014/15 61% of Monmouthshire residents said they have been to an arts event in Wales. It is clear from responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* Engagement that arts and events contribute greatly to residents’ and visitors’ cultural and social experience in Monmouthshire.

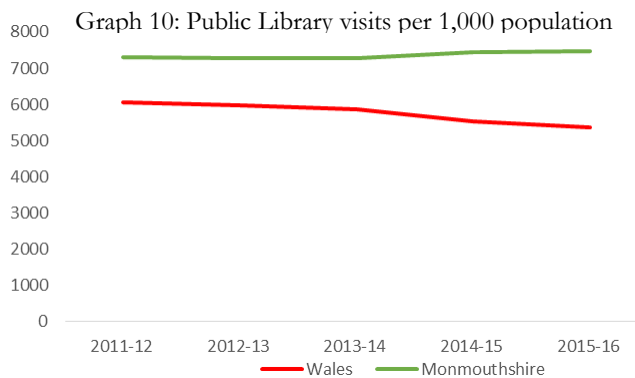
A Household survey showed 66% of the respondents interviewed said that they visited the cinema, cinema usage was highest in Chepstow 74% and lowest in Caldicot 57%. Just over one in ten visited smaller, independent cinemas: Baker Street Cinema, Abergavenny and Savoy Theatre and Cinema, Monmouth (13% for both). With the majority of other visits to larger cinemas out of the County. While just over half of those interviewed ever visited museums and theatres (53% and 58% respectively), only around a third ever visited art galleries (31%). Table 9 shows the breakdown of some of the town and cities visited with Cardiff and London proving most popular with in County visits lower.<sup>157</sup>

Table 9: Towns and cities visited for arts <sup>158</sup>	Museum (%)	Art Galleries (%)	Theatres (%)
Total who ever visit	<b>53</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>58</b>
Cardiff	37	34	36
London	22	32	14
Chepstow	10	1	1
Bristol	5	10	15
Monmouth	5	3	6
Abergavenny	4	3	11

There has been some variation in responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement regarding access to and availability of facilities for leisure and cultural activities, with some responses feeling these are adequate or plentiful while some feel there need to be more, further local issues are identified in the area sections below. This is an area that would require further analysis to fully understand the locality based issues that may exist.

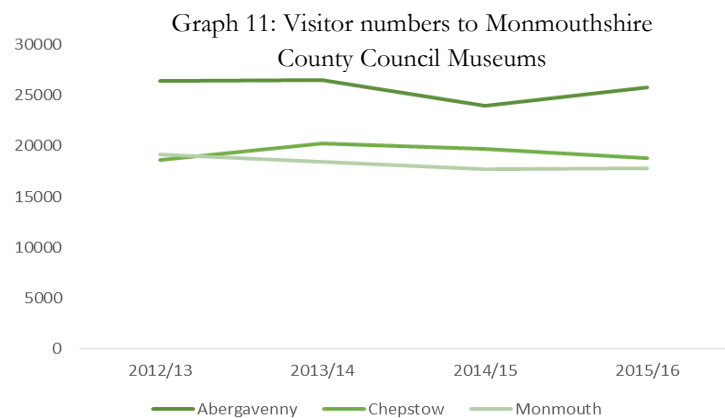
*“..better public transport links at times that work for working people and for socialising in evenings, no theatre in south of Monmouthshire - limits the cultural offer”*  
*Chepstow resident*

Libraries in Monmouthshire are well used with visitor numbers to libraries in Monmouthshire being the highest of any local authorities in Wales, graph 10. In 2015/16 there were 7477 visits per 1000 residents. In recent years there has been a continuing increase in visits to online services and in 2015/16 online visits accounted for 27% of visits to libraries. In recent years (2013-2016) issues of library materials have declined by 16.5%.<sup>159</sup> This trend is likely to be reflective of the library spaces being increasingly used for a variety of community uses. While there has been a trend towards an increase in use of digital library services, in order to enhance



the well-being of future generations services need to be accessible to all, the society and economy section assesses access to broadband and IT skills in the County. The increasing digitisation of services presents an opportunity and challenge for communities in Monmouthshire currently and in the future.

Museums play an important part in preserving the history of Monmouthshire for communities and visitors. Council run museums are located in Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth and the collection at Caldicot Castle. The latest breakdown on visitor numbers is provided in graph 11<sup>160</sup>. Overall there is no definitive trend in visits with minor fluctuations in visitor numbers to

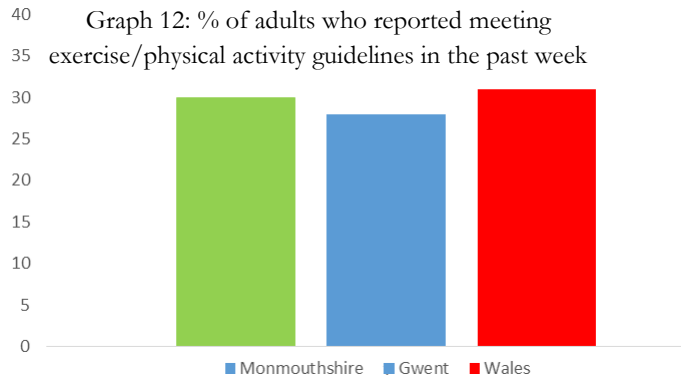


Museums in the last 4 years. In 2014/15 42% of Monmouthshire residents said they have visited a museum in Wales.<sup>161</sup> In August 2016 the Council's Tourism, Leisure and Cultural services undertook a survey about what was important to customers. The survey identified that there was a low number of visitors in the 16-30 age group to museums, highlighting the challenge of how to reach out and make arts, culture and heritage accessible to all generations.<sup>162</sup>

Monmouthshire has a number of printed and digital local newspapers that cover news and sport in the County including weekly publications the Monmouthshire Free press, Abergavenny Chronicle, Monmouthshire Beacon, Chepstow Beacon and Forest of Dean and Wye Valley review and daily South Wales Argus.

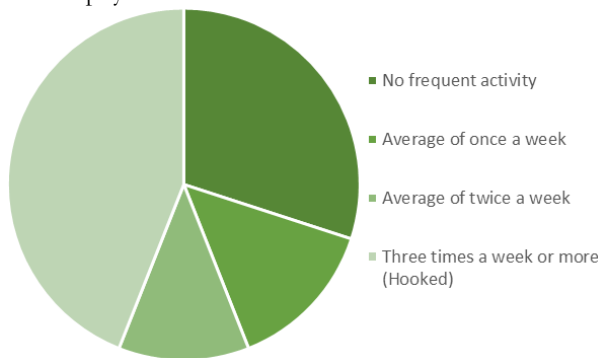
## Sport and Leisure

There is considerable evidence which supports the health and well-being benefits of healthy and active lifestyles for both adults and children.<sup>163</sup> Guidance from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends Adults should aim to be active daily.<sup>164</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. Latest data from the Welsh Health Survey in 2014 & 15 shows only 30% of adults in Monmouthshire reported meeting physical activity guidelines in the past week, which is below the Average for Wales and although this has fluctuated marginally in recent years is below the 32% in 2010-11.<sup>165</sup>



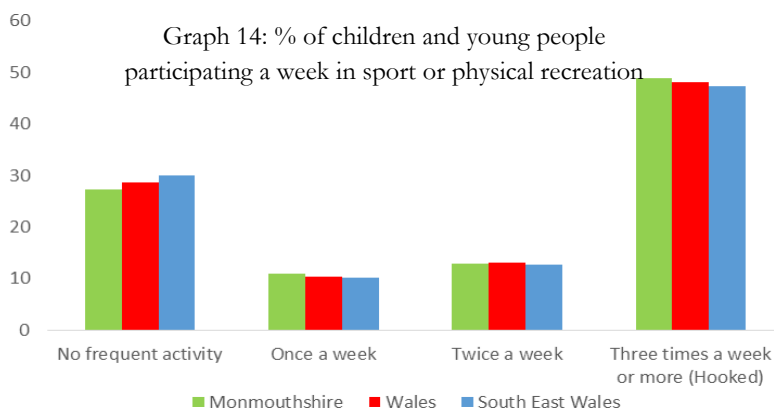
Research by Sport Wales in the Active adults survey in 2014 shows that 30.4% of adults do not participate in any frequent activity a week which is lower than the Wales average of 38.4%. There

Graph 13: % of adult participation a week in sport or physical recreation in Monmouthshire



was a gender gap in participation levels with 47.0% of males and 41.3% of females taking part on average three or more occasions a week in sport or physical recreation, Male participation was in line with the average for Wales (46.3%) and Females were above the average (35.1%). The report highlights across Wales that 72% of all adults would like to do more sport or physical activity (73% of males and 71% of females).<sup>166</sup>

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>167</sup> The School Sport Survey, undertaken by Sport Wales has



captured a detailed picture of frequency of participation, in Monmouthshire in 2015, 48.8% of pupils across Years 3 to 11 take part in organized sport activity other than in curriculum time (i.e. extracurricular or club sport) on three or more occasions per

week., while 27.3% take part in no frequent activity.<sup>168</sup>

Understanding the makeup of participation in different settings can help identify the different access, provision and opportunities children and young people have to participate in sport. In Monmouthshire, overall participation in most settings (any setting, community club and other setting outside school) is in line with the Welsh average, while extra-curricular participation is lower than the average for Wales (Monmouthshire, 74.0% and Wales, 77.4%).<sup>169</sup>

The internationally recognised definition of play is “Play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live”<sup>170</sup>. Therefore play has an important role in well-being.

The latest Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan 2016/17<sup>171</sup> for the County was completed by the Council in March 2016, the assessment 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). The wider consultations undertaken for the 2013 play assessment, which included parents as well as children and young people, found 78% of respondents said that they did make use of existing play areas/activities in the local community but 73% felt that there were insufficient play opportunities available in their local community. The area profiles of the assessment highlight any local issues from responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement related to recreational activity. Some of the key actions arising from the assessment for action in 2016/17 are: Space for play, supervised provision, providing for diverse needs, policy integration and Engagement and Information.

While access to the countryside was considered a real positive for the residents we spoke to, the lack of more formal opportunities and facilities for children to play were often raised as a negative. A further survey showed 60% of Monmouthshire parents are satisfied with places for children aged 1-10 to play and only 31% of parents are satisfied with places for children aged 11 to 15 to meet and get together.

In a rural county like Monmouthshire access to leisure and cultural services is important. The Wales Index of Multiple deprivation (2014) shows the average public transport travel time to a leisure centre is 60 minutes and public library is 49 minutes. For private transport travel time is 10 minutes for leisure centres and 9 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.

# Abergavenny and Surrounding Communities

## Environment

This area includes Abergavenny, an important market town which provides a range of services to its rural hinterland and includes Monmouthshire’s only main hospital, a railway station and bus terminus. Its town centre is a conservation area containing many listed buildings, including the ruins of the Norman Abergavenny Castle. Together with the nearby village of Llanfoist, it is overlooked and sheltered by the Blorenge and the Sugar Loaf mountains, located to the south-west and north-west 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 south west of Abergavenny.



*“Need more emphasis on what makes this area special – let’s be proud of our hills and rural situation.” 59 year old Maesygartha resident*

Abergavenny is the gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park and is heavily used for tourism and walking and cycling. Tourism is important to the local economy here because of the natural beauty and wildlife of the area.<sup>172</sup> Other parts of the area comprise of very rural, productive agricultural land with a few villages and scattered settlements. Just under 50% of

the Blaenavon World Heritage Site lies in Monmouthshire. The World Heritage Site was designated as it shows evidence of the pre-eminence of South Wales as the world’s major producer of iron and coal in the 19th century. All the necessary elements can still be seen - coal and ore mines, quarries, a primitive railway system, furnaces, workers’ homes, and the social infrastructure of their community.<sup>173</sup>

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. The *Our Monmouthshire* engagement showed that 22% of all respondents living in this area mentioned how they value the

*“Picturesque views with a peaceful effect on us and everyone who visits” 81 year old Abergavenny resident*



landscape and countryside, both themselves and for tourism.

In terms of biodiversity, the Abergavenny area boasts 4 Special Areas of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive – the River Usk due to its exceptionally clean and natural state, 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.

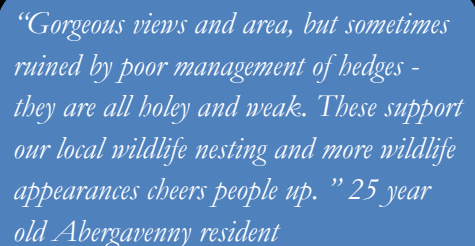
There are 19 SSSIs, with habitats including river, geological, woodland, bat roosts, meadow and pond, and 83 SINCS.<sup>174</sup>

Threats to habitats in this area include:

- Grazing and recreation pressures resulting in several areas of exposed peat vulnerable to erosion (Crucorney). Peat is important for slowing down flood water, reducing the impact of drought and supporting good water quality.<sup>175</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.

*Our Monmouthshire* engagement shows there is recognition amongst residents of the importance of maintaining biodiversity, not just for the benefit of the environment, but for people too.

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>176</sup>



*“Gorgeous views and area, but sometimes ruined by poor management of hedges - they are all holey and weak. These support our local wildlife nesting and more wildlife appearances cheers people up.” 25 year old Abergavenny resident*

This area has 737 kilometres of public rights of way, and forms the gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park. 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.



Castle Meadows, Abergavenny

There are a number of historic parks and gardens and are also 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.

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>177</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>178</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>179</sup>

Much of Abergavenny town northern residential area and along the River Usk are prone to flooding. 60 properties and 226 people in Abergavenny town are at High (1 in 30 year) or Medium (1 in 100 year) risk of flooding from surface water, and 1018 properties and 2392 people are at risk of flooding by rivers (Low risk 1 in 1000 year). The figure at low risk from flooding for Abergavenny and surrounding area as a whole rises to 1268 properties and 2980 people.<sup>180</sup> NRW identify Abergavenny as having a high probability of flooding.<sup>181</sup> Rivers also flood a number of roads in this area, such as the A4042 at Llanellen.

Research by Professor Simon Haslett on the Usk Valley has shown that there has been a tenfold increase in floodplain deposits since before the nineteenth century. This increase is likely due to continued deforestation in the hills of the river catchment, and also due to an increase in ploughing through changing land use. One consequence of this tenfold increase is that towns that lie within the river valleys have become exposed to increased potential impacts of flooding as deposits are laid down.<sup>182</sup> With increase in winter rainfall in Wales projected to increase by an average of about 14% by the 2050s, flooding is likely to be a greater threat than ever to these communities.<sup>183</sup>

Watercourses form an important part of the Green Infrastructure in and around Abergavenny, including the River Usk and its floodplain which includes accessible natural greenspaces such as Castle Meadows, 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 actually assessed as Moderate quality under the Water Framework Directive (based on a combination of ecological and chemical monitoring). The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

which 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. <sup>184</sup>

The Abergavenny area has 9 Groundwater Source Protection Zones which seek to protect underground aquifers as an important source of drinking water. Four of these are in the Crucorney ward, along the Llanthony Valley. Two SPZs are in the Llanelly Hill, Llanfoist and Llanellen area, and the remaining three are in the Mardy/Cantref area of Abergavenny.<sup>185</sup>

Although none of this area exceeds the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective, Merthyr Road in Abergavenny has come close to exceeding, particularly since the new houses have been built opposite Waitrose, so this area is being closely monitored. <sup>186</sup> However, neither air nor water quality concerns were raised through the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement.

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, Food Assembly, Fairtrade Forum, and many “Friends of” groups working in local parks and green spaces. The strength of the third sector in and around Abergavenny is definitely a great asset.

## Culture

The Market Town of Abergavenny is in close proximity to the Brecon Beacons national park and is surrounded by seven mountains. Llanfoist adjoins the Blaenavon World Heritage Site and is a directly recognisable location nationally and internationally in Monmouthshire.

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 200 pupils. 85.9% of the population in the area have no skills in Welsh, the second lowest of the 5 areas.



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 declared themselves as Christian.

The highest category of response to the *Our Monmouthshire* Engagement from Abergavenny residents was the Landscape and Countryside demonstrating it forms an important part of lifestyle in their area. The second highest category of responses referenced the sense of community in Abergavenny and friendliness of people in the area.

The area holds a number of festivals and events including cycling and the National eisteddfod 2016. The area is internationally recognised for its food, with the annual autumn Abergavenny Food festival as well as regular food and craft markets.

Abergavenny and surrounding area's main built heritage includes Abergavenny castle, museum, St Mary's Priory church and market hall. The Borough theatre in Abergavenny hosts drama, music and comedy. Some responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement referenced events and culture, many of which identify the positive contribution of the festival, events and the cultural offer in the area to well-being.

78% of respondents to a household survey who use the gym or sports/leisure centre said they used Abergavenny Leisure centre, showing the importance of locally available facilities. In terms of the respondents use of museums, art galleries and theatres people tended to travel further afield for these when they used them. Although the presence of a local theatre in the town means that 31% would visit the theatre in Abergavenny.<sup>187</sup>

Some responses mentioned leisure services in the area, some of which identified the need for more choice of facilities and leisure activities particularly for younger people in the area.

The average public travel time to a leisure centre in Bryn-y-cwm is above the average for Wales at 53 minutes and for private travel is in line with the Wales average at 9 minutes. Travel time to a library is similar for public transport (48 minutes) and private travel (9 minutes).<sup>188</sup>

## Economy

Much of the data on the economy is not available below county level. Where figures are available there are some notable differences in economic activity.

Abergavenny and the surrounding communities has the lowest proportion of people who are economically active in the county and the highest proportion of working age people who are retired. As in other areas the difficulties for young people have securing a home has emerged as a key issue during the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement exercise. Average house prices in Monmouthshire vary from £161,118 in the Caldicot area to £330,556 in the large rural centre of the county<sup>189</sup>. Prices are lower in areas which include the towns of Caldicot, Chepstow and Abergavenny where population densities are higher and housing stock more varied.

Overall town centre vacancy rates in Abergavenny have risen since the low level recorded in 2005, 4.1%, this increase in vacancy levels occurred across both primary and secondary frontages. However, in the most recent surveys 2014 (5.1%) and 2015 (5.8%) the vacancy rate has been lower than at any point in the last 15 years, apart from 2005.

The county had almost 70 hectares of employment land made up of 17 allocated sites in the Unitary Development Plan<sup>190</sup>. The majority of this employment land was in Magor, allied to the M4 corridor. There were issues regarding the distribution of employment land, therefore, and, while Monmouth and Abergavenny had reasonable amounts of land one of the main settlements with only a small amount remaining in Chepstow.

Abergavenny and the surrounding area has the highest proportion of people in receipt of employment related benefits within the county at 10.3%, higher than the Monmouthshire average of 8% but below the 12% average for Wales. This masks significant variation from 5% in Crucorney to 17% in Cantref. The proportion of people in income deprivation is also above the county average and ranges from 6% in Crucorney to 28% in Cantref.

In a number of communities there are stark relative differences between the rates of people in receipt of employment related benefits and those in income deprivation suggesting that policies to take people out of poverty need to look more broadly than just the working age population.



Pupils at Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School

Headline rates of educational attainment at a school level also mask differences that become apparent when shown as the very local level, for example the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 inclusive at key stage 4 differed by more than 25 percentage points even within Abergavenny and the surrounding communities ranging from 33.96% to 84.66% within the Cantref area.

These highlight the importance of place when considering responses to societal challenges.

## Social

Abergavenny and the surrounding area has a population of almost 26,000, of which 18% are children. This area has the highest proportion of residents aged 65 and over (26.2%) and aged 85 and over (3.7%).

Of the five areas Abergavenny has the highest proportion of areas in the most deprived 20 per cent in Monmouthshire, 6 out of 11 areas. Parts of Cantref (Cantref 2) are the most deprived in Monmouthshire and is most deprived in terms of income. In this area 7.6% of people live in overcrowded homes, the third highest proportion in the county.

Croesonen is the fourth most deprived area in Monmouthshire, particularly in education. Lansdown is the sixth most deprived are in Monmouthshire, employment being the most evident issue. Grofield is eighth most deprived, particularly in terms of community safety. Parts of Llanover and Llanelly Hill are tenth and eleventh most deprived and both suffer most from poor access to services.

Some areas in Abergavenny and Surrounding Communities are ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales for access to services in the area, 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

Crucorney in Abergavenny has the highest percentage population living in households without central heating in Monmouthshire, 4.7% of the population. In parts of Cantref (Cantref 2) 7.6% of people live in overcrowded households<sup>191</sup>.

Flying Start is available to parents and their children aged 0-4 in parts of Lansdown, Croesonen and Cantref in North Abergavenny on a postcode basis and is childcare provided by three playgroups. A higher percentage of low weight babies are born in parts of Priory, Croesonen, Cantref and also Llanover.

Abergavenny has the fewest residents of the five areas, who report their health is very good or good, with 77%.<sup>192</sup> 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 their health was very good or good were in the areas of Lansdown (71%), Cantref 1 (74%) and Croesonen (75%). Lansdown, Croesonen and Cantref 2 are the areas with high rates of people living with long term limiting illness. Cancer incidences are higher in part of Llanover and Priory.

Abergavenny recorded the highest volume of crime during 2015/16, 1,376 crimes, 33.4% of Monmouthshire's total. Between 2014/15 and 2015/16 Abergavenny saw a significant reduction by 13.1% (-208 crimes), although in terms of crime rate per 1000 population Abergavenny (53) remains the highest.

Priory ward in Abergavenny had the second highest recorded crime (259) during 2015/16, although this was a decrease of 20% on the previous year. Priory ward had 259 crimes, the second highest number in Monmouthshire, followed by Grofield with 241 recorded crimes. Croesonen saw a 47% decrease in volume of crime during 2015/16.

Priority streets for total crime in 2015/16 in Monmouthshire include Frogmore Street, Abergavenny (107) and Merthyr Road, Abergavenny (89). There were some notable reductions in High Street, Abergavenny (-36.6%, from 41 to 26), Frogmore Street and Abergavenny (-30.5%, from 154 to 107).

The highest number of ASB incidents occurred in Abergavenny (661 incidents) accounting for 3 in 10 of all Monmouthshire's ASB incidents, although Abergavenny also experienced the largest reduction by 24.7% (-217 incidents). Priory (128) has the third highest number of ASB incidents and third highest rate per 1000 population (60)

Between 2011/12 and 2015/16 the highest number of fires attended in Monmouthshire were in Llanover (54) and Llanelly Hill (53) (source: South Wales Fire and Rescue). Over the same period, Llanover was also the ward where second most road traffic collisions were attended by South Wales Fire and Rescue (48).

The town centre in Abergavenny is dominated by retail, commerce, and leisure activities and also contains a number of important non-retail uses. The Abergavenny shopping hinterland covers a largely rural area from beyond Crickhowell in the west to Llantilio Crossenny and Raglan in the east. The hinterland extends as far north as Llanthony and Grosmont and towards Penperlleni in the south. Most comments received in the engagement work were positive but in Abergavenny,

however opinions over the old cattle market site are split with some people calling for the redevelopment to begin and other rejecting the need for another supermarket.

Of those interviewed in the Abergavenny zone for the Household survey of shopping patterns 69% said they do their main convenience shopping in Abergavenny, this is up on the levels recorded in the previous two surveys. 76% said they do their top-up convenience shopping within the town. In comparison to the other three main towns in the County Abergavenny maintains a higher share of the available trade across all of the comparison good sectors. For Abergavenny the main trade draws away from the town for comparison goods are Cwmbran and Cardiff.

## Monmouth and Surrounding Communities

### Environment

This area focusses around the historic town of Monmouth, located where the Rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye meet, and includes the south western 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 plateau 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>193</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 are important at a European level.

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 196 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>194</sup> The southern part of this area also has the county's only Local Nature Reserve, Cleddon Bog.

Tree disease is a significant threat which could fragment some of the well connected woodlands of the Wye Valley. Over the last ten years there has been a significant increase in the number of pests and diseases in the UK attacking our trees. There are imported pests diseases creating problems with Ash, Larch, Oak, Pine, Spruce and Horse Chestnut trees. Current threats include Ash Dieback and Larch disease which all have the potential to affect dramatically the landscape character of the AONB.<sup>195</sup> Already 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>196</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>197</sup>

Urban tree cover in Monmouth town is 17.5%, higher than most other Monmouthshire towns. However, there has been a loss of 584 trees mainly from the 2006-09 period, and a further 5 hectares lost between 2009-13.<sup>198</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.



Flooding in Monmouth, February 2014

The meeting of the rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye at Monmouth means that the town is at particularly high flood risk.<sup>199</sup> However, flood defences on the town side of the river means that much of the town has some protection. Most at risk is the Riverside Caravan Park, since there are no flood defences, properties are single storey and many residents are elderly and vulnerable. The Comprehensive school and Leisure Centre are also at risk of flooding. 116 people and 18 properties are at high or medium risk of flooding from surface water, with



1473 properties and 3462 people at low risk of river flooding.<sup>200</sup> With new housing developments in Wonastow Road, it will be even more important to continue to implement measures to reduce surface water run-off.

Through the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement work, there were 15 comments relating to concerns in Monmouth about the pressure that new housing developments are placing on infrastructure such as roads, schools, doctors and drainage.

Monmouth has a small but active voluntary sector working on sustainability, including the very active Transition Monmouth. They have recently been successful in getting funding from the Rural Development Programme towards an innovative and ambitious project to reduce flood risk by, amongst other things, planting trees to reduce run off.<sup>201</sup> By the end of March 2017 over 1000 trees will have been planted in 4 locations by a number of partners, with the ultimate aim of planting 50,000 trees during the 10 year project.

*“Stop building more houses and overwhelming the local infrastructure and contributing to climate change by bringing in more residents who have to drive 30-40-50 miles to work.” Monmouth resident*

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.<sup>202</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. Natural Resources Wales undertook a study on the A40 with their Mobile

*“Monmouth would be much better if it was not divided by the A40. The noise and pollution it causes deserves the attention and amelioration measures it does not receive.” Monmouth resident*

Monitoring Facility monitoring particulates, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide in 2015 and the site continues to be monitored, particularly given the close proximity to sensitive locations such as Monmouth School.<sup>203</sup> A number of residents in Monmouth mentioned their concerns about air quality and pollution from the A40.

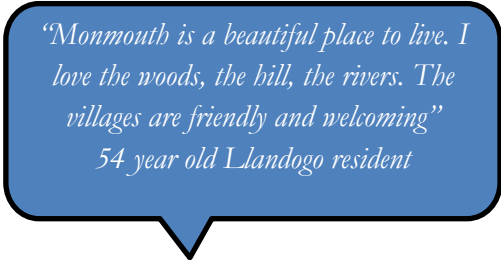
## Culture

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.

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 articulates 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. They provide 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 distance of 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 highest category of responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* Engagement in the area referenced the sense of Community, with the vast majority positive about the area as a place to live.



*“Monmouth is a beautiful place to live. I love the woods, the hill, the rivers. The villages are friendly and welcoming”*  
54 year old Llandogo resident

The surrounding area of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is of key environmental importance but also plays an important part in residents social, economic and cultural well-being in the area, the third highest category of responses in the area was Landscape and Countryside.

The town of Monmouth has significant archaeological and historical importance. The Council for British Archaeology have 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>204</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 Monmouth museum which exhibits one of the best collections of Nelson material in the world, a theatre and cinema. Festival and events include the annual Monmouthshire agricultural Show and the Monmouth Festival, a free nine-day music festival.

Respondents to a household survey show of those in the Monmouth catchment area who said they visited the cinema 44% said they usually went to the Savoy Theatre and Cinema, 72% of gym/leisure center users used Monmouth leisure centre, while respondents use of museums, art galleries and theatres people tended to travel further afield for these when they used them,

although the presence of a local theatre in the town means that 20% would visit the theatre in Monmouth.<sup>205</sup>

A few responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement responses referenced leisure services, mainly covering improvement of the range and availability of current leisure facilities and concerns over the future of a swimming pool at Monmouth leisure centre.

On average it takes over an hour to travel to a leisure centre on public transport in Monmouth and the surrounding area (74 minutes) which is well above the average for Wales at 41 minutes. For private travel, it takes 12 minutes, above the Wales average of 9 minutes.<sup>206</sup> Travel time to a public library is also long, it takes 65 minutes on public transport and 13 minutes on private transport.<sup>207</sup>

Many responses referenced parks and recreational areas and comments were divided with some concerns about the accessibility of facilities for children to play safely while other responses particularly from young people in the area were more positive of parks and play provision.

## Economy

Much of the data on the economy is not available below county level. Where figures are available there are some notable differences in economic activity.

The proportion of people who are economically active is above the Welsh average and marginally above the figure for Monmouthshire as a whole. The difficulty of young people securing a home has emerged as a key issue during the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement exercise. Average house prices in Monmouthshire vary from £161,118 in the Caldicot area to £330,556 in the large rural centre of the county<sup>208</sup>. Prices are lower in areas which include the towns of Caldicot, Chepstow and Abergavenny where population densities are higher and housing stock more varied.

The overall vacancy rate of the town centre has fluctuated in recent years in 2015 Monmouth had 15 vacant units constituting 7.9% of outlets.

The county had almost 70 hectares of employment land made up of 17 allocated sites in the Unitary Development Plan<sup>209</sup>. The majority of this employment land was in Magor, allied to the M4 corridor. There were issues regarding the distribution of employment land, therefore, and, while Monmouth and Abergavenny had reasonable amounts of land one of the main settlements.

6.4% of people in Monmouth and surrounding communities are in receipt of employment related benefits which is below the county and Wales averages. This masks local variations with figures of 3% in Mitchell Troy and Dixon with Osbaston and 16% in Overmonnow. 10.1% of the population are in income deprivation ranging from 3% in Dixon with Osbaston to 24% in Overmonnow.

In a number of communities there are stark relative differences between the rates of people in receipt of employment related benefits and those in income deprivation suggesting that policies to take people out of poverty need to look more broadly than just the working age population.

Headline rates of educational attainment at a school level also mask differences that become apparent when shown as the very local level, for example the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 inclusive at key stage 4 differed by more than 30 percentage points even within Monmouth and the surrounding communities ranging from 46.48% in Wyesham to 80.3% in parts of Drybridge, however looking at a lower level some parts of Drybridge have attainment at 58.61% highlighting just how localised these differences can be.

These highlight the importance of place when considering responses to societal challenges.

## Social

The population of Monmouth and the surrounding area is 16,439 and the smallest working age population of the five areas, with 54% aged 18-64 years old. Monmouth and its surroundings have the highest proportion of children, with 21.2% aged between 0-17. 24.9% of the population are aged 65 and over, and 3.6% aged 85 and over, the second highest of our five areas.

Monmouth and its surroundings have only one area in the most deprived 20% of areas in Monmouthshire. Part of Overmonnow (Overmonnow 2) is ranked as the second most deprived area in Monmouthshire where education is the prime concern. Residents in some parts of Overmonnow are eligible for Flying Start for pre-school children.

Access to services in the area is a key issue with some areas being ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales, for example Llantilio Crossenny is ranked as the 12<sup>th</sup> most deprived areas in Wales for access to services as classified by the Wales index for Multiple Deprivation. Average Travel time to a number of services, such as GP services and post office, particularly by public transport in the area is significantly longer than average time for Wales.

In Llantilio Crossenny in the Monmouth area 3.9% of the population live in homes with no central heating and in parts of Drybridge (Drybridge 2) the figure is 3.5%. These are the second and third highest proportions of homes without central heating in Monmouthshire. In parts of Overmonnow (Overmonnow 1) 9.2% of the population are living in overcrowded homes, the highest proportion in the county.

80% of people in Monmouth and the surrounding communities report their health is good or very good (Census 2011). Within the Monmouth area, this varies from 65% in Overmonnow 2 (also the second most deprived area in Monmouthshire, WIMD) to 86% in Trellech United 2.

Monmouth recorded the second highest number of crimes during 2015/16 (1,010 crimes, 25.4%), and increase of 30 crimes or 2.1% since 2014/15. Monmouth remains the lowest crime rate at 38 per 1000 population. The ward of Drybridge had the fourth highest volume of crime during 2015/16 (235). There were notable reductions in crime in 2015/16 in Monnow Street, Monmouth (-30.4%, from 115 to 80).

Monmouth had significant reductions in ASB incidents of 17.3%. In terms of ASB rates, Monmouth remains the lowest with a rate of 16.92. Drybridge had 122 ASB incidents recorded in 2015/16, fifth highest in Monmouthshire. A significant reduction was seen in Llantilio Crossenny (from 14 to 5, -64%).

Monmouth town centre includes retail, commerce, and leisure activities. The shopping catchment area for Monmouth covers a largely rural hinterland from Raglan in the west towards

Coleford in the east. The hinterland extends as far north as Skenfrith and Llangarron and towards Llangwm and Trellech in the south.

Of those interviewed in the Monmouth zone for the Household survey of shopping patterns: 61% said they undertake their main convenience shopping in Monmouth, this is lower than for either Abergavenny or Chepstow. 72% said they do their top up convenience shopping within the town, In comparison to the shopping patterns for convenience goods where Monmouth retains a high percentage of the available trade, comparison good trade is being drawn away from the town. Monmouth's location means that the main trade draws away from the town are both locations in Wales but also across the border in England.

# The Heart of Monmouthshire

## Environment

This area is characterised by rolling hills, productive farmland and many patches of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, some of them of a significant size. The area also includes steep hillsides marking the edge of the uplands of Brecon Beacons National Park to the north west. The River Usk flows through the centre of the area and is a dominant feature.

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. 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>210</sup>



There are 130 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 hence 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 greenspaces, 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, provision of good quality greenspace is relatively low. Provision for outdoor sports is particularly deficient in these rural areas. <sup>211</sup> This lack of provision of accessible green space is well illustrated by Figure 4 in the main environment section providing a map of greenspaces in

main Monmouthshire. 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>212</sup>

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 their formation in 1982 Usk In Bloom have 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. Their efforts have meant that they have won gold for 35 consecutive years for the Wales in Bloom Large Village category!<sup>213</sup>



Twyn Square, Usk, Source: <http://www.uskinbloom.org.uk/>

*"I live in Llangwm and I like the people and all the flowers" 9 year old from Llangwm*

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. Bridge Street in Usk offers a strategic route across the river, which means the volume of traffic using the A472 is relatively high, and the street is relatively narrow, giving rise to the exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. Traffic often queues along the A472 in Bridge Street because of parked delivery vehicles and traffic waiting to turn off, to access the free parking available in the town centre.<sup>214</sup> Nitrogen dioxide has a negative impact on health, causing and exacerbating breathing problems.<sup>215</sup> An Air Quality Action Plan is in place, but although the last two years have suggested a downward trend, it is too early to tell whether this is actually a trend since there are many other factors which affect air quality.<sup>216</sup> Usk's emerging Transition Town group are interested in the

*"Prohibit HGV's - there still seems to be a lot coming up main street and over the bridge" 45 year old Usk resident*

potential of green walls to help to absorb nitrogen dioxide and particulates and improve air quality.<sup>217</sup>

The River Usk has a broad flood plain, and is prone to flooding, and although traditionally development has avoided the natural flood plain, Natural Resources Wales class it as high risk of flooding based on number of properties in a community likely to be flooded.<sup>218</sup> Usk town is protected by flood defences,

but a number of roads in the area are flooded by tributaries to the Usk such as the Olway at Llanllowell. A total of 2164 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>219</sup>

*“Drains aren’t cleared causing flooding and build up of debris” 59 year old Usk resident*



Flooding in Usk, Source:

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

There are water quality concerns in this area. Although the River Usk is designated as a Special Area of Conservation, in order 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>220</sup> The Olway and Gavenny tributaries face a number of diffuse rural pollution pressures.<sup>221</sup> Land in this area is mainly Grade 3 or 4 under the Agricultural Land Classification<sup>222</sup>, and the relatively intensive agriculture in this rural area means that the county’s largest Nitrate Vulnerable Zone has been designated

near Raglan. 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>223</sup> There is also one Groundwater Source Protection Zone in the north western corner of this area along Mynydd Garnlochdy.

## Culture

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 second highest category of responses to the engagement was Landscape & Countryside, with again the majority of responses stating this is one of the important aspects for communities in the area.



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

The Heart of Monmouthshire is another area with no Welsh medium educational provision. Although access to education is an 11 mile journey to Abergavenny, or could 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%). 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%).

Sense of Community was the highest category of response to the *Our Monmouthshire* Engagement in the area, with the vast majority of people of all ages mentioning the area has a good community spirit and friendly communities to live in.

The area, mainly around the towns and villages has many local festivals, events and activities. A few responses to the engagement identified there were lots of community activities, particularly around Usk.

Responses to the household survey show over half of gym or sports/leisure centre users in the area use a facility in the County. In terms of respondent's use of museums, art galleries and theatres people tended to travel further afield although the presence of local theatres in Abergavenny and Monmouth means that 12% of respondents would visit one of these theatres.<sup>224</sup>

There was also a significant amount of responses, mentioning parks and recreation, with comments on these divided, with some concerns about the condition and accessibility of facilities particular in Usk and Raglan, while other responses from young people in the area in particular were more positive on parks and play provision.

Travel time to a leisure centre in the heart of Monmouthshire is poor; on average it takes over two hours to travel to a leisure centre on public transport (138 minutes), which is well above the average for Wales at 41 minutes. Similarly private travel 21 minutes is also well above the Wales average of 9 minutes.<sup>225</sup> Travel time to a public library is also long, it takes 73 minutes on public transport and 11 minutes on private transport.<sup>226</sup>

## Economy

Much of the data on the economy is not available below county level. Where figures are available there are some notable differences in economic activity.

The proportion of people who are economically active in the Heart of Monmouthshire is marginally below the average for the county and just under four percentage points higher than the average for Wales as a whole.

The difficulty of young people securing a home has emerged as a key issue during the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement exercise. Average house prices in Monmouthshire vary from £161,118 in the Caldicot area to £330,556 in the large rural centre of the county<sup>227</sup>. Prices are lower in areas which include the towns of Caldicot, Chepstow and Abergavenny where population densities are higher and housing stock more varied.

The overall vacancy rate in Usk town centre reached a significant level in 2010 with nearly 17% of units within the town vacant, however at the time of the latest survey this vacancy level has declined to 11.1% although it was still at a higher level than that experienced in the other town centres.

The county had almost 70 hectares of employment land made up of 17 allocated sites in the Unitary Development Plan<sup>228</sup>. The majority of this employment land was in Magor, allied to the M4 corridor. There were issues regarding the distribution of employment land, therefore, and, while Monmouth and Abergavenny had reasonable amounts of land one of the main settlements, Chepstow, had only one site of 0.3 hectares remaining.

The Heart of Monmouthshire has the lowest proportion of people in receipt of income related benefits at 6.6% ranging from 5% in Usk to 11% in Goytre. These figures are below the Monmouthshire and Wales averages. The area also has the lowest proportion of people claiming employment related benefits ranging from 3% in Usk to 9% of Goytre.

In a number of communities there are stark relative differences between the rates of people in receipt of employment related benefits and those in income deprivation suggesting that policies to take people out of poverty need to look more broadly than just the working age population.

Headline rates of educational attainment at a school level also mask differences that become apparent when shown as the very local level, for example the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 inclusive at key stage 4 differed by more than 25 percentage points even within the Heart of Monmouthshire ranging from 54.7% in parts of Goytre Fawr to 80.75% in Llanybi Fawr.

These highlight the importance of place when considering responses to societal challenges.

## Social

The heart of Monmouthshire has a population of 10,370 and the smallest proportion of children at 16.2%. The area is home to the second highest proportion of people aged 65 and over at 26.1%.

None of the small areas in the Heart of Monmouthshire appear 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 a number of 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.

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 has a higher than Gwent average (586.6) rate of cancer incidence (656.1).

South Wales Fire and Rescue attended 53 road traffic collisions in the ward of Llangybi Fawr between 2011/12 and 2015/16, which was the highest number in Monmouthshire. Raglan had the third highest number of collisions attended over the same period, 39.

Usk is the main town centre providing a range of facilities and services. The shopping hinterland is more compact than the large rural catchments that serve the principal market towns. The catchment serves an area extending from Raglan in the north to Llangybi in the south and extends as far east as Llansoy.

With no large supermarket locally few of the respondents in the Usk area interviewed for the Household survey of shopping patterns said they did their main convenience shop in the town. The majority of respondents are doing their comparison shopping either on line or at centres outside of the County. For Usk the main trade draws away from the town for comparison goods are Cardiff and Cwmbran.

# Severnside

## Environment

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 main line 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 land,<sup>229</sup> bounded by traditional reens to drain the low lying land, protected from coastal flooding by a flood bank. 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.



Severn Estuary

As described in the Chepstow and Lower Wye section, the Severn Estuary is of international importance for wintering and passage waterfowl, saltmarshes, exposed sand banks, fish feeding areas and 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>230</sup>

There are 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest which 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>231</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 are working on a Shril Carder Bee Project to maintain Monmouthshire's population of this rare bumblebee. There are 21 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 importance of the Gwent Levels for biodiversity was recognised by the Heritage Lottery Fund who awarded substantial funding to the RSPB to work in partnership with many organisations to preserve and protect 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.<sup>232</sup>

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 breaking up currently well connected habitats. As well as housing development, the area is also earmarked for the proposed M4 relief road. There has been much opposition to the relief road from environmental groups such as Gwent Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth Cymru, CPRW and others,<sup>233</sup> and the Future Generations Commissioner has written to Welsh Government Minister Ken Skates expressing concerns about how well the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act have been applied to decision making.<sup>234</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. With sea levels anticipated to rise between 50 and 100 centimetres by 2100 as a result of climate change<sup>235</sup>, the risk of coastal flooding increases. 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>236</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 Severnside area, the largest number of people likely to be affected out of all of the 5 areas of Monmouthshire.<sup>237</sup>

The Nedern Brook has poor water quality, due to pollution from sewage misconnections.<sup>238</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>239</sup>

Table 10: Urban tree cover by area	<b>Total Urban Tree Cover in 2013 (%)</b>
Gilwern	20.3
Abergavenny	17.5
Monmouth	17
Usk	16.4
Chepstow	15

Magor	15
<b>Caldicot</b>	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Rogiet</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Monmouthshire Average	15
Welsh Average	16.4

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>240</sup> There are 74km of public rights of way enabling people to explore the countryside, including access to the Wales Coastal Path.<sup>241</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>242</sup> However, in comparison with the rest of Monmouthshire and Wales as a whole, Severnside has much less urban tree cover, as shown in table 10. Rogiet only has 8.4% tree cover and Caldicot has 8.7% (compared with a Welsh average of 16.4%)<sup>243</sup> with a subsequent reduction in the benefits given by urban trees for well-being.

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 in close proximity to sensitive receptors such as homes or schools.

In comparison with other areas of Monmouthshire, the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement produced a lot of comments and suggestions about improving the local environmental quality of Severnside, tackling issues such as litter, pigeon mess, flowerbeds and weeds. There are fewer community groups in Severnside working on environmental issues. 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 to help improve local environmental quality such as litter and cutting back overgrown footpaths etc. A community supported agriculture project has also started at Caldicot Castle.

## Culture

Severnside is uniquely placed as being the landfall of the instantly recognisable new Severn 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%.

As aforementioned in other sections, the Severnside area would be 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 for 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.

In Severnside, Caldicot castle and Country Park is of particular historical importance and is increasingly being used for festivals and events. The area also has a number of other historically significant features.



Caldicot Castle

Landscape & Countryside was amongst the highest category of responses in the area along with sense of community, again the majority of responses stated this landscape is one of the important good aspects of the area with a good community spirit and friendly communities.

Parks and recreation was another high category of responses along with leisure services. Some feel that the leisure services and parks are good while others feel the area could be improved if there was more choice and better equipment in parks and leisure/ sport facilities in the area.

Travel time to a leisure centre in the area is line with the average for Wales, on average it takes 41 minutes on public transport and 9 minutes on private transport.<sup>244</sup> Respondents to a household survey show of 72% of gym/leisure centre users used Caldicot Leisure centre, while respondents use of museums, art galleries and theatres travelled outside the County to use these facilities.<sup>245</sup>

Other significant categories of responses included references to cultural activities in the area with many feeling these are a positive part of their lives, while a few feel more could be done to enhance these to be accessible to all.

Travel time to a library in the area is also in line with the average for Wales, on average it takes 37 minutes on public transport and 8 minutes on private transport.<sup>246</sup>

## Economy

Much of the data on the economy is not available below county level. Where figures are available there are some notable differences in economic activity.

The proportion of people who are economically active is highest in the areas in the south of the county. Chepstow, The Lower Wye Valley and Severnside have a higher number of people who live in Monmouthshire but work in other areas. Planned reductions in the Severn Bridge tolls will increase the accessibility of employment opportunities in Bristol but could also lead to the area being perceived as part of the commuter belt for the city putting pressure on house prices<sup>247</sup>.

The difficulty of young people securing a home has emerged as a key issue during the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement exercise. Average house prices in Monmouthshire vary from £161,118 in the Caldicot area to £330,556 in the large rural centre of the county<sup>248</sup>. Prices are lower in areas which include the towns of Caldicot, Chepstow and Abergavenny where population densities are higher and housing stock more varied.

The overall vacancy rate in Caldicot town centre had declined steadily between the 2000 and 2007 surveys; however since then there has been an increase, with the rate at 7.6% in 2015, with this increase predominantly coming from vacancies in the primary frontage. Our engagement with residents of Severnside many felt improvements were needed in the town centre.

The county had almost 70 hectares of employment land made up of 17 allocated sites in the Unitary Development Plan<sup>249</sup>. The majority of this employment land was in Magor, allied to the M4 corridor. There were issues regarding the distribution of employment land, therefore, and, while Monmouth and Abergavenny had reasonable amounts of land one of the main settlements, Chepstow, had only one site of 0.3 hectares remaining.

Severnside and Chepstow and the Lower Wye have low proportions of people in receipt of income related benefits and in income deprivation compared with the Monmouthshire and Wales averages. However even within these areas this can mask particular pockets. For example within the Severnside area the proportion of people experiencing income deprivation ranges from just 3% in The Elms to 18% in West End and Dewstow. In Chepstow it can range from 3% in St. Kingsmark to 26% in Thornwell<sup>250</sup>.

In a number of communities there are stark relative differences between the rates of people in receipt of employment related benefits and those in income deprivation suggesting that policies to take people out of poverty need to look more broadly than just the working age population.

Headline rates of educational attainment at a school level also mask differences that become apparent when shown as the very local level, for example the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 inclusive at key stage 4 differed by more than 30 percentage points even within the Severnside area ranging from 48.6% in Dewstow to 81.05% for the Elms. These highlight the importance of place when considering responses to societal challenges.

## Social

Severnside has a population of almost 20,000 and the largest proportion of working age residents, 59.5% aged between 18 and 64. Of the 5 areas, Severnside has the lowest proportion of people aged 65 and over (20.6%) and 85 and over (2.4%).

Three of the 11 most deprived areas in Monmouthshire are located within Severnside. West End is the fifth most deprived area, part of Severn is seventh and part of Dewstow and Green Lane ninth. For each area, the main category of deprivation is the physical environment which covers air quality and emissions, proximity to waste disposal and industrial sites and flood risk. Flying Start is available to some residents and their young children in West End. On average travel times to a number of 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 report good or very good health at the census in 2011. Again, variations within the area are notable, ranging from 75% in Dewstow to 89% in The Elms. Parts of Dewstow & Green Lane 2 have the highest rates of people living with long term limiting illness in the Severnside area. Dewstow also sees the highest rates of cancer incidence in the Severnside area.

There was a significant increase in recorded crime in Caldicot during 2015/16 (+170 crimes, +24.0%), Severn ward in particular saw an increase on 91%. Priority streets for total crime in 2015/16 in Monmouthshire include Newport Road, Caldicot (93), Notable rises have been seen in Woodstock Way, Caldicot (+80%, from 25 to 45).

Green Lane had 143 ASB incidents during 2015/16. An increase in ASB was noted in Portskewett (30 to 45, +50.0%) but a decrease in Dewstow (from 47 to 16, -66%).

Caldicot town has matured from its local centre nature to provide a retail facility for a hinterland wider than its own urban boundaries. The town centre is a more modern development than the other retail centres in the County. The catchment serves an area extending from Rogiet in the west to Portskewett in the east and extends as far north as Llanvair Discoed.

Of those interviewed in the Caldicot zone for the Household survey of shopping patterns: 57% said that they do their main convenience shopping in Caldicot, a significant increase on the previous two surveys. 85% said they do their top-up convenience shopping within the town. –

# Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley

## Environment

This area is centred around the town of Chepstow, and the south western 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 sand banks, fish feeding areas and 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 SSSIs in

the Chepstow and Lower Wye area, the most important sites for nature in Wales, comprising of meadows, woodland, bat sites and geological, as well as 154 SINC, site of local importance for nature conservation.<sup>251</sup>

Unlike many other parts of Monmouthshire, many of these sites are well connected to other 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>252</sup>

The Woodland Trust own a large part of Wentwood Forest and other sites, and NRW also own and manage a number of sites in the Lower Wye Valley.



Tintern Abbey in 1794, a watercolour by J. M. W. Turner

As well as wildlife designations the area is also valued for its landscape, hence the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status. The beauty of the landscape has for centuries brought visitors and tourists to the area to do a tour, and the popularity with visitors continues today. Historically, the “Wye Tour” was an excursion past and through a series of scenic buildings, natural phenomena, and factories located along the River Wye. It was a popular destination for British travellers from 1782 to around 1850, and reached its peak popularity during the Napoleonic Wars, with visitors travelling by pleasure boat from Ross on Wye down to Chepstow to take in the views and sketch.<sup>253</sup> Likewise today, many travel to the Chepstow and Wye Valley area because of the natural beauty and wildlife which is an important contribution to the local economy.<sup>254</sup>

Chepstow marks the start of several long distance walks, the Wye Valley Walk, Offa’s Dyke and the Wales

Coastal Path, and the Chepstow and Lower Wye area as a whole has 365 kilometres of public rights of way.

Although Chepstow town has a number of 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>255</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>256</sup>



Congestion on the A48 at Chepstow, Source:  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/southeastwales/hi/people\\_and\\_places/newsid\\_9358000/9358332.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/southeastwales/hi/people_and_places/newsid_9358000/9358332.stm)

Greater urban tree cover would perhaps go some way towards reducing the air quality problems that Chepstow faces. The A48 at Mount Pleasant, Hardwick Hill and Newport Road has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area, 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>257</sup> Despite this designation in 2007 and the development of an Air Quality Action Plan,<sup>258</sup> nitrogen dioxide still periodically exceeds the annual mean objective.<sup>259</sup>

The high traffic levels in this area are likely to be due to vehicles using the A48 to avoid having to pay the tolls on the Severn Bridge. As well as the health impacts that the high levels of pollution has the potential to cause, the tolls on the Severn Bridge also has an economic impact, with around 20 people from the south of the county in the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement saying that they would like the tolls to be removed. The Chancellor announced in the 2016 budget statement that tolls will be halved by 2018, so it is possible that this may reduce traffic levels on the A48.<sup>260</sup>

*“Severn Bridge tolls – we are concerned that the tolls increase traffic through the Wye Valley and impact upon employment” Tintern Ladies Group (60+ years)*

Generally water quality in the Chepstow and Lower Wye area is good with the River Wye and Mounon Brook both being of good quality.<sup>261</sup> The River Wye and its tributaries support many important species including Atlantic salmon, white-clawed crayfish, sea and river lampreys and otters.

However, the Nedern Brook, the northerly part of which is in the Chepstow and Lower Wye area, is of poor quality, due to pollution from sewages and misconnections.<sup>262</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>263</sup> In Chepstow

town 221 people are at high or medium risk of surface water flooding.<sup>264</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 south west 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 impact of flooding such as floodgates and sandbags.

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.

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>265</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>266</sup>

Chepstow has a reasonable 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, who 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.

## Culture

Chepstow is one of Monmouthshire's historic market towns and the area is bordered by Gloucestershire and Forest of Dean in England.

Figures from the 2011 Census portray this area has the lowest level of Welsh skills (87.7% stated they have no Welsh skills). Additionally the proportion of people who stated they could speak Welsh (8.8%) and speak, read and write Welsh (6.2%) 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 stayed consistent with other areas with 62% declaring themselves as Christian.

The landscape of the area, again, plays an important role in what residents and visitors feel is good about the area with the river wye, which has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world and natural beauty of the lower wye valley being amongst the significant factors in this. Many responses referenced the sense of community in the area with again the vast majority highlighting the good community spirit in the area.

The area has a rich history summed up the stunning built heritage in the area 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. Only a few responses to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement referenced events with most feeling these are a positive part of local life, although a few think they should be better supported. While Chepstow has a rich heritage and history, availability of cultural activities is an area which some respondents to the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement feel could be improved.

Public transport travel time to a library in the area is also above the average for Wales, on average it takes 51 minutes (35 Minutes is the average in Wales). Travel time by private transport is 10 minutes, slightly above the Wales average 8 minutes.<sup>267</sup>

Chepstow race course is the home of the Welsh Grand national and a high profile sporting venue in the County. A number of responses referenced leisure services, some people are happy with facilities in the area but some feel sporting facilities and parks could be improved.

Travel time to a leisure centre in the area on public transport is above the average for Wales at 56 minutes (Wales Average, 51 minutes). On private transport it is 9 minutes which is in line with the average for Wales.<sup>268</sup>

Respondents to a household survey show 59% of gym/leisure centre users used Chepstow Leisure centre. For use of museums, art galleries and theatres people tended to travel further afield except for visit museums, where 32% would go to the local museum in Chepstow<sup>269</sup>

## Economy

Much of the data on the economy is not available below county level. Where figures are available there are some notable differences in economic activity.

The proportion of people who are economically active is highest in the areas in the south of the county. Chepstow, The Lower Wye Valley and Severnside have a higher number of people who live in Monmouthshire but work in other areas. Planned reductions in the Severn Bridge tolls will increase the accessibility of employment opportunities in Bristol but could also lead to the area being perceived as part of the commuter belt for the city putting pressure on house prices<sup>270</sup>.

The difficulty of young people securing a home has emerged as a key issue during the *Our Monmouthshire* engagement exercise. Average house prices in Monmouthshire vary from £161,118 in the Caldicot area to £330,556 in the large rural centre of the county<sup>271</sup>. Prices are lower in areas which include the towns of Caldicot, Chepstow and Abergavenny where population densities are higher and housing stock more varied.

The overall vacancy rate in Chepstow town centre declined steadily up to 2007, however since this time it has increased, in 2015 the overall vacancy rate was 10%.

The county had almost 70 hectares of employment land made up of 17 allocated sites in the Unitary Development Plan<sup>272</sup>. The majority of this employment land was in Magor, allied to the M4 corridor. There were issues regarding the distribution of employment land, therefore, and, while Monmouth and Abergavenny had reasonable amounts of land one of the main settlements, Chepstow, had only one site of 0.3 hectares remaining.

Sevenside and Chepstow and the Lower Wye have low proportions of people in receipt of income related benefits and in income deprivation compared with the Monmouthshire and Wales averages. However even within these areas this can mask particular pockets. For example within the Sevenside area the proportion of people experiencing income deprivation ranges from just 3% in The Elms to 18% in West End and Dewstow. In Chepstow it can range from 3% in St. Kingsmark to 26% in Thornwell<sup>273</sup>.

In a number of communities there are stark relative differences between the rates of people in receipt of employment related benefits and those in income deprivation suggesting that policies to take people out of poverty need to look more broadly than just the working age population.

Headline rates of educational attainment at a school level also mask differences that become apparent when shown as the very local level, for example the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 inclusive at key stage 4 differed by more than 40 percentage points even within the Chepstow and Lower Wye area ranging from 37.25% in Thornwell to 78.65% in Caerwent.

These highlight the importance of place when considering responses to societal challenges.

## Social

The population of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley is 19,847 and similar in profile to Sevenside. 58.7% of the population are of working age, second highest after Sevenside. 21.1% of residents are aged 65 or older, 2.7% are aged 85 and older, and both are second lowest of the five areas after Sevenside.

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 third most deprived area in Monmouthshire, access to services being the most prominent type of deprivation with some areas ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales, for example Devauden and St. Arvans are in the top 150 most deprived areas in Wales. Average travel times for key services in the area as classified by the Wales index for multiple deprivation, particularly by public transport, are longer than average time for Wales. 9% of people in this area live in overcrowded homes, which is the second highest proportion in the county. Pre-school children residing in particular postcodes in

Thornwell and Severn are eligible for Flying Start. Parts of Severn also have a higher than average percentage of low weight babies.

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 second least deprived of Monmouthshire's areas). In the Chepstow areas, more people live with long term limiting illness and suffer from cancer in parts of Thornwell than other areas.

Recorded crime increased during 2015/16 in Chepstow (+117; 15.9%). Chepstow has a crime rate of 48 per 1000 population second highest after Abergavenny. St Mary's in Chepstow ranks in the top 5% in Wales in terms of Community Safety deprivation. This is reflected in St Mary's being the third ranked ward in Gwent in terms of violent crime per 1000 population. St Christopher's ward in Chepstow saw an 81% increase in crime between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Priority streets for total crime in 2015/16 in Monmouthshire include Monmouth/Station Road, Chepstow (80). Notable rises have been seen in James Stephens Way, Chepstow (although small numbers from 1 to 8), and Station Road, Chepstow (+78%, from 45 to 80).

Chepstow had significant reductions in ASB of 14.6% although in terms of ASB rates, Chepstow remains the highest with 32.5 incidents per 1000 population. St Mary's (158) had the highest number of ASB incidents and highest rate per 1000 population (83). Thornwell had 143 ASB incidents during 2015/16. Increased in ASB were noted in Devauden (from 0 to 7, +700%) and Shirenewton (from 30 to 46, +53.3%) while reductions were seen in Larkfield (from 39 to 19, -51.3%) and St.Mary's (from 233 to 158, -32.2%).

Between 2011/12 and 2015/16, Shirenewton had 49 fires attended by South Wales Fire and Rescue which was the third highest number by ward in Monmouthshire.

Chepstow town centre provides a broad range of facilities and the catchment area covers a largely rural hinterland including Shirenewton, Mynydd-Bach and Devauden in the west and Woolaston in the east. Llandogo forms the northern boundary and Mathern the boundary to the south. Of those interviewed in the Chepstow zone for the Household survey of shopping, 68% said they do their top up convenience shopping within the town. Chepstow's location with ease of access to the M4 means that the main trade draw away from the town is Cribbs Causeway in Bristol and Newport.



# Future Trends

It is important that public services look to the long term and do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To do this the Public Service Board must seek to understand long term trends, including potential disruptions that could impact on these and how we deal with them. In 2018 the PSB will need to consider how its well-being objectives could contribute to addressing trends.

The Welsh Government’s Future Trends report is one important source of evidence and is used as part of this chapter. Welsh Government acknowledge that at this stage the report is static and will need to be supplemented by a live resource.

## Population and Migration

The population of Monmouthshire is forecast to increase by less than one percent over the next twenty years. Of far greater significance is changes in the age profile of the county with the number of over 85 year olds increasing by 185% by 2039 while the number of people under 18 will decline by 14%<sup>274</sup>. Deaths are forecast to exceed births with the difference being made up of inward migration – mainly from other parts of the UK rather than overseas<sup>275</sup>.

Graph 5: proportion of population aged 85+



Graph 15: proportion of population aged 0-18



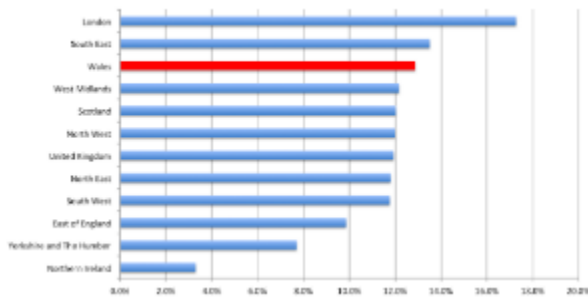
This will result in a significant increase in the ratio of older people to younger people in the county. The trends for Monmouthshire are shown in green above alongside the trends for Wales as a whole which are shown by the red bars.

The number of households is projected to increase while the average household size is projected to decrease with the largest growth in single person households.

## The Economy

There is currently a high degree of uncertainty about the future of the UK economy. Gross Domestic Product has been growing slowly since the 2008 recession. Measured in terms of Gross Value Added per head Wales’ economy grew at 12.9% between 2008 and 2015, the highest of any region apart from London and the South East. However growth in Monmouthshire was below the UK average<sup>276</sup>.

Graph 16a: Growth in GVA/head 2008-15



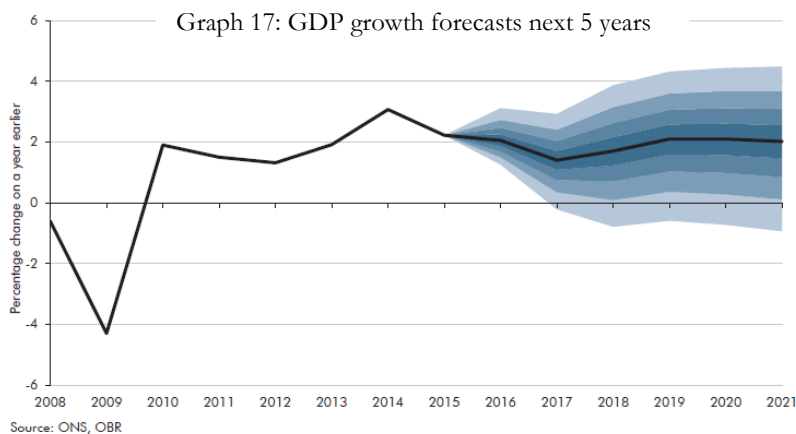
Graph 16b: Growth in GVA/head 2008-15



Wales presently appears to have a productivity problem with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the UK but also a lower Gross Value Added – in short there are quite a lot of people working but they are not doing high value or high skill work. If productivity does not increase then growth will be slower reducing household incomes and the tax revenue available to fund public services.

Changes in the global economy are likely to severely disrupt the job market as we know it. We have already seen the rise of the gig economy with firms like Deliveroo and Uber and human intelligence tasks through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. In future we are likely to see robotics, smart algorithms and artificial intelligence take up to 35% of existing jobs in the UK. Unlike mechanisation of the past this is likely to impact on traditional white collar professions.<sup>277</sup> There are a range of possible scenarios that could play out and these will be explored at this future trends work is developed.

There is uncertainty about what Brexit will mean for the Welsh and UK economies. This will depend on the nature of the arrangements put in place following the cessation of the UK’s membership. Graph 17 produced by the Office for Budget responsibility shows a range of forecasts of changes in GDP growth for the next five years.



Increasing affluence leads to changes in consumer demand with less spending on goods and more on services and experiences. However other nations are shifting towards greater provision of services.

## Climate Change

Climate change modelling anticipates that by 2050 Wales will see hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters, more extreme weather events and sea level rise,<sup>278 279 280</sup> which will lead to:

- Increase in flooding risk – threat to business continuity, harder to get insurance/mortgage, stress and mental health impacts.
- Possible reduction in winter mortality, but increase in heat related death/illness in summer.
- Risk to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures – especially a risk with ageing population, hence a big issue for Monmouthshire
- Risk to natural capital – ecosystems, soil and biodiversity - and impact on food, timber, fibre, clean water, carbon storage and cultural benefits from landscape.
- Forestry potentially affected by drought, fire, pests and diseases.
- Potential benefit to tourism
- Risk to domestic and international food production and trade.
- Potential increase in grass yield could support more livestock.
- Greater pressure on water supplies in summer for public supply, agriculture, energy generation and industry.
- More uncertain risk to air quality, and from human displacement and conflict over scarce resources.

## Fracking

Much of the Forest of Dean is earmarked for licensing for fracking. The area to the east of the River Wye from Tintern up to Monmouth is all part of the zone with the potential to be licensed. Each of the 10km square blocks has a 10km “zone of potential impact” surrounding it, meaning that should fracking be authorised, much of Monmouthshire may potentially be affected. Campaign groups in the Forest of Dean are working hard to persuade Gloucestershire County Council not to allow fracking. Herefordshire are also considering their options but are unlikely to go for a blanket ban.

The south of the county also has the potential to be licensed for underground coal gasification.<sup>281</sup> A swathe of the Gwent levels from Newport and across to include Magor, Undy and Rogiet are all in this proposed zone.

While Welsh Government has put a moratorium on all fracking activity in Wales for now, as have Monmouthshire County Council,<sup>282</sup> there is still uncertainty regarding the future of fracking in Wales. Concerns include water quality issues, biodiversity impacts and increased carbon emissions.

## Threats to habitats and ecosystem services

Many species and habitats in Wales are in decline due to a wide range of threats and pressures. For example, 90% of lowland grassland has been “improved” since the 1930s, resulting in a loss

of wildlife. Only 12% of Wales' woodland cover is ancient and semi-natural and much of it is degraded and fragmented, and 12% of Wales' former floodplain and coastal levels habitats have now been built on.<sup>283</sup>

In Monmouthshire, pressures and threats to biodiversity include:

- Housing development, reducing the size and connectivity of habitats.
- Intensification of agriculture.
- Infrastructure development.
- Invasive non-native species.
- Pathogens and diseases such as Ash Dieback.
- Water quality concerns from agricultural run-off and over-abstraction (taking too much water out of rivers).

A wide range of issues which are difficult to manage or regulate are contributing to reducing the resilience of Wales' ecosystems, which affects the delivery of ecosystem benefits and impacts on people's well-being, as well as lowering our and future generations' quality of life.<sup>284</sup> Across the UK, the net loss of biodiversity described in the first State of Nature report in 2013<sup>285</sup> appears to be ongoing, and despite some successes in Wales such as the recovery of otters and red kites, the loss of biodiversity and decline in quality of many species, habitats and designated sites is continuing.<sup>286</sup>

## Health and Well-being

Changes in demographics has a direct impact on trends in health and well-being and the demand for health and social services. Life expectancy is likely to continue to increase, and figures already described in the population section above demonstrate the issues that Monmouthshire is set to face with an ageing population. An older demographic is inevitably going to place pressure on health and social services during the population's additional years of life, since it is during older age that the likelihood of developing a chronic condition increases. For example, current estimates are that approximately 43,000 people in Wales are experiencing dementia and this is predicted to increase by over 30% in the next 10 years.

Whilst projections suggest that there will continue to be a decline in smoking and improvements in low birth weight babies, other health issues are on the increase. For example, during times of recession mental health problems affect more people and suicide rates increase.

Monmouthshire's suicide rate has risen steadily over recent years. There is evidence that more children suffer with mental health problems and many more have behavioural issues and this is set to increase.

Increasingly sedentary lifestyles mean that obesity has risen, and this is likely to rise, with subsequent increases in conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

## Welsh Language

Despite an overall decline in Welsh speakers across Wales, Monmouthshire was one of only 2 local authorities in Wales to see a rise in Welsh language figures from 2001 Census to 2011 Census. A major contributing factor to this rise can be assigned to the growth of the two Welsh medium primary schools, based at either end of the County. Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni has increased its capacity in response to growing demand. This combined with the hosting of the 2016 Eisteddfod would suggest that demand for Welsh medium education in Monmouthshire is likely to continue to grow.

Although Monmouthshire is not traditionally an area where Welsh is widely used, the likelihood is that with the introduction of the Welsh Language Standards, the number of employers within and around Monmouthshire requiring Welsh language skills is likely to increase. This will mean that there will be more opportunities locally for young people leaving Welsh medium education to be able continue to use the language in their employment and retain their language skills.

# Conclusions

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This assessment has been developed from a wide-range of evidence. It highlights a number of assets on which we can build a future for the people and communities of Monmouthshire and also a number of problems and challenges that need to be addressed.

The issues below are those that have emerged most clearly from the evidence we have received from individuals through extensive involvement, data, future trends, academic research and policy papers. This paper does not attempt to prioritise these in any way, it merely highlights the evidence that public service partners can use to undertake the next phase of their work in developing a well-being plan for the area.

During the consultation phase between January and March we are particularly interested to hear whether you feel we have identified the right issues based on the evidence presented as part of the assessment.

## Challenges and Opportunities Facing Public Services

- There is inequality between communities and within communities.
- Wage levels available locally are low, coupled with high property prices, making it difficult for young people and future generations to live and work locally
- With an increasingly globalised economy and technological advances tomorrow's workforce will need a very different skillset to those of today's school leavers
- Limited public transport, particularly in rural areas makes it harder for people to access jobs, services and facilities. This could be exacerbated by rising fuel prices but there are also future opportunities from things like automated vehicles.
- Adverse childhood experiences have a negative impact on people's long term health and economic prospects and can be perpetuated through the generations
- There is a need to increase healthy behaviours with a particular focus on the first thousand days of a child's life
- Reducing levels of physical activity which along with dietary changes are leading to growing levels of obesity. This is likely to lead to an increase in long-term conditions associated with it such as type 2 diabetes
- An ageing population brings many opportunities, however there are also challenges for service provision and increases in the number of people living with long term conditions.
- The natural and built environment needs to be protected and preserved for future generations, due to risks from development, climate change and pollution
- There are human health impacts of air pollution, especially in Usk and Chepstow
- Water pollution is a concern, especially from changing agricultural practices
- Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding, as well as many other risks, so mitigating climate change and building resilience is crucial
- There is a need to increase accessibility of arts, culture and heritage and to ensure adequate provision of Welsh medium education
- Monmouthshire has high levels of social capital and volunteering. By taking an asset and placed based approach there is an opportunity to improving well-being.

# Next Steps

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This well-being assessment has been produced following extensive engagement throughout the second half of 2016. It is presently in draft form and for six weeks from 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017 we welcome comments and feedback from partners, groups and individuals. At the end of March the assessment will be presented to the Public Service Board for approval.

However, the well-being assessment will be an ongoing and dynamic document. In 2017 the assessment will be explored in more detail, including more work to identify and develop any further evidence that is needed. This will include further work on future trends which, by its very nature, is an area which will change continuously. As part of this we will be holding focus groups to understand some of the issues and identify some of the potential solutions and ideas that could help address the challenges and build on the opportunities presented in the assessment.

The Public Services Board will prepare and publish a local well-being plan setting out its local objectives and the actions it will take to meet them. This will be in place by May 2018. The well-being assessment will continue to be a live document that can be updated and added to.

In choosing local objectives and any proposed steps the board will take into account the issues covered in the assessment of local well-being. The assessment provides the evidence base for the PSB to determine the local objectives it sets. These will be the issues where it's decided that collective action can be taken that will have a positive impact on well-being in the area. Individual statutory members of the board must also set their own well-being objectives which will be influenced by the evidence in the assessment.

Through preparing this assessment of well-being, the Public Service Board have had the opportunity to capture the strengths and assets of the people and communities of Monmouthshire. The Public Service Board must now recognise and build on these strengths as it develops the well-being plan, which will ensure that public bodies pull together to help improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the county.

# Appendix 1: Data Tables

There are 46 national well-being measures that have been established under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. At time of publication these have yet to be produced. The PSB, along with others in Gwent, has worked with Data Unit Wales to produce a core set of information to underpin the assessment. This is shown on the table below. This assessment also draws on a wider range of data which can be seen throughout the report.

Indicator	Year	Monmouthshire	Wales
Number of dwellings improved through disabled facilities grants	FY 2014-15	88	4770
Rate of deaths due to cardiovascular diseases per 100,000 population (European age-standardised)	2014	242.7	284.7
Rate of deaths due to cancer per 100,000 population (European age-standardised)	2014	236.6	289.1
Gap between the employment rate of those with a long term health condition and the employment rate of people aged 16 - 64 years	FY 2013-14	6	15
Rate of emergency admissions for hip fractures in people aged 65+ per 100,000 population (European age-standardised)	2013	600	611
Gap in years in the life expectancy at birth of males (between the most and least deprived)	2010-2014	6.3	8.8
Gap in years in the life expectancy at birth of females (between the most and least deprived)	2010-2014	3.6	7.2
Average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth in children aged 5 years	2014-2015	1.14	1.29
Number of delayed transfers of care (all reasons)	Apr-Dec 2016	16	Not Available
Percentage of children aged 4 - 5 years of a healthy weight	AY 14-15	*	72.9
Number of HHSRS category 1 hazards found during the year	FY 2014-15	34	2094
Percentage of adults who reported being a current smoker	2014-2015	18	20
Percentage of adults who reported binge drinking alcohol on at least one day in the past week	2014-2015	27	24
Percentage of adults who reported eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables the previous day	2014-2015	35	32
Percentage of adults who reported meeting exercise/physical activity guidelines in the past week	2014-2015	30	31
Percentage of children aged 4 - 5 years of a healthy weight or underweight	AY 14-15	78.9	73.8
Percentage of children aged 4 - 5 who are overweight or obese	AY 14-15	21.1	26.2



Percentage of all children up to date in immunisation schedule by age four	FY 2014-15	86.5	86.2
Number of killed or seriously injured road casualties	2015	21	1186
Percentage of children in need achieving the Foundation Phase indicator	31 Mar 2015	43	54
Total number of households decided to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need per 1,000 households	FY 2014-15	2.88	3.89
Percentage of low birth weight live single births	2015	4.9	5.6
Number of permanent exclusions from maintained schools	AY 13-14	0	89
Percentage of adults who reported their general health status as fair/poor	2014-2015	16	19
Percentage of adults who reported being overweight or obese	2014-2015	53	59
Percentage of Flying Start children reaching or exceeding their developmental milestones at 3 years	FY 2014-15	50	50
Rate of suicide deaths per 100,000 population	2013-2015	12.9	12.3
Rate of under 18 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15 – 17	2014	14.2	25.4
Life expectancy of males	2010-2014	80.5	78.3
Life expectancy of females	2010-2014	84.1	82.3
Percentage of 16 year olds leaving care with no qualifications	2015	*	21
Rate of male cancer registrations per 100,000 population	2014	643.3	697.3
Rate of female cancer registrations per 100,000 population	2014	520	560.3
Rate of all offences per 1,000 population	FY 2014-15	43.31	58.95
SCC/004 - Looked after children with 3 or more placements (Percentage)	FY 2014-15	1.9	9
Number of individuals assessed for alcohol misuse	FY 2014-15	146	7662
Number of individuals assessed for drug misuse	FY 2014-15	148	6942
Percentage of people aged 3+ who can speak Welsh	27 Mar 2011	9.9	19
Number of people who consider themselves non Welsh	2015	42900	1113300
Percentage of adults who reported meeting exercise/physical activity guidelines in the past week	2014-2015	30	31
Capacity of renewable energy equipment installed (MW)	2014	21.8	1810.3
Ecological footprint per person (global hectares)	2011	3.42	3.28
Carbon footprint per person (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	2011	11.5	11.1
Air quality concentration score	2012	52	
Air emissions score	2012	43	
Flood risk score	2014	47.6	
Kilotonnes CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	2014	736.5	28705.1

Tonnes CO2 emissions per resident	2013	8.6	9.6
Percentage of properties with a high risk of flooding	2014	1.1	1.1
Percentage of properties with a medium risk of flooding	2014	1.5	2
Percentage of municipal waste sent for reuse/recycling/composting	FY 2014-15	63.2	56.2
Percentage of pupils aged 15 who achieved level 2 threshold	AY 14-15	91.2	84.1
Percentage of pupils aged 15 who achieved level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and Mathematics	AY 15-16	67.0	60.3
Percentage of Year 11 school leavers that are NEET (known not to be in employment, full time education or work based training for young people)	2015	1.9	2.8
Percentage of Year 13 school leavers that are NEET (known not to be in employment, full time education or work based training for young people)	2015	3.3	3.8
Percentage of working age people who are economically active	Jun 2016 (Qtr)	80.1	75.2
Percentage of working age people who are employed	Jun 2016 (Qtr)	77.7	71.3
Percentage of working age people aged 50+ who are employed	Sept 2016 (Qtr)	41.9	39.1
Percentage of working age people who are benefit claimants	May 2016 (Qtr)	10.2	14.9
Average gross weekly full time pay (£)	2016	623.4	498.3
Percentage of children living in workless households	2015	6.6	13.6
Percentage of workless households	2015	10.8	18.3
Percentage of working age people who are claiming Job Seeker's Allowance	Oct 2016	0.8	1.5
Percentage of Job Seeker's Allowance claimants who are aged 17-24	Oct 2016	13.2	14
Number of active businesses	2015	4015	95010
Percentage of working age people qualified to NQF level 3 or above	2015	64.1	57.5
Percentage of working age people qualified to NQF level 4 or above	2015	44.7	36.1
Percentage of working age people with no qualifications	2015	6	9.5
Percentage of children living in low income families	31 Aug 2014	14.2	22.5
Percentage of all 7 year olds achieving the expected level at the end of the Foundation Phase	AY 15-16	91.7	87

FY = Financial Year, AY = Academic Year

# Appendix 2: Our Monmouthshire

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

Between August and December 2016 staff from public services in Monmouthshire attended over 80 events speaking to more than a thousand people. This has helped us understand the issues that matter most to people in Monmouthshire. We called this engagement process *Our Monmouthshire*.

We asked two questions:

- What is good about where you live?
- What could make it even better?

We wanted to draw on the strengths and assets of an area, rather than asking people what they are unhappy about.

We were conscious that although data and statistics may tell us one story, people's perception and understanding of well-being may be different. Involvement is a key principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and so new graphics were designed for *Our Monmouthshire* to try and engage as many people as possible. We used a colour scheme that didn't look like Monmouthshire County Council colours, to emphasise the partnership nature of the PSB. Maps of each of the 5 areas were produced, together with fact cards which gave some short social, economic, environmental and cultural facts about the area to stimulate discussion and ideas.



Recognising the importance of planning for the long term and preventing problems in the future, some future trends cards were included to prompt conversations and encourage longer term thinking. People were encouraged to respond by completing attractive postcards with images of the county on them, or larger sheets, which could either be filled in on the spot or be left in *Our Monmouthshire* postboxes in the five Community Hubs.

Involving people from as wide a cross section of the community as possible has been important as part of working towards a more equal Wales, so efforts were made to ensure that we involved young and old and people with protected characteristics. We also wanted to reach people where they were already at, rather than expecting people to come to us, so we went to a large number of venues and groups to speak to people.



To be as inclusive as possible, the ways we engaged with people varied in response to different groups' needs. For example, following feedback from a school that was visited, an extra question was added for children asking what they would like to happen in the future, and in groups for older people or the visually impaired, large headings were put on flip charts on the wall and comments were grouped under those headings, with officers helping to

write comments.

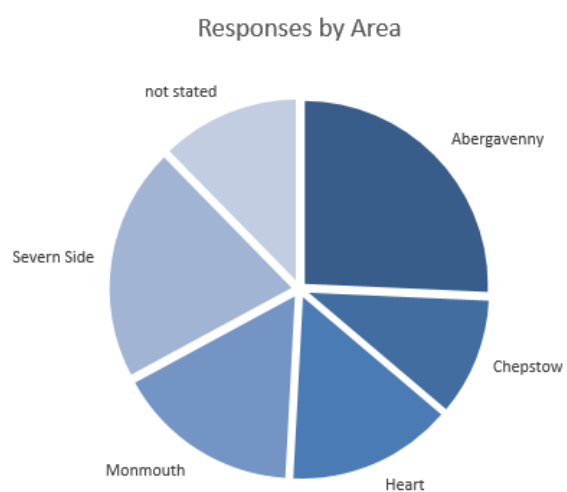
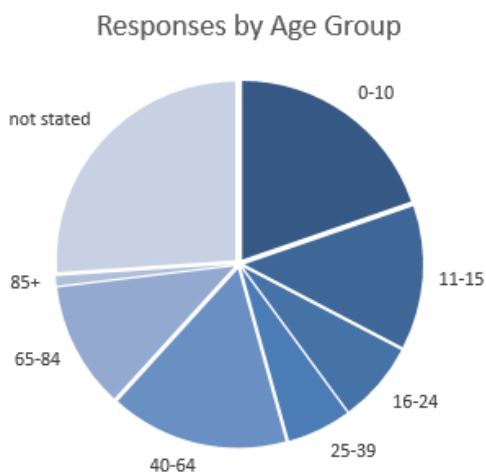
A number of electronic ways of engaging were also used. People could respond via Facebook and Twitter using the *#ourmonmouthshire* tag. There was an online questionnaire for people to complete, and they could get involved and have their say using Monmouthshire Made Open, our digital engagement platform.

The following list shows the range of locations, groups and organisations that representatives of the PSB visited for *Our Monmouthshire*.

Abergavenny 50+ Group  
 Abergavenny Adult Education Classes  
 Abergavenny Civic Society  
 Abergavenny Community Centre  
 Abergavenny Jobs Fair  
 Abergavenny Library  
 Abergavenny Town Hall  
 Ace centre  
 Acorn Centre  
 Ageing Well Forum  
 Beachley Barracks Coffee Morning  
 Bridges Monmouth Social circles/tea dance  
 Bronze Ambassadors young people  
 Bulwark Community Centre  
 Caldicot Hub  
 Caldicot Market  
 Chepstow Parent Group  
 Chepstow Rugby Registration Day  
 Chepstow Show  
 Facebook  
 Financial Exclusion and Digital Inclusion Partn  
 Abergavenny Fire Station  
 Flu Jab Morning  
 Gilwern Coffee Morning  
 LGBT awareness event at County Hall  
 Life Issues Group  
 Livestock Market  
 Llandogo Coffee Morning  
 Llanfoist School assembly  
 Monmouthshire Made Open  
 Magor Square  
 Mon Community Climate Champions  
 Monmouthshire Fairtrade County Group

Monmouth Visually Impaired Group  
 Bridges Stroke Association Coffee Morning  
 Monmouth Business Network Meeting  
 Monmouth Market  
 Monmouth MS Society 8/9/16  
 Monmouth Place Group  
 Monmouth Show 25/8/16  
 MCC Members Seminar  
 MCC MonDelivers Seminar for staff  
 Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board  
 Monmouthshire Voices  
 Online Questionnaire  
 Parent forum for children with autism, Undy  
 Parent Forum of Children with Autism  
 Parent & toddler, Aber Comm Centre  
 People First Monmouth  
 Police & Crime Commissioner Event for Comm Councils  
 PSB Engagement and Participation group  
 Raglan Project  
 Rogiet Community Café  
 Rogiet School assembly  
 Shirenewton Super Saturday  
 Tintern Ladies Group  
 Tintern Table Top Sale  
 Transition Chepstow  
 Transition Monmouth  
 Usk Farmers Market  
 Usk Hub  
 Usk Show  
 Youth Service Alton Towers trip  
 Youth Service INSET training day  
 Youth Service work with Secondary Schools  
 Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni

These charts show the proportion of responses that came from different age groups and which area most people lived in:



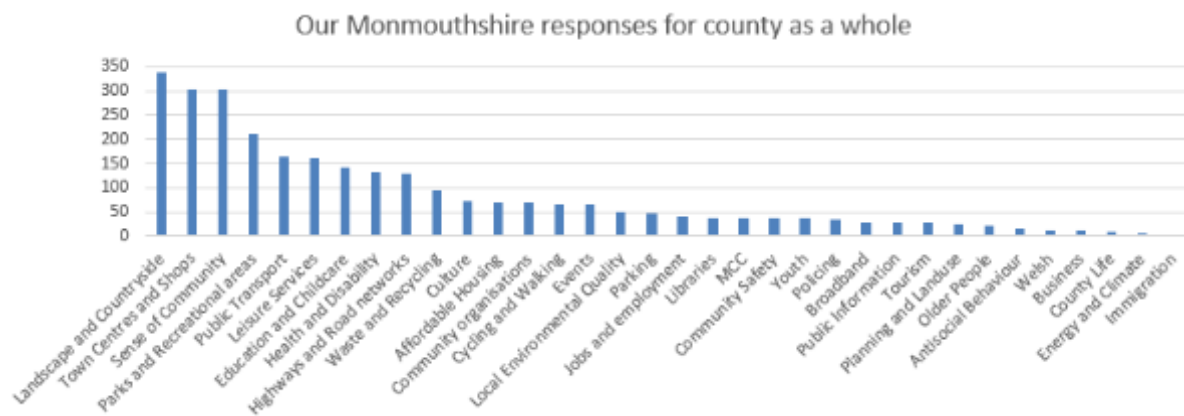
## What have people talked about as part of *Our Monmouthshire*?

To make it easier to analyse the many diverse comments that were received to the two open ended questions that we asked, comments were grouped into categories or themes.

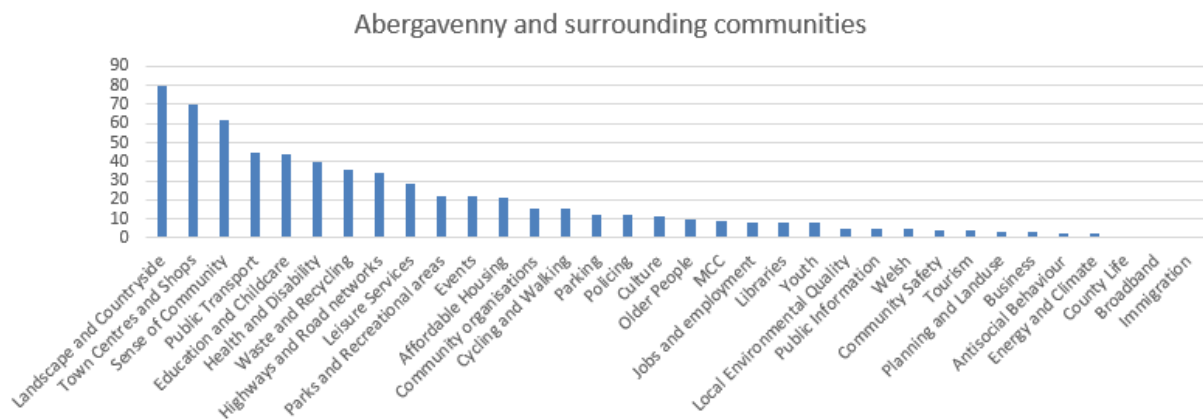
The theme that generated by far the most comments was landscape and countryside, with these comments being overwhelmingly positive about how the beautiful area and landscape benefit both residents and visitors. The next largest category of comments was about town centres and shops. These comments vary to some extent on where people come from. Some people are happy with their town centres and shopping provision, others are unhappy about empty shops, particularly in Caldicot. In several places, there was concern about supermarkets having a negative effect on town centres. Also attracting a large number of comments were responses on the strong sense of community where they live and friendly people.

Other themes that generated many comments include parks and recreation, public transport, leisure services, education and childcare, health and disability and highways and roads.

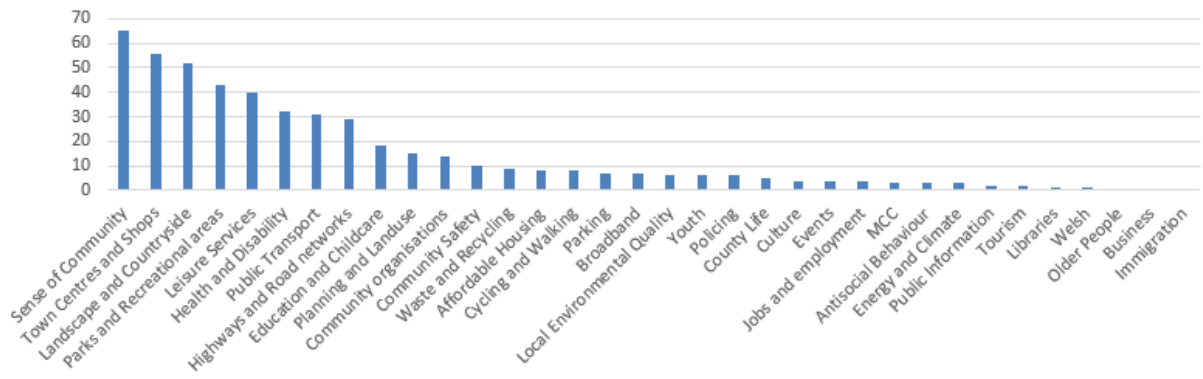
The following chart shows the number of comments by theme for the county as a whole:



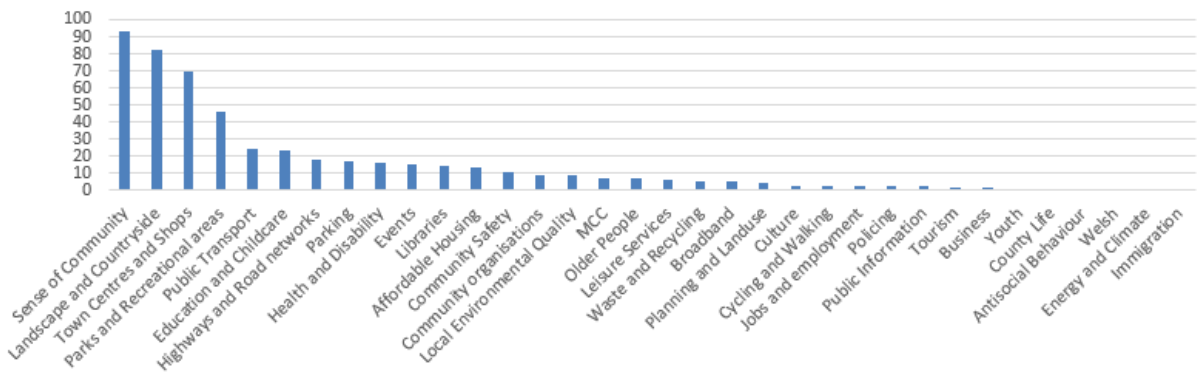
We know that in such a large and diverse county there are big differences between areas and the things that matter most to the residents of these communities. You can see some of these differences in the following charts:



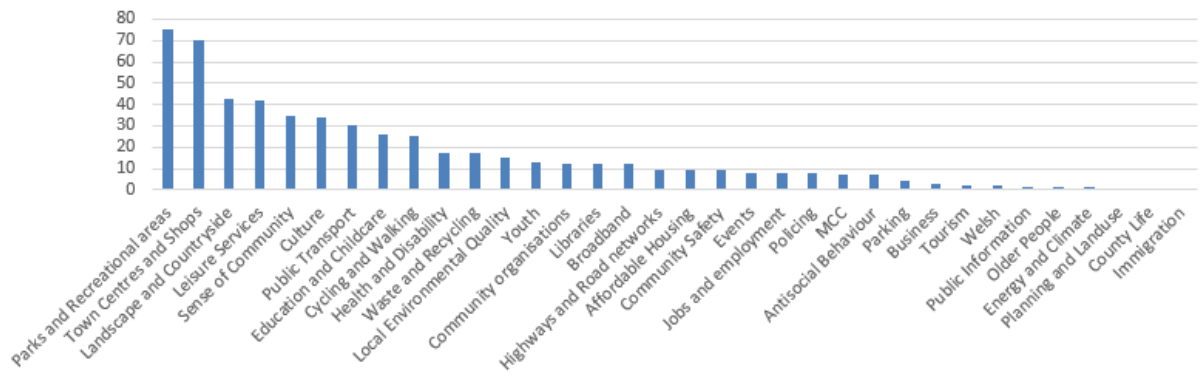
### Monmouth and surrounding communities



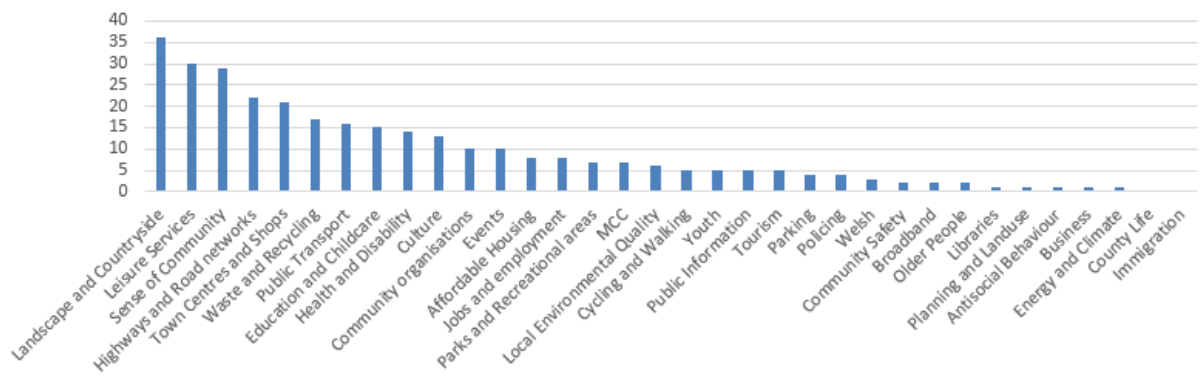
### Heart of Monmouthshire



### Severnside



### Chepstow and Lower Wye Valley



## What will happen next?

We will use the things people have told us through *Our Monmouthshire*, combined with data, statistics and research, to produce a well-being assessment. This will help us prioritise the things that public services should do to maximise the well-being of current and future generations.

The draft well-being assessment will be made available on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and there will be a further six weeks when people can comment on the document and let us know if you think we are identifying the things that matter most.

The well-being assessment will be agreed by the Public Service Board at the end of March and published in May 2017. The Public Service Board will then be looking closely at the findings of the assessment to help them decide on priorities to focus on in the well-being plan which will need to be produced by May 2018.





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