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MONMOUTHSHIRE



Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment 2022 Summary Version

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Version Control

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

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

This is the summary version of the Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment. To see further analysis please visit www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Monmouthshire Profile.....	6
Economic Well-being.....	7
Social Well-being.....	8
Environmental Well-being.....	14
Cultural Well-being.....	17
Key Emerging Issues.....	22
Monmouthshire's Five Areas	25
Abergavenny and surrounding area	25
Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley.....	27
The Heart of Monmouthshire	30
Monmouth and surrounding area.....	32
Severnside	35
Future Trends.....	38
References	50

Introduction

Monmouthshire faces a number of challenges now and in the future. These include climate change, income and health inequalities and access to housing and transport. These are really complex things and we 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.

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

In 2021, the five local authorities in Gwent moved from having five separate Public Service Boards to having one overall Gwent Public Service Board. PSBs must prepare and publish an assessment of local well-being, produce a well-being plan and report annually on its progress. This is the Monmouthshire part of Gwent's first well-being assessment and it will describe well-being in the county based on a broad range of evidence.

This assessment has been produced following a range of engagement and 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. The report will be finalised by May 2022. The Public Service Board will then use the Gwent level assessment, together with these local assessments, to develop a set of well-being objectives for the area.

If you'd like to be more involved, then please get in touch with us using the contact details on the previous page.

The Communities of Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire is geographically large and headline statistics can fail to shine a light on the differences within and between communities. 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.

The assessment is structured so that you can read about the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of each area as whole with some key messages for each area also highlighted.



Integration

The following matrix shows how the themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals. This process is a useful way of ensuring that the well-being assessment is sufficiently cross-cutting and integrated and is addressing all of the goals.

	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
Jobs and employment							
Earnings and locations							
Worklessness and inequality							
The effect of Covid-19							
Health and Well-being							
Transport and access to services							
Crime							
Mental Health							
Loneliness and Isolation							
Housing							
Child Development							
Education							
Ageing Well							
Landscape and Countryside							
Air and Water Quality							
Climate Change							
Waste and Recycling							
Welsh Language							
Faith and Religion							
Landscape and Heritage							
Community and Social Action							
Cultural Attractions							
Sport and Leisure							

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

Monmouthshire Profile

Located in south-east Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in south Wales and the south-west of England and the Midlands. The county covers an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with an estimated population of 95,164.¹

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

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

Monmouthshire has major landscape resources and is home to internationally and nationally designated landscapes, ranging from the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east and the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site to the north-west. It contains some good quality agricultural land and has a high proportion of farming land altogether – more than double the Welsh average, with 16.7% of this used for crops and horticulture.²

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.³ There is a higher-than-average proportion of older people in the county which is forecast to rise further. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033.⁴

Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous area offering a high quality of life for its residents. This is reflected in the 2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, with none of the lower super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 10% in Wales.⁵ However, as is highlighted elsewhere in this assessment, these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when juxtaposed with areas of relative wealth.

Economic Well-being

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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An economy's performance has a strong bearing on well-being. There is a perception of Monmouthshire as being an affluent county: the average annual wage is £34k, higher than the Wales average of £29k, and there is an above-average percentage of working-age people in employment.⁶ However, there are issues and challenges, explored below.

Jobs and Employment

Monmouthshire has the second highest number of businesses per head of population in Wales. However, there is a relatively low business start-up rate compared to the Wales average, the combined England and Wales average, and that of the Cardiff Capital Region.⁷

Although fewer businesses are started in Monmouthshire, those that are have a slightly better chance of survival. More than 90% of enterprises employ less than 10 people.⁸ Only the manufacturing sector includes firms with 250 or more employees. This may be a factor in high levels of out-commuting.

Tourism is an important aspect of Monmouthshire's economy. In 2019, 2.28 million visitors contributed £245 million to the county's economy.⁹

Monmouthshire has had a slow uptake of allocated employment land, with 19.5% of the total area of industrial and business sites identified in the last adopted Local Development Plan still available for development, although there are presently limits on development in large parts of the county as a result of high levels of phosphates in the county's waterways.¹⁰

The county has 77% people in employment compared with 72% for Wales and 74% for Great Britain.¹¹ However, an ageing population and potential limits on housing as a result of the National Development may affect future economic growth.¹²

Earnings and locations

In the last five years, the wages on offer in Monmouthshire have been approximately 10% below the UK average, and just under the Wales average. However, overall earnings by place of residence are still higher than the Wales or UK average: £688.8, £570.6 and £613.1, respectively.¹³

The difference between the wages on offer in Monmouthshire jobs and the wages earned by Monmouthshire residents is due to people working in higher paid jobs outside the county. 43% (19,700) of the county's economically active residents out-commute.¹⁴

The average incomes of economically active women who both live and work within the county is significantly lower than that of men within the same category.¹⁵ As of April 2021, the mean full-time pay gap was 5.4%, though this is lower than the Welsh mean of 9.8% and the UK mean of 14.9%.¹⁶

House prices were 8.23 times the average earnings, compared with 5.88 for the Wales average, making it harder to get on the property ladder and for young people and future generations to live and work locally.¹⁷ This issue was raised by residents in the engagement responses.

Since 2017 there has been an increase in vacant retail space.¹⁸ The four largest retail centres have recorded a rise in vacancy rates although all town centres, except for Monmouth, are below or broadly in line with the Great Britain high street vacancy rate, though in many of the engagement responses Monmouthshire residents referenced the high streets and expressed concern for their long-term survival.¹⁹ The long-term effect of Covid-19 on the high street is not yet known.

Worklessness and Inequality

Monmouthshire's economy is currently ranked second in Wales, behind Cardiff, in the UK Competitiveness Index while Wales as a whole lags behind other parts of the UK.²⁰ The largest employment sectors in the county are those that tend to suffer from low pay.²¹

Despite higher levels of economic activity there are pockets of higher unemployment within the county located particularly in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and the community council areas of Llanfoist and Llantilio Pertholey.²² There are no areas in the most income-deprived 10% and only 26.8% in the most income-deprived 50% in Wales. The picture is one of overall affluence but with stark income and employment disparities between individual areas; for example, the percentage of children living in workless households has risen from 4.9% in 2009 to 11.2% in 2019.²³

The effect of Covid-19

In Monmouthshire, the onset of the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns saw the numbers of out-of-work benefit claimants increase significantly, with the number of employees on furlough ranging from a peak of 10,500 in July 2020 to 2,600 at 31st May 2021.²⁴

Although the county has fared relatively well as a whole, among those who are most likely to have been affected economically by lockdowns are young people and those on a low-income which could have widened existing inequalities.²⁵

Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Many of the issues above integrate with other sections of the assessment.

Employment and income create opportunities and has a significant influence on cultural, social and environmental well-being. The natural environment provides jobs and opportunities. However, rural communities can be more prone to poverty than urban areas. The prevalence of low paid and fragile employment contributes to the risk of in-work poverty.



Social Well-being

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

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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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.²⁶ Behind the headline rates, there are notable variations, with those living in the least deprived areas of Monmouthshire expected to live longer than those in the most deprived, by on average 6.3 years for males and 3.6 years for females.²⁷

Health is influenced by many factors such as income, housing, education, access to services and deprivation in general.²⁸ The county fares well compared to the rest of Wales with no areas in the most deprived 10%.²⁹ 80.1% of people in Monmouthshire consider their general health to be good or very good, compared to 81.4% in England and 77.8% in Wales.³⁰ However, only a third of people report eating five portions of fruit or veg a day, a fifth of people drink above recommended guidelines and 56% of people are overweight or obese.³¹ Further local health services, improved provision and the need to ensure that suitable care is available are frequent comments in the engagement responses.

Community growing activities such as community gardens, Incredible Edibles and community orchards are in place across the county. These projects could increase confidence in cooking with vegetables and fruits which could improve the diet for all.³²

Healthy lifestyles in childhood and adulthood allow for healthy ageing and preventing chronic disease in older age. Regular exercise can reduce the risk of major illnesses by up to 30%.³³ Physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy. Although Monmouthshire has one of the highest sports participation rates in Wales, 37% of adults in the county do less than the recommended 150 minutes of exercise a week.³⁴

Obesity is rising in Wales, as it is globally. Between 2003 to 2015 there was a 4% increase obesity among adults in Wales. In 2018/19, 21.4% of 4 and 5-year-olds in the county were overweight or obese.³⁵ As many sedentary behaviours start in childhood, such as school children being driven to school, children living with obesity are more likely to become obese adults.

Transport and Access to Services

Transport is essential for many aspects of daily life, providing opportunities for people to access jobs, leisure, and social activities as well as vital services, including education and healthcare.

Public and private travel times to services such as doctors' surgeries are higher than the Wales average in every category except one. While unsurprising in a rural county, these times are a concern when considering its number of elderly residents and inadequate public transport. In the engagement responses, better public transport came out strongly as something that would improve the area where people live.

Only 4% of people in the county commute to work using public transport. Six out of ten of drivers say that they would switch to public transport if its quality improved.³⁶ In addition to the potential positive effect on well-being, this would also have benefits for the environment. Currently, only

1% of people in commute to work by cycling. Significant investment is being made in active travel, however, the rural nature of the county makes this more difficult.³⁷

Nearly 70,000 vehicles are registered in Monmouthshire reflecting the challenges of using public transport or walking and cycling in a rural county. The costs of owning a vehicle are likely to increase in future years, with plans to phase out the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030. The council has installed chargers in several car parks across Monmouthshire and data shows they are being well used.³⁸

Community Safety

Crime in Monmouthshire is at a lower level than in the five other local authority areas covered by Gwent Police, but there has been a marked increase in certain crime types within the county recently with the overall rate increasing from 44.6 to 49.4 recorded crimes per 1000 population.

Incidents of Rape increased 35% between 19-20 and 20-21, while Other Sexual Offences increased 36.9%. Shoplifting, residential burglary, commercial burglary, thefts, and vehicle crime have mainly shown reductions over this period, which is likely due in part to lockdowns.

There is evidence that Organised Crime Groups are operating within the county, which may contribute to some of the increases in certain crime types. Drug Offences are showing a reduction. However, substance misuse remains an ongoing issue within our younger population with higher than average levels of smoking, cannabis use, and alcohol consumption.

Anti-Social Behaviour incidents are higher than two years ago with Nuisance accounting for 53% of these. The last full year of data from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service in Monmouthshire was April 2019 – March 2020, in which time there were notable increases in deliberate refuse fires.

Domestic Crime has shown a steady increase since January 2019. In November 2021, the two-year average stood at 118 crimes per month. Offences of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship increased by 40% in 2021. Although there is a worrying increasing trend of domestic-related crime in Monmouthshire, this could indicate that more victims are coming forward to report it. It also highlights the need for attention from all partners to support and protect the vulnerable.

Mental Health

Around one in ten adults in Monmouthshire reported that they were currently being treated for a mental illness and one in four adults experience mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime.³⁹ 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. This can be seen in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, with the highest levels of GP-recorded mental health conditions in Monmouthshire seen in the most deprived areas.

The pandemic has also exposed people to greater levels of stress and anxiety. While mental health services have remained open, reports have emerged of significant challenges to accessing support. 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. This demonstrates the importance of childhood determinants that can affect people across the course of their lives.

There has been pioneering research in Wales into the association between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and mental well-being within the adult population. Adults with four or more

adverse childhood experiences were five times more likely to have low mental well-being than those with no ACEs. An effective approach to population mental well-being includes a combination of interventions across the life course.⁴⁰

Alcohol dependence is the most common form of substance misuse, but drug use also falls into this category. A pilot found that 59.7% of adults in Wales had experienced harm from someone else's drinking in the previous year.⁴¹ Other harms included drink driving and physical assault.

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

Depression is the most common mental health disorder in Britain, according to the Mental Health Foundation. The Rural Services Network suggests that mental health is probably better in rural areas.⁴³ The latest data from ONS reports that in 2020, the Wales suicide rate was 10.3 deaths per 100,000 population, of whom 79% were male.⁴⁴ In Wales, the suicide rate was 11.8.

Loneliness and Isolation

Evidence suggests that loneliness and social isolation can impact physical and mental health significantly.⁴⁵ Different factors can place individuals at greater risk, including major life transitions, personal characteristics, and health conditions. It can affect both young and old, and those living in rural or urban areas. 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. Transport plays a vital role in keeping people connected. Being unable to get out and about can result in older people losing independence, leading to feelings of loneliness.⁴⁶

A lack of affordable housing and employment opportunities increase pressure on families to disperse, such pressures are significant in Monmouthshire. Older people who see their children once a month or less are twice as likely to feel lonely than those who have daily contact with their children.⁴⁷ More people are able to maintain connections via digital devices. However, the county has the second lowest proportion of properties with Superfast UK broadband in Wales.⁴⁸ In 2019, the county had a digital deprivation rate of 12.5% but work has continued to install better fibre broadband to areas of south Wales, including Monmouthshire.⁴⁹

The accessibility of local village shops and services such as post offices often act as community hubs and provide a place for daily interaction. In 2020/21 three quarters of Monmouthshire residents agreed they have a feeling of belonging to their local area.⁵⁰

Housing

A person's health is directly affected by the quality of their home. Several factors still disproportionately affect those experiencing social or economic disadvantage, including homelessness, fuel poverty, unaffordable housing, and lack of safety and green spaces.⁵¹

House prices in Monmouthshire are 8.23 times the average earnings, compared with 5.88 for the Wales average making it very difficult for young people, particularly, to live and work locally, leading many to move out of the county.⁵²

Studies suggest that the rental properties available reduced by almost 50% between 2010-19 and the private rental market is highly unlikely to be a viable option for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance contributing to people leaving the county.⁵³ There are approximately 5,700

units of affordable housing across Monmouthshire.⁵⁴ The waiting list stands at more than 3,500 households, of which 2,400 have a recognised need.⁵⁵

In the immediate future, it has been estimated that 468 additional affordable homes will be needed each year up until 2025.⁵⁶ Factors affecting the delivery of additional affordable housing in Monmouthshire include the high levels of phosphates in the River Wye and River Usk, which mean that any new developments in those areas must demonstrate that the levels will be neutral or will improve as a result of the development. Also, high land values and increased costs of building materials are affecting viability and deliverability. The Welsh Government Planning Division is currently objecting to Monmouthshire's growth proposals, arguing that growth should be directed to Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys.⁵⁷

Additional affordable housing is needed in rural areas to enable people to remain in their local communities, particularly younger households and first-time buyers who are often priced out of the open market.⁵⁸ One in ten households in the county are in fuel poverty; this is below the Wales average of 12%, but high considering the county's overall affluence.⁵⁹ The risk of young people being unable to live and work locally, and the need for more affordable housing, were raised throughout the engagement responses.

The current homelessness situation in Monmouthshire is extremely challenging due to the lack of temporary and permanent accommodation and the continuing level of need for homeless support.⁶⁰ As of August 2021, there were 147 households in temporary accommodation, including 73 households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Many of these are single homeless people with multiple support needs.⁶¹ The local authority is increasing both accommodation and housing support; in 2019/20 the county had only 5 rough sleepers, the joint 6th lowest in Wales.⁶²

Child Development

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

Monmouthshire fares well on key indicators including teenage pregnancy, birth weights and breastfeeding.⁶³ It has a number of Flying Start areas which provides free quality, part-time childcare for two to three-year-olds. On the whole, the quality of childcare provision in Monmouthshire is very good and there is sufficient provision to meet the needs of most families. However, there are some gaps in provision that have been identified and need to be addressed such as a lack of childcare for children with a disability.⁶⁴ Engagement responses highlighted the affordability of childcare as a concern, and the potential impact this has on parents being in employment.

As mentioned above, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are chronic stressful experiences in childhood that can directly hurt a child. Unfortunately, data on ACEs for Monmouthshire is not available.

Education

Monmouthshire has 30 LEA funded primary schools including two Welsh-medium, six Church in Wales and two Roman Catholic primary schools. There are four secondary schools and a pupil referral unit. Monmouthshire has benefitted from the 21st Century Schools programme, with new secondary schools in Caldicot and Monmouth.

Due to the Welsh Government's decision to cease publishing comparative information, and with further modifications to the regulations in light of the disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic, the local authority is unable to provide school academic performance information at this time.

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

School attendance is a critical factor in student achievement. Attendance in Monmouthshire primary schools during the last year of available data (2018/19) was the highest in Wales, with 4.6% of half-day sessions missed due to all absences, with the Wales average being 5.4%.⁶⁵ Attendance in secondary schools tends to be slightly lower than in primary schools. As with primary schools, attendance in Monmouthshire secondary schools during 2018/19 was the highest in Wales, with 5% of half-day sessions missed due to all absences (compared to 6.2% for Wales).⁶⁶

However, The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact upon attendance at schools across Wales. In Monmouthshire, attendance rates in 2020/21 were 94.4% at primary phase and 92.8% at secondary phase which is 1.0pp and 2.2pp respectively below the latest published Monmouthshire data contained in the national data releases in 2018/19.

An increasing number of Monmouthshire children are eligible for free school meals although not all parents who are eligible claim for them. The coronavirus outbreak has resulted in a further increase and as a result, the percentage of compulsory school-age children eligible for free school meals in Monmouthshire in 2020/21 is 16%, lower than the Welsh average of 22.9%. In Monmouthshire, however, the percentage of children eligible is increasing at a faster rate than the Welsh average. The latest annual report produced by Monmouthshire's Chief Officer for Children and Young People highlights that securing better outcomes for our learners eligible for free school meals remains an important area of focus.⁶⁷

Careers Wales data shows the percentage of year 11 school leavers who were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in 2020 was 1.4% in Monmouthshire and for year 13 school leavers 3.9%. This compares favourably with the Wales figures of 7.4% of 16-18 year olds.⁶⁸

Almost one-third of Monmouthshire Key Stage 4 pupils entered higher education in the following three years after leaving Year 11 compared to 29.9% for Wales.⁶⁹ Qualifications of working-age adults at both NQF levels 3 and 4 in Monmouthshire are both above the Welsh average. Working-age adults with no qualifications are 3.8% and below the Welsh average of 7.3%.

But, a lack of high-quality graduate jobs in South Wales means that the healthy and better qualified often leave the area for better opportunities, leading to a 'brain drain' effect. As more people that are qualified leave, it becomes more difficult for the area to recover and attract the employment opportunities that people seek.⁷⁰

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

Ageing Well

Monmouthshire's population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 41% and, more significantly, those aged 85 and over by 96% by 2043.⁷¹ This has many positives as older people contribute a huge amount to communities and society. The economic contribution of

employment, informal caring, including childcare, and volunteering by people aged 65 or over is estimated at £160 billion.⁷² In 2019/20, 30% of people aged 65-74 volunteered.

However, an ageing population also comes with challenges. As the age of the population increases, so too does the number of unpaid carers, placing pressure on others. 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.⁷³ Dementia, and the condition affects 1 in 6 people over 80 and the number of people with the condition is increasing as people are living longer; it is estimated that by 2025, more than 1 million people in the UK will have dementia. Many responses to the engagement exercise raised the importance of, and concerns related to, the provision of care for older people and ensuring older people can remain involved in their local community and supported at home for as long as possible.

Monmouthshire has integrated health and social care teams, with a mix of skill sets, which provide people with the most appropriate professional when needed. Adult Social Care services are facing unprecedented pressure which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic and a shortage of care workers. Monmouthshire has specific challenges due to rurality and demographics, however, demand following lockdown, and the complexity of need, is significantly higher.

Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Many of the issues above integrate with other sections of the assessment.

Good health and well-being is a resource for life, increasing an individual's ability to achieve their educational, economic and social potential. The environment has an important role in contributing to people's health and well-being. Transport whether public or private is an essential for people to access the jobs, services and activities they need. Social and economic circumstances can lead to crime, while perceptions of crime and safety can impact on people's well-being in communities. Having a secure home is a prerequisite to well-being. Economic and social circumstances impact on the availability of housing, with Monmouthshire house prices are amongst the highest in Wales. This could also affect the long-term viability of some communities, but housing developments new to be balanced against environmental impacts.

The first thousand days of a child's life from conception to their second birthday has a significant impact on their outcomes and those of future generations. Equipping young people with the skills and education they need for future employment, to fulfil their potential and maximise their social and economic well-being. The challenges of the well-being of an ageing population are well documented and mainly cover economic, social and cultural factors, however, older people are also a significant asset to the county, while community-based assets in the county provide an opportunity to improve the well-being of older people.

Environmental Well-being

Natural resources, such as air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil, provide our most basic needs, including food, energy and security. They help to keep us healthy and help people and the



economy to thrive, while reducing flooding, improving air quality and supplying materials for construction. However, they are also under pressure from development, climate change, the need to produce energy, and more.

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Landscape and Countryside

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is its landscape and natural environment. The landscape is an integral element of the county's green infrastructure, a living network of green spaces, water and environmental features in both urban and rural areas. This sustains a range of social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits as well as being important contributors to the economy.⁷⁴

There are 695 agriculture, forestry and fishing enterprises in Monmouthshire, 15.5% of the total number of businesses. As well as having an important role to play the economy and well-being, the condition of our green spaces in gives an important indication of environmental well-being.

Monmouthshire has large numbers of areas recognised for wildlife and biodiversity.⁷⁵ The east of the county is part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and parts of the county outside Abergavenny form part of the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Blaenavon World Heritage Site and Clydach Gorge Landscape of Special Historic Interest.

Despite these designations, there are still numerous threats to environmental well-being. Monmouthshire is not meeting the four long-term aims of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.⁷⁶ Some of the threats are contributing to species decline.⁷⁷ Ecosystem resilience is significantly affected by 'landscape connectivity'. As the climate gets warmer, species may need to migrate further north where it is cooler. But if habitats are separated from each other by developments and roads then species may not be able to make that migration.

Loss of woodland and tree cover is also an issue of concern which affects economic, social and environmental well-being. Threats from tree disease, conflicting recreational pressures and little economic incentive to plant and manage woodlands on farmland means that some woodlands are now in a poor condition, of small size, and are fragmented. Trees are also an essential component of our urban Green Infrastructure to help sustain life and mitigate against climate change.

Despite this, many rural populations do not have easily accessible natural or semi-natural green space or easy access to amenity green spaces such as sports pitches.⁷⁸ Monmouthshire has approximately 2,028 kilometres of public rights of way, mostly public footpaths. However, most areas of the county are below the Wales average for the provision of square metres of green space per person.⁷⁹ Access to green spaces is directly linked to improved health and well-being, including better mental and physical health and improved mortality.⁸⁰ During the engagement process, when asked what is good about where they live, the second most-cited reason by residents was the landscape, countryside and green spaces.

Air and Water Quality

Air quality across Monmouthshire varies and is relatively high given the rural nature of the county. Problems are almost completely due to transport-related emissions, with high levels of nitrogen

dioxide and particulates from vehicles, which are particularly detrimental to health.⁸¹ Complaints about cars idling their engines, particularly outside schools, has led to an anti-idling campaign being run in 2020/21, with children designing posters to be made into road signs.

Water pollution from rural sources, particularly phosphates, nitrates and sediment, is identified by Natural Resources Wales as a significant threat to wildlife and plants within the county.⁸²

Many partnerships work together to balance demands on the rivers and catchments. Both the Rivers Usk and Wye are protected as Special Areas of Conservation but both are now failing to meet water quality standards, in particular with regard to the level of phosphates which can result in changes to vegetation, increased algae and less oxygen, making the water unsuitable for fish and other animals.⁸³ The issue of water companies releasing sewage into watercourses has brought the issue even more into the public eye.⁸⁴

Climate Change

Carbon dioxide emissions are the principal man-made contributor to climate change. How the county works to reduce carbon emissions is a significant part of our contribution to being globally responsible.

Emissions per Monmouthshire resident were 6.6 tonnes which is above the Wales and UK averages.⁸⁵ Transport makes up 51% of the total, largely due to the rural nature of the county and limited public transport provision.⁸⁶ Emissions from the domestic sector are also higher than neighbouring authorities probably because Monmouthshire has more older houses which are harder to insulate.⁸⁷

By the end of 2019, there were 3,655 renewable energy installations in Monmouthshire, the vast majority of which were photovoltaic solar.⁸⁸ UK Government reductions to Feed-In Tariffs means that these figures have not increased as rapidly in recent years, although anecdotal evidence from local solar installers is that business is booming. Future energy security in the UK is a significant concern with a large percentage of fossil fuels coming from overseas.⁸⁹ During engagement with residents, there was strong recognition of the importance of using renewable energy to help to reduce climate change.

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is its strong culture of volunteering and active third sector involvement and there is a lot of third sector activity on climate change being carried out by Transition Towns and other groups to build local resilience to climate change. A local authority Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan were published in October 2019.⁹⁰

Wales can expect hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and more extreme weather events.⁹¹ The impacts of flooding are being increasingly felt across Monmouthshire. In the winter of 2019/20 alone 180 residential properties and 50 commercial properties are known to have been flooded across the county.⁹² Flooding has significant effects on physical and mental health, insurance, economy and infrastructure.

As well as the impact on homes, the effects of flooding on business can be significant, and damaged infrastructure can cause huge disruption to business and community life. Effects such as these require significant funding to mitigate and repair.

Waste and Recycling

Monmouthshire is fortunate to have a great deal of goodwill from the public towards recycling. 68.4% of municipal waste in Monmouthshire is being sent for reuse, recycling or composting,

higher than the Welsh average.⁹³ The first quarter of 2020/21 saw the highest recycling rate ever in MCC of 74%, with record numbers of residents using kerbside recycling collections.⁹⁴

The overall amount of municipal waste collected has decreased steadily each year and is now 20% lower than in 2015 at 40,082 tonnes.⁹⁵ It is likely that this reflects the better participation in the kerbside recycling scheme during lockdown, and lower levels of consumption.

Flytipping incidents were decreasing but seem to have increased in 2019/20 to 572.⁹⁶ Only 60% of those surveyed in Monmouthshire were satisfied with the levels of litter, although this is higher than the Welsh average of 54%.⁹⁷ However, despite this, actual levels of street cleanliness are high, with 97.2% of streets inspected in 2018/19 considered to be of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness.⁹⁸ In response to high levels of littering, Welsh Government has invested in Caru Cymru, which is working with each local authority on campaigns to reduce litter.⁹⁹

Public awareness of the effect of single-use plastics has increased enormously resulting in the subsequent burgeoning of plastic-free town initiatives in the county.¹⁰⁰ There has also been a move towards re-use and repair. The council has helped to facilitate the establishment of community Repair Cafes in Abergavenny and Monmouth, and Circular Economy funding has resulted in the establishment of two re-use shops at Household Waste Recycling Centres, 4 Bentyg Library of Things, and supported other initiatives such as setting up community fridges to take waste food.

Integration

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



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

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

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

Cultural Well-being

The Well-being of Future Generations Act considers improving cultural well-being aimed at achieving the 7 well-being goals. The broad areas of well-being related to culture that contribute

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

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Welsh Language

There has been a significant increase in the profile of the Welsh language in with the latest data showing 16.1% of the population speaking Welsh compared to 2.3% in 1991.¹⁰¹

The demand for Welsh-medium education in the north of the county has proposals developed to relocating the primary school to a bigger site. Pre-school groups provide children and their parents an opportunity to meet once a week in an informal Welsh environment and there is a Meithrin playgroup also located in Abergavenny that provides daily sessional care and education for children aged 2 to 5 which are positive signs for the language.

There is currently no in-county Welsh medium provision at the secondary school level. Pupils travel to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Pontypool or to Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed in Newport which may be a barrier for some parents in sending their children to Welsh-medium schools.

Welsh language community groups exist in each of the towns. They hold regular meetings, such as coffee mornings and reading groups, and allow Welsh speakers and learners an opportunity to socialise through the medium of Welsh. Other groups with regional/national footprints are also active within Monmouthshire, such as the Urdd and Menter Iaith BGTM, which work with schools and within communities to promote the use of the language. There is also increasing interest in Welsh for Adult education provision. Engagement responses contained mixed views on the language, with some wishing to have more opportunities to use it on a day-to-day basis, whereas others believed there should be less emphasis on it.

Faith and Religion

The 2011 census shows that 62.5% of Monmouthshire residents are Christian, close to 5 percentage points higher than Wales overall. The other major religions were represented by figures of less than a percentage point. There is a Buddhist Centre located in Raglan, but the nearest Mosques are located in Blaenau Gwent and Newport, and many of the nearest houses of worship for other religions are in Cardiff or Bristol. In 2021, a community venue was identified to establish a multi-faith cultural centre in Abergavenny.

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

Many people in Monmouthshire have a strong sense of belonging to their local area. The latest National Survey for Wales shows increases in the percentage of people reporting they are satisfied with their local area, from 90.8% to 91.8% while people reporting a sense of community rose from 53.4% to 61.3% both figures are in the top quartile for Wales.

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.¹⁰² Many features and areas of historical and cultural value in Monmouthshire are recognised as important heritage assets, including conservation areas designated for their special historic or architectural interest, registered Historic Parks and Gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and Listed Buildings including Tintern Abbey and a significant number of castles and churches.

Four out of ten visitors to the county were drawn by historical and religious sites or attractions.¹⁰³ It is vital to promote and protect this landscape for future generations, not only for its importance to Monmouthshire's heritage but for its recognised contributions to the economy, environment and health and well-being in Monmouthshire, as identified elsewhere in this assessment.

Community and Social Action

Monmouthshire has a long and healthy history of volunteering and local social action. People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons, including the chance to give something back to the community or developing new skills.¹⁰⁴ A third of people in the county volunteer, the second-highest figure in Wales.¹⁰⁵ The 'A County That Serves' volunteering programme is helping to highlight and support volunteering opportunities.¹⁰⁶

The pandemic has seen a tremendous response with the mobilisation of volunteering and community groups. These have been integral in supporting those most in need in our communities and have the potential to play a significant role in well-being in the future as volunteering has been shown to have a positive effect on social networks and inclusion within communities. In July 2020, the Monmouthshire PSB agreed to formally adopt the place-based partnership working model of Community Support Networks across the county as a mechanism to deliver the aspirations of the well-being plan through leading a relational place-based, multi-agency support structure.

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. Research shows a positive association between engagement with sport and culture and an individual's subjective well-being measured as happiness.¹⁰⁷

The arts play a major role in contributing to the well-being goals including jobs, wealth and tourism through the cultural sector – for example, Borough Theatre in Abergavenny, which is being redeveloped, and the Wye Valley River Festival. There is significant evidence that the development of cultural attractions has considerable economic development potential beyond direct tourism, leading to the regeneration and increased footfall in towns, and added vitality for town centres.

In 2019/20, 75% of Monmouthshire residents said they have been to an arts event in the last 12 months, the third highest percentage in Wales.¹⁰⁸ Museums play an important part in preserving the history of Monmouthshire for communities and visitors. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on culture and the arts, with initial lockdowns preventing attractions from opening and people gathering. Income streams were paused for a long time, and once reopened, it is likely a hesitancy to return alongside increasing operating and staff costs to adapt to new guidelines will continue to affect the businesses.

Libraries also play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. There are six community hubs in Monmouthshire, that also include library services, offering both physical and digital services to all. Pre-pandemic statistics show that the libraries saw over 400,000 visitors across the 6 sites and home delivery.¹⁰⁹

Sport and Leisure

There is considerable evidence that supports the benefits of healthy and active lifestyles.¹¹⁰ An active lifestyle is important in reducing levels of obesity and other chronic conditions.¹¹¹ Monmouthshire has a range of open space areas, cycle paths and walking routes as well indoor and outdoor activities, sports clubs, societies, and community facilities across the county. The latest data shows that 36% of adults in the county participating in sporting activities three or more times a week, which is amongst the highest levels in Wales. Males are more likely to be a member of sports clubs than women.¹¹²

The Department of Health recommends that all children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day.¹¹³ The School Sport Survey finds 45% of pupils in Monmouthshire, across Years 3 to 11 took part in organized sport activity other than in curriculum time, three or more times per week, while 25.7% take part in no frequent activity. Participation in extracurricular sport is lower than the Wales average but participation in community sport outside school is higher (Monmouthshire 67.5%, Wales 65.1%). There is a range of provision for young people from 11-25 in Monmouthshire through the council's youth service, including youth clubs, youth centres, school holiday events and activities, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

There are leisure centres in Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot and Chepstow which play a pivotal role in the promotion of physical activity, well-being, and mental health. However, participation in sporting activity has been affected throughout the pandemic, which may have longer-term impacts on health and well-being. 47% of survey respondents felt that their physical fitness has declined over the past 12 months, and 40% reported weight increase.¹¹⁴ Some responses to the engagement exercise referenced the desire for better leisure facilities.

The latest Play Sufficiency Assessment for the county, in March 2019, 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). In a rural county, access to leisure and cultural services is important. The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that the average public transport travel time to a sports facility is 88 minutes.¹¹⁵ For private transport, travel time is 14 minutes for a sports facility and 13 minutes for libraries.

Integration

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



The promotion and protection of the Welsh language are important for the social, economic and cultural well-being of Welsh language speakers and learners. The landscape and natural and built heritage of Monmouthshire is an important part of the quality of life and an integral element of

social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. This high level of community action makes an invaluable contribution to social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

Cultural attractions in Monmouthshire affect social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being, while levels of well-being can also be a barrier to participation in arts and cultural events.

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

Key Emerging Issues

This section summarises the key challenges and opportunities facing the county in the years ahead. It is based on the issue highlighted in the well-being assessment and will be used by the Public Services Board and other partnerships, to prioritise the things that public services will need to collaborate on to improve the well-being of current and future generations.

Economic

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

Social

- There is a lack of affordable housing in the county. This will be exacerbated by the maximum growth level proposed by the Welsh Government Planning Division which could limit the development of new homes in Monmouthshire, reducing our ability to tackle homelessness and the demographic imbalance. In the short term this is compounded by the level of phosphates in rivers which has resulted in a block on new developments.
- There are significant income inequalities within communities, with wealth sitting alongside relative poverty on a scale not seen in other parts of Wales. Research suggests that gaps between rich and poor within a community have negative repercussions for a whole range of things, from educational attainment to physical health.
- Monmouthshire enjoys high levels of social capital. Large numbers of people volunteer which helps build connections and is a major contributor to well-being. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the energy we have seen in communities during the pandemic but also a risk that as the pension age changes and people retire later, the number of active volunteers could decline.
- We have an ageing population; while this has many advantages, it will create additional pressure on health and social care. With high property prices and limits on development it will be difficult to attract the workforce needed to meet the needs of residents.
- Limited public transport affects social opportunities for some people who may become isolated in rural communities, exacerbating loneliness and mental health.

- Both adult and children's social care are facing acute pressures with escalating demand, increasing complexity and workforce shortages all contributing. While there is pressure to free-up hospital beds, the care system does not have the capacity to accommodate this, meaning that more resources will be drawn into the acute settings to meet short-term needs rather than being directed towards a sustainable long term model of provision.
- There are significant differences in life expectancy, and action is required to address health inequalities and ensure a range of programmes are in place to increase the opportunities people have to live healthy lives and reduce health-harming behaviours such as high alcohol consumption, smoking and diet.
- Children, particularly the most vulnerable, whose learning has been disrupted by the pandemic may be at a disadvantage as they enter the workforce or higher education, and other aspects of their well-being may have been affected.
- There are good levels of educational attainment in the county but some groups, such as those eligible for free school meals and vulnerable children, are not achieving at the same level as the wider population and the gap is not narrowing. There are also differences in attainment between communities, even where pupils are attending the same school.
- One in four adults and one in ten children experience mental health issues. This is exacerbated by loneliness and the challenges many have faced during the pandemic placing pressure on stretched services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Resources such as Melo, to help people manage their own mental health and well-being, offer an opportunity to address this but will only be part of the solution.
- We are seeing increasing levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the county and concerns about the level of substance misuse amongst younger people.

Cultural

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

Environmental

- Monmouthshire has a high carbon footprint per head of population.
- The rural nature of Monmouthshire means that transport is a significant contributor to the county's carbon emissions, with some areas also experiencing poor air quality. There is high car ownership and the rural nature of the county limits take-up of active travel while many people do not have a driveway which, along with affordability, will slow the adoption of electric vehicles. There needs to be a move away from private cars to more active travel, public transport and low emission vehicles in order to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

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

Monmouthshire's Five Areas

Abergavenny and surrounding area

Environmental Well-being

This area includes Abergavenny, an important market town which provides a range of services to its rural hinterland and includes Monmouthshire's only main hospital, a railway station and bus terminus. The town centre has 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. Rural areas include the Llantony and Grwyne Fawr valleys, former industrial areas around Clydach and Black Rock.

Abergavenny is the gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park and is heavily used for tourism and walking and cycling, contributing to the local economy. The area has four Special Areas of Conservation. There are 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, with habitats including river, geological, woodland and pond.¹¹⁶ Threats to habitat include: grazing and recreation pressures resulting in several areas of exposed peat vulnerable to erosion;¹¹⁷ Some fragmented woodlands; Tree disease and habitat loss due to development. The Llanelly Hill and Clydach areas have Monmouthshire's only peat deposits, important for storing carbon and slowing down flood water. Soil quality in the area is generally low-quality agricultural land, mainly Grade 4 and 5.¹¹⁸



This area has 737 kilometres of public rights of way and access to well used natural green spaces such as Bailey Park and Linda Vista Gardens. However, the northern residential areas of Abergavenny are poorly served by natural open space.¹¹⁹ Urban tree cover in Abergavenny is 17.5%, higher than the Monmouthshire average of 15%, and the Wales average of 16.3%.¹²⁰

Much of Abergavenny town northern residential area and along the River Usk is prone to flooding.¹²¹ With an increase in winter rainfall in Wales projected in the future, this is likely to be a greater threat than ever to these communities. Water quality varies across this area. The River Usk is assessed as Moderate quality. However, the Honddu and Clydach rivers are both of poor quality under the EU Water Framework Directive.¹²²

The area has an active groups including Transition Town, Friends of the Earth, Incredible Edibles and Fairtrade Forum as newer arrivals such as Extinction Rebellion Abergavenny. The strength of the third sector in and around Abergavenny is a great asset.



Abergavenny during the annual Food Festival

There is much work going on at a community level, and with local partnerships, to support and promote local food growing. This ranges from the extremely successful annual Abergavenny Food Festival to the Our Food project.¹²³

Economic Well-being

Although average house prices in this area are above the national average, Abergavenny has the lowest prices of Monmouthshire's five areas.¹²⁴ The vacancy rate of 7.6% in the

central shopping area is the highest since 2016, although there is a perception that the town is presently thriving and the rate is still below the average for British high streets.¹²⁵

In this area, 12% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 15% considered to be income deprived and 16.6% of children are in low-income families.

Abergavenny includes Llanover 1, Cantref 2, Lansdown and Croesonen which are in the 30% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. Cantref 2 has the highest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county and the second-highest percentage of working-age people in employment deprivation.¹²⁶

Given these figures, Abergavenny has a higher proportion of deprivation than the other four areas of Monmouthshire. 24% of the households in the Abergavenny catchment area are below 60% of the median income for the UK. This compares to 22% respectively for Monmouthshire and 33% for Wales as a whole.¹²⁷

Social Well-being

Abergavenny and the surrounding area has a population of just over 27,000, the most populated of the five areas, 15.7% are children aged between 0-15, and 27.6% are aged 65 and over. As mentioned above it has the highest proportion of areas in the most deprived 20% in Monmouthshire. Grofield is most deprived in terms of community safety, while more rural Llanover suffers from poor access to services and housing.

Some areas in Abergavenny and surrounding communities are ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales for access to services, particularly for public transport travel times. For example, in Crucorney return trips on public transport can take over two and a half hours to reach services such as a library or sports facility.

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

Indicators for school-age children fare marginally better than Monmouthshire as a whole. Cantref 2 has poorer educational outcomes; for example, 15% of key stage 4 leavers enter higher education, compared to 33.1% in Monmouthshire overall, while 30.7% of adults have no qualifications, compared to 13.2% across Monmouthshire.¹²⁸

Abergavenny has the fewest residents of the five areas who report that their health is very good or good, with 77%. Cantref 2, Lansdown and Croesonen are the areas with high rates of people

living with long term limiting illnesses or mental health conditions. Cancer incidences are highest in parts of Grofield.¹²⁹

In the year to November 2021, overall crime in Abergavenny decreased from 35.1% to 33.9% of Monmouthshire's total, with a reduction of recorded crimes of Shoplifting, Theft, and Residential and Commercial Burglaries. This could be due, in part, to the pandemic and lockdown periods. There have been increases in other offences, notably Other Sexual Offences and Criminal Damage.

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

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

Cultural Well-being

Abergavenny is steeped in history with regards to the Welsh language. The area has hosted the National Eisteddfod twice, most recently in 2016, and is also the home of Cymreigyddion y Fenni – the Abergavenny Welsh Society. The Welsh primary school, Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni, is well established and currently has over 250 pupils. 86% of the population in the area have no skills in Welsh, the second lowest of the 5 areas.¹³⁰

The Abergavenny area is also the most diverse in terms of ethnicity. Proportions of mixed race and Asian ethnicities are the highest in Monmouthshire (0.8% and 1.4%). 62.1% of the population in the area declare themselves as Christian.

The area is internationally recognised for its food, with the annual Abergavenny Food festival attracting thousands of visitors every September. There are many sports clubs throughout the area that offer grassroots sport for football, rugby and cricket.



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

Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley

Environmental Well-being

This area is centred around the town of Chepstow, and the southwestern quarter of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The historic core of the town is adjacent to the castle, overlooking the River Wye. Tree cover from the outskirts of Chepstow northwards is almost continuous and the landscape is reflected by the many protected areas.

The Severn Estuary is Special Area of Conservation as is the River Wye. There are 14 Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Chepstow and Lower Wye area, comprising meadows, woodland and bat sites.¹³¹ Many of these are well connected meaning they are more resilient to change or



Autumn in the Wye Valley, from Eagle's Nest

disturbance because species can easily migrate.¹³² However, ash dieback and larch disease pose a threat.¹³³

The area is valued for its landscape and has Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status with 365 kilometers of public rights of way. Visitors make an important contribution to the local economy.¹³⁴

Perhaps surprisingly, rural parts of the Lower Wye are not well served by accessible natural green space.¹³⁵ The town itself only has 15% urban tree cover which if increased could help mitigate the air quality problems in the town.¹³⁶

The A48 at Hardwick Hill has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area due to high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulates from traffic, especially HGVs.¹³⁷ The removal of the Severn Bridge tolls has led to increased congestion as more people are commuting across the border or have moved from Bristol to Chepstow to take advantage of lower house prices.¹³⁸

The River Wye and its tributaries support many important species. However, concerns over a deterioration in water quality, potentially because of pollution from chicken farms and sewage treatment over recent years, has led to both national campaigns and local protests.¹³⁹ Parts of the area are at risk of flooding which places important infrastructure at risk.¹⁴⁰ Parts of Tintern flood regularly at high tide, mitigations are in place but this does not completely remove the risk of properties being prone to tidal flooding as occurred in March 2020.¹⁴¹

The Gwent Levels are an important feature of the landscape of southern Monmouthshire and are one of the largest surviving areas of ancient grazing marsh and drainage ditch systems, known as reens, in Britain. Wetlands provide many economic, social and environmental benefits, 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.¹⁴² Agriculture is also an important feature in this area. Most Monmouthshire's Grade 2 farmland is found in the south of the Lower Wye area.¹⁴³

Chepstow has a number of environmental and sustainability groups such as Transition Chepstow. Gwent Energy Community Interest Company are based in the town while there are also groups looking after local woodland, promoting Fairtrade and local cycle routes.

Economic Well-being

Chepstow is the second most expensive area for house prices in Monmouthshire and has three wards in the county's most expensive 10. However, it also has two wards in the 10 least expensive, demonstrating the potential differences that can be found within a single area.¹⁴⁴

The overall retail vacancy rate of 13.5% in Chepstow is the highest since 2003. The town retains a high percentage of trade for convenience goods, but trade is being drawn away from the town – to retail parks in Bristol and Newport.¹⁴⁵

8% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 12% considered to be income deprived. 13.4% of children are in low-income families.¹⁴⁶

In the Chepstow area, 20% of households are below 60% of the median income for the UK, and 20% are below 60% compared with 22% for Monmouthshire, and 33% for Wales.¹⁴⁷ Thornwell has the second-highest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county, while St Kingsmark 1 and Trellech United 2 have the joint first and joint second-lowest.¹⁴⁸

Social Well-being

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

Thornwell 1 is ranked the third most deprived area in Monmouthshire, largely due to deprivation in health, income and education.¹⁴⁹ One-quarter of people in the area are in income deprivation, and repeat absenteeism in school is one of the highest in the county.

Access to services is an issue in some parts of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley, for example, Devauden and St. Arvans. Average travel times for key services in the area particularly by public transport, are longer than average time for Wales.¹⁵⁰

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%. In the Chepstow area, more people live with long term limiting illnesses, and more suffer from cancer in Thornwell 1 than in other areas.¹⁵¹

In the year to November 2021, overall crime in Chepstow remained unchanged. There has been a reduction of Rape, Commercial Burglaries, Drug Offences, and Robbery which could be due in part to the pandemic and the reduction in Stop and Search activity within the county. There have been notable increases in all Other Thefts, Public Order Offences, and Other Sexual Offences.

In the twelve months to March 2021, 294 incidents of Anti-social behaviour were recorded. The wards with the highest prevalence were St Mary's, Thornwell and St Christopher's. As of January 2021, there were 99 adults accessing support, 39 for alcohol and 60 for other substances. The highest recorded substances for which initial help is sought are heroin and alcohol. The Crime Volume in Chepstow of Violence Without Injury has increased from 270 to 294 and Criminal Damage has also increased from 121 to 142 incidents. Thornwell has recorded the most domestic-related crime over the last three years. From January 2021 to November 2021, Thornwell made up 33% of all recorded crime in the Chepstow area.

Of those in Monmouthshire on the affordable housing waiting list with a recognised need, the largest demand is for one-bedroom accommodation, particularly in the Chepstow Housing Market Area.¹⁵²

Cultural Well-being

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

The proportion of people in the area who stated that they could speak Welsh (8.8%) and speak, read and write Welsh (6%) were the lowest in Monmouthshire. However, there are still thriving groups, 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 five areas; however, the area is consistent with other areas with 62% declaring themselves as Christian.

The area has a rich built heritage including Chepstow Castle, 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 one of the most instantly recognisable buildings in Monmouthshire. Chepstow and the surrounding area also host a number of festivals and arts events and houses a museum, which displays the rich and varied past of the town.

Chepstow Racecourse is one of the more prominent sporting venues in the county and hosts the Welsh Grand National. The racecourse also plays host to a range of live music and other events.

Public transport travel time to a library in the area is above the average for Wales, taking, on average, 56 minutes. Travel time to a sports facility in the area on public transport is above the average of 52 minutes.¹⁵³ Feedback from residents during the engagement process suggests that many are not satisfied with the current public transport provision.

The Heart of Monmouthshire

Environmental Well-being

This area is characterised by rolling hills, productive farmland and many patches of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland with steep hillsides marking the edge of the uplands of Brecon Beacons National Park. The market town of Usk and the village of Raglan are the largest settlements.

The River Usk is designated as a Special Area of Conservation for its clean and natural state although there are significant concerns about water quality from phosphates.¹⁵⁴ The Olway and Gavenny tributaries face several diffuse rural pollution pressures.¹⁵⁵ Agricultural land in this area is mainly Grade 3 or 4 and relatively intensive agriculture means that the area around Raglan is particularly vulnerable to nitrates.¹⁵⁶

The area has five SSSIs of importance at a Wales level, including geological sites, a bat site and Llandegfedd Reservoir which is the largest body of open freshwater in the county.¹⁵⁷ There are 161 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, mainly ancient woodland and neutral grassland. There is potential to increase the connectivity of woodland in the area.

Threats to habitats in this area include: abstraction of water from the river Usk which could impact on wildlife; pollution from agriculture; tree disease and habitat loss due to development. The town of Usk has 7 amenity greenspaces, so is well provided for. Raglan has no



Source: www.uskinbloom.org.uk

parks or gardens and only one natural greenspace so provision is relatively low. Provision for outdoor sports is deficient in these rural areas.¹⁵⁸ There are 385km of public rights of way 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.¹⁵⁹

Also important to the visual amenity of Usk are the flowers planted as part of the award winning Usk in Bloom which has worked tirelessly to improve Usk through planting trees, shrubs, bulbs and floral displays, whilst addressing environmental issues and preserving wildlife.¹⁶⁰



Source: www.jtallet.co.uk/uskfloods/photo_flood_52_page.htm

Bridge Street in Usk 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.¹⁶¹ An Air Quality Action Plan is in place and seems to be having an effect.¹⁶²

The River Usk has a broad flood plain and is prone to flooding.¹⁶³ Usk town is protected by flood defences, but several roads in the area are flooded by tributaries to the Usk such as the Olway at Llanllowell.¹⁶⁴

Economic Well-being

House prices in this area are very high with two wards among the ten most expensive in the county.¹⁶⁵ Usk has experienced consistently high retail vacancy rates when compared to the other centres. However, as of 2020, only 9.8% of its units were vacant, the lowest number since 2014. Vacancy rates in Raglan have remained at the same level as the year before.¹⁶⁶

In this area, 4% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 6% considered to be income deprived. 8.4% of children are in low-income families.¹⁶⁷

Given these figures, Usk and Raglan have the lowest proportion of deprivation, compared to the other four areas of Monmouthshire. In this area, 15% of households are below 50% of the median income for the UK, and 20% are below 60%, as compared with 17% and 22% respectively for Monmouthshire, and 25% and 33% for Wales as a whole.¹⁶⁸

Social Well-being

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

None of the small areas here appears in the 20% most deprived areas in Monmouthshire, despite access to services being an issue, particularly outside the main town of Usk. Average travel time to services are amongst the highest in the county, and higher than the average for Wales, particularly for public transport travel times.¹⁶⁹

In the Heart of Monmouthshire, 81% of people's health is reported as good or very good. The community of Usk reports the lowest (73.4% in Usk 1) and the highest (85.7% in Usk 2) within this area. Goetre 2 has a higher than Monmouthshire average (589.6) rate of cancer incidence (683.3).¹⁷⁰

The community safety data for the heart of Monmouthshire is included in the section for Monmouth and surrounding area due to the way areas are recorded by Gwent Police.

Cultural Well-being

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. There area has a rich built heritage including Raglan Castle, Twyn Square, Usk Sessions House and many churches.

There is no Welsh medium educational provision in the area or formal Welsh language groups. Access to this education requires an 11-mile journey to Abergavenny, or can be accessed in neighbouring authorities. Interestingly, this area has the 2nd highest proportion of population that can speak Welsh at 10.2%.

66.7% of residents declaring themselves Christian, above the Monmouthshire average, and the highest of all five areas. 1.3% of the population stated that they were of a religion other than Christian.

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

On average it takes over two hours to travel to a sports facility on public transport (124 minutes), which is well above the average for Wales of 55 minutes.¹⁷¹ Travel time to a public library is also long, taking 73 minutes on public transport and 14 minutes on private transport.¹⁷² The average public travel time to a secondary school is 90 minutes, with the majority of children travelling to either Abergavenny, Monmouth, or to Caerleon Comprehensive in Newport.

Monmouth and surrounding area

Environmental Well-being

This area is focused around the historic town of Monmouth, located where the Rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye meet, and includes the southwestern quarter of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is almost continuous tree cover from Monmouth down the Wye Valley towards Chepstow. To the north and west, the area is sparsely populated, with rolling countryside, mixed agriculture and Grade 3 and 4 quality land.

The area is important for tourism, as well as employment in agriculture and forestry.¹⁷³ There are three Special Areas of Conservation in this area: The River Wye; Wye Valley Woodlands and the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites. It also has Monmouthshire's only two National Nature reserves.¹⁷⁴

Tree disease is a significant threat that could fragment some of the well-connected woodlands of the Wye Valley.¹⁷⁵ Surveys have identified approximately 300,000 newly infected Larch trees, covering 270 hectares of the forest.¹⁷⁶

The Wye Valley, and its importance for tourism, has been covered in the section in Chepstow and the Lower Wye. Monmouth and the surrounding area has 603km of public rights of way. However, although Monmouth town is reasonably well served 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.¹⁷⁷

Urban tree cover in Monmouth town is 17.5%, higher than most other Monmouthshire towns. However, 5 hectares were lost between 2009-13 resulting in loss of benefits to health and well-being, absorption of pollution, biodiversity, and reduction in surface water run-off.¹⁷⁸

The meeting of the rivers Monnow, Trothy and Wye at Monmouth means that the town is at particularly high flood risk. Although flood defences mean that much of the town has some protection, there have been significant and devastating floods in recent years.¹⁷⁹ The village of Skenfrith was also badly affected by flooding in both October 2019 and February 2020.¹⁸⁰ Transition Monmouth has managed a project to assess the potential for natural flood management solutions around Monmouth.¹⁸¹

Monmouth has a very active voluntary sector working on sustainability, including Transition Monmouth. Monmouth Town Council established the Action on Climate Emergency, or ACE Monmouth group, which has been proactive in organising work to protect green spaces, encourage active travel and the Monmouth Climate Futures Festival.¹⁸²

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. The Wye is currently threatened by nitrate and phosphate pollution.¹⁸³ A small area of Trellech is particularly vulnerable to nitrates, as is a small section crossing the border adjacent to Monmouth. 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.¹⁸⁴

Economic Well-being

House prices in this area are high, with four wards among the ten most expensive in the county. However, two wards are among the ten least expensive including Overmonnow which is in the 30% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. This demonstrates the disparities within Monmouthshire, with the more affluent wards having the potential to mask those that are more deprived.¹⁸⁵

In 2020, 15.4% of all units within Monmouth's central shopping area were vacant following a rise in 2019.¹⁸⁶ This might, in part, reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the high street, particularly with the loss of some national chains from Monmouth.¹⁸⁷

In this area, 7% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 12% considered to be income deprived.¹⁸⁸ 14.8% of children are in low-income families. Monmouth includes Overmonnow 2, which is in the 30% most deprived LSOAs in Wales and has the third-highest percentage of people in income deprivation in the county. The area also includes Dixon with Osbaston, which has the joint lowest level of deprivation for income and employment in the county, along with Mitchel Troy for the latter, illustrating, the disparity within the county.

In the Monmouth catchment area, 24% of households are below 60% of the median income for the UK compared to 22% respectively for Monmouthshire and 33% for Wales as a whole.¹⁸⁹

Social Well-being

The population of Monmouth and the surrounding area is just over 17,000. 16.9% are aged between 0-15, the highest of the five areas, while 26.6% of the population are aged 65 and over.¹⁹⁰ There is only one area in the most deprived 20% of areas in Monmouthshire here, Overmonnow 2, where employment and education are the main concerns. 16% of working-age people in Overmonnow 2 are in employment deprivation, the highest in Monmouthshire, and 23.2% of working-age adults have no qualifications.¹⁹¹ Residents in some parts of Overmonnow are eligible for Flying Start for pre-school children.

Access to services in the area around Monmouth is a key issue, with some areas being ranked amongst the most deprived in Wales. For example, Llantilio Crossenny is ranked the sixth most deprived area in Wales for access to services. In this area, two-thirds of households suffer from the unavailability of broadband at 30Mb/s and 3 hours average round trips on public transport to key services such as food shop, pharmacy, post office, library and secondary school.¹⁹²

80% of people in Monmouth and the surrounding communities report that their health is good or very good. Within the Monmouth area, this varies from 65% in Overmonnow 2 (the second most deprived area in Monmouthshire) to 86% in Trellech United 2.¹⁹³

From November 2020 to November 2021, overall crime in Monmouth increased from 24.5% to 25.4% of the county's total.¹⁹⁴ There has been a reduction of recorded crimes for Shoplifting, Theft, and Residential and Commercial Burglaries, possibly due, in part to lockdown periods. There has been a notable increase in Violence Without Injury while Violence With Injury, Public Order Offences and Rape also saw notable increases. In the year to March 2021, 250 incidents of anti-social behaviour were recorded, accounting for 22% of all reported ASB in the county. The wards with the highest prevalence were Drybridge, Overmonnow and Trellech United. As of January 2021, there were 46 adults accessing support, 31 for alcohol and 15 for other substances.

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

Cultural Well-being

The market town of Monmouth is located on the river Monnow and acts as the main retail, educational, and cultural centre for an extensive rural area. Its location on the border between England and Wales is an important factor in the culture of the area.

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

There is an active Welsh society, Cymdeithas Gymraeg Trefynwy a'r Cylch, providing opportunities to socialise in Welsh in an informal setting. Welsh education for the Monmouth area requires a journey of approximately 19 miles which may be factor in the Monmouth area having the equal-highest proportion of population with no skills in Welsh.

The town of Monmouth has significant archaeological and historical importance. The built heritage includes Shire Hall, Market Hall, the Monnow Bridge, and Agincourt square. The area has a thriving arts, festivals and events scene. The town centre is home to Monmouth Museum, a

theatre and cinema. Festivals and events include the annual agricultural show and the Monmouth Festival, a free nine-day music festival.

The leisure centre in Monmouth has upgraded its fitness and sports facilities and offers a play centre for primary school aged children. Monmouth Rowing Club is located beside the river Wye.

The average travel time by public transport to a sports facility in the area is very nearly double that of Wales at 109 minutes, the 2nd longest time in Monmouthshire. The area has the longest public travel time to a public library in Monmouthshire, at 83 minutes.

Severnside

Environmental Well-being

The Severnside area includes Portskewett, Caldicot, Rogiet, Magor and Undy and also has the mainline railway to South Wales and the M4 motorway. The landscape along the coastal zone is primarily flat, with productive fields of Grade 2 and 3 agricultural lands, bounded by traditional reën.¹⁹⁵ The land rises to the north with low hills before rising further towards Wentwood.

Severnside's natural assets include marine, freshwater, species-rich grassland and ancient woodland. The Severn Estuary is of international importance for wintering and passage waterfowl, saltmarshes, a large natural tidal range and is protected by European legislation.¹⁹⁶

There are 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest that create a large tract of well-connected land and associated reens.¹⁹⁷

There are 31 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in this area. The Lottery-funded Living Levels Partnership works to preserve and protect approximately 5,700 hectares of land, including much of the Severnside area.¹⁹⁸



A major threat to environmental resilience comes from development, which would reduce the extent of the natural areas as well as potentially break up currently well-connected habitats. Much of the levels area is protected by flood defences. Rising sea levels are a threat to the saltmarshes and mudflats that make the Severn Estuary so valuable for wildlife.¹⁹⁹

Parts of Caldicot are at risk of flooding where the Nedern Brook joins the River Severn.²⁰⁰ In February 2020, widespread surface water flooding affected numerous properties and businesses, as well as several roads, residential properties and gardens.²⁰¹ The Nedern Brook has poor water quality, due to pollution from sewage misconnections.²⁰² In the Gwent levels, a unique reën and ditch network is under pressure from development and diffuse rural, industrial and sewage pollution.²⁰³

The Severnside area has some accessible green spaces, such as Magor Marsh, Caldicot Castle Country Park and Black Rock along with 74km of public rights of way including access to the Wales Coastal Path.²⁰⁴ However, most of the towns and villages in the area are deficient in easily

accessible natural or semi-natural greenspace, with fewer residents in the engagement process saying that landscape and countryside is good about where they live.²⁰⁵

In comparison with the rest of Monmouthshire, and Wales as a whole, Severnside has much less urban tree cover. Rogiet only has 8.4% tree cover and Caldicot has 8.7% compared with a Welsh average of 16.4%, with a subsequent reduction in the benefits such as reducing runoff, increased



Caldicot Castle in the Gwent levels

biodiversity and providing shading and cooling.²⁰⁶

Through the work of the Caldicot Town Team and other groups, there are small groups of people working together on a range of different sustainability projects. The council is working closely with volunteers to run the new TogetherWorks space in Caldicot and it is expected that this will become a focus for a range of community sustainability initiatives.²⁰⁷

Economic Well-being

Severnside includes house prices that are among the most and least expensive in the county. Overall, it is the second least expensive area of the county.²⁰⁸ Vacancy rates in the centres of Magor have decreased from 13.6% in 2019 to having no vacant units in 2021, but rates in the central shopping area of Caldicot have risen.²⁰⁹ Caldicot's easy access to the motorway and proximity to Newport means that there is a high trade draw away from the town to Spytty Retail Park in Newport, Bristol's Cribbs Causeway and Cardiff.²¹⁰

In this area, 7% of the working-age population receive employment-related benefits, with 10% considered to be income deprived. 11.7% of children are in low-income families.

In the Severnside catchment area, 25% of households are below 60% of the median income for the UK, compared with 22% for Monmouthshire and 33% for Wales as a whole.²¹¹ The Elms has the joint second-lowest percentage of working-age people in income deprivation in the county, while Shirenewton has the joint lowest percentage of working-age people in employment deprivation.²¹² Improvement work focussed on Severn Tunnel Junction will benefit Caldicot, Magor/Undy and Rogiet, by making it easier for people to travel by train.

Social Well-being

Severnside's population of just over 20,000 includes the largest proportion of working-age residents, with 60.8% aged between 16 and 64 and the lowest proportion of people aged 65 and over (22.4%).²¹³

Three of the 11 most deprived areas in Monmouthshire are located within Severnside: West End, part of Dewstow and Green Lane and part of Severn. For each area, the main category of deprivation is the physical environment.²¹⁴

West End has the lowest percentage of key stage 4 leavers entering higher education, at 10.2%.²¹⁵ Flying Start is available to some residents and their young children in West End.

On average, travel times to several services are shorter when compared to other areas in Monmouthshire and are more in line with the Wales average.

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

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

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

Cultural Well-being

Severnside is uniquely placed as being the landfall of the instantly recognisable Prince of Wales Bridge. The area is bordered by the Severn Estuary coastline, including the Caldicot and Wentloog levels, and Magor Marsh.

Severnside has the second 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.

The Severnside area is covered by the Cas-gwent, Cil-y-coed a'r Cyffiniau Welsh language society. Coffee mornings are held regularly in the Caldicot library. Severnside is one of two of the five areas with Welsh medium education, with Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin, located in Caldicot. This could be one of the reasons why figures for Welsh within Monmouthshire are at their highest in this area.

Caldicot Castle and Country Park are of particular historical importance and is increasingly being used for festivals and events.

Travel time to a leisure centre in the area is slightly higher than the average for Wales: on average it takes 68 minutes on public transport.²¹⁶ Travel time to a library in the area is also slightly higher than the average for Wales, taking 55 minutes on public transport.²¹⁷

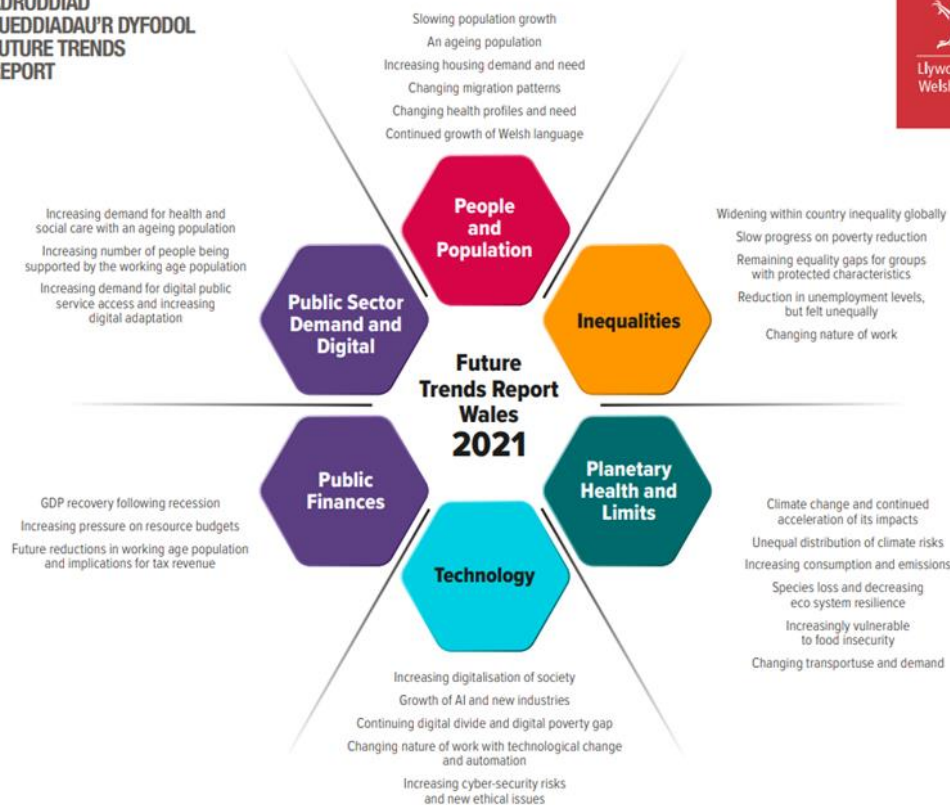


Caldicot Castle

Future Trends

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

This report provides an overview of four big drivers of change: People and Population; Inequalities; Planetary Health and Limits; Technology along with of two public service drivers: Public finances; Public sector demand and digital. The diagram provides an overview of the findings from the report.²¹⁸



Public Service Boards in Gwent have previously commissioned specific work to develop an understanding of future trends that could affect well-being and the delivery of public services to inform the development of well-being plans. The future trends work allows us to better understand the likelihood and impact of future risks and opportunities at a local level and how they might be addressed by the PSB.

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

- **Future Skill requirements:** There is a risk of young people being trained in the wrong, or outdated, skills. There are opportunities to build a new training and education system which develops more flexible and creative problem-solvers.
- **Jobs lost; jobs gained:** There is a risk that some communities don't have access to the skills development to help individuals get jobs in the emerging economy. There are opportunities for business to become more efficient and to use AI to build new markets and value chains.
- **Chronic ill health:** People are living longer, which means society is changing and our health is changing with it. An ageing population means that the number of people with long-term health conditions has increased. There is a risk of increased morbidity, especially due to cancer, cardiovascular disease, strokes, diabetes and other conditions related to obesity. There is an opportunity to refocus healthcare towards well-being and preventative actions.
- **Unequal society:** There is a risk that there will be a further entrenchment of health inequalities, increased loneliness and isolation and mental health issues.

- Climate Change: There is a severe risk of rises in temperature, increase in sea levels, increased frequency of adverse weather events and increased frequency of flooding
- Loss of biodiversity: The natural environment provides us with the necessities of life – what we consume, our waste and pollution, cultural benefits and natural processes such as pollination.
- As a result of growing cities, industrialisation, intensive agriculture and climate change, natural habitats are threatened across the world and in the UK. There is a risk that nature no longer provides the range of system services that society relies on.
- Housing and Land pressures: Pressure on land will intensify, with competing demands – for agriculture, forestry, industry, mining, housing, recreation and amenity use. There is a risk that failing to build sufficient (and affordable) homes will increase inequality and reduce affordability and tenure choice.

These will need to be developed as evidence and the situation changes. They were identified before the Coronavirus pandemic and any longer-term effects will need to factor into the risks and opportunities already identified. It is likely that the ongoing pandemic will lead to the acceleration of some existing trends and potentially create new trends. However, how the evolving impact of the pandemic will shape medium and long-term trends globally and for Wales is far more uncertain at this stage.²¹⁹

More work will be needed to develop a greater understanding of how these trends will impact on Monmouthshire and develop the Well-being Plans to maximise the potential benefits in line with the sustainable development principle and ways of working outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Monmouthshire Engagement Responses



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

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

The community engagement has been undertaken using a consistent framework across Gwent and a common set of questions. During the Summer of 2021, Monmouthshire, along with neighbouring Gwent areas published a questionnaire which asked residents to answer a series of questions on their experiences with their local area. As well as asking whether the current

Monmouthshire well-being plan objectives remain important, we wanted to understand more about residents' views on current well-being and to draw on the strengths and assets of the county. The compiled responses have helped us to understand the issues that matter to people in Monmouthshire.

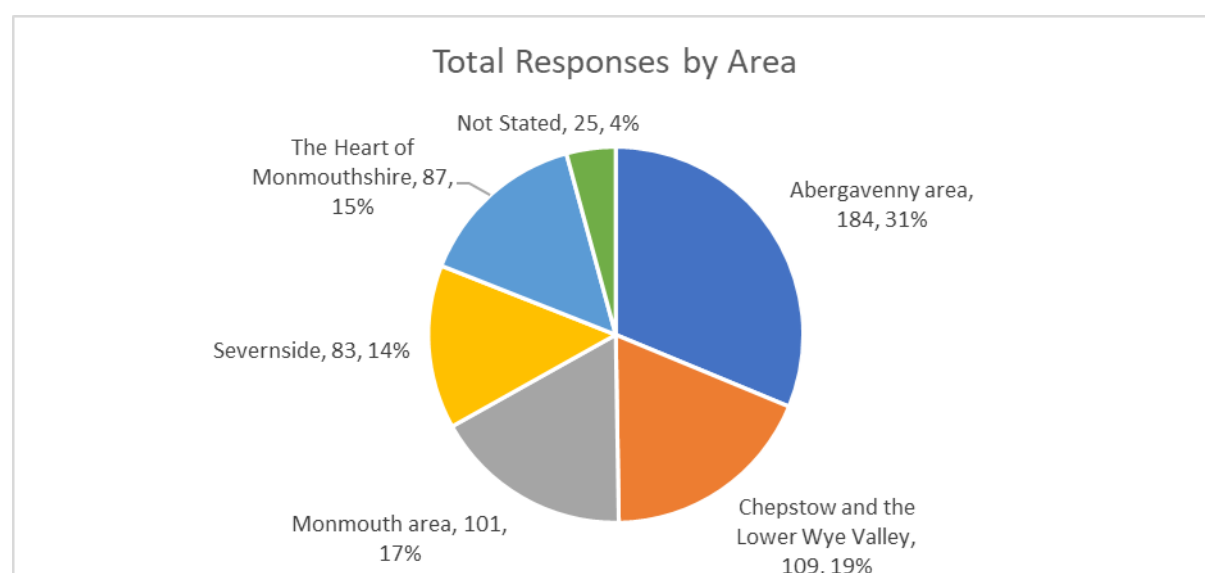
The questions asked included:

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

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

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

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



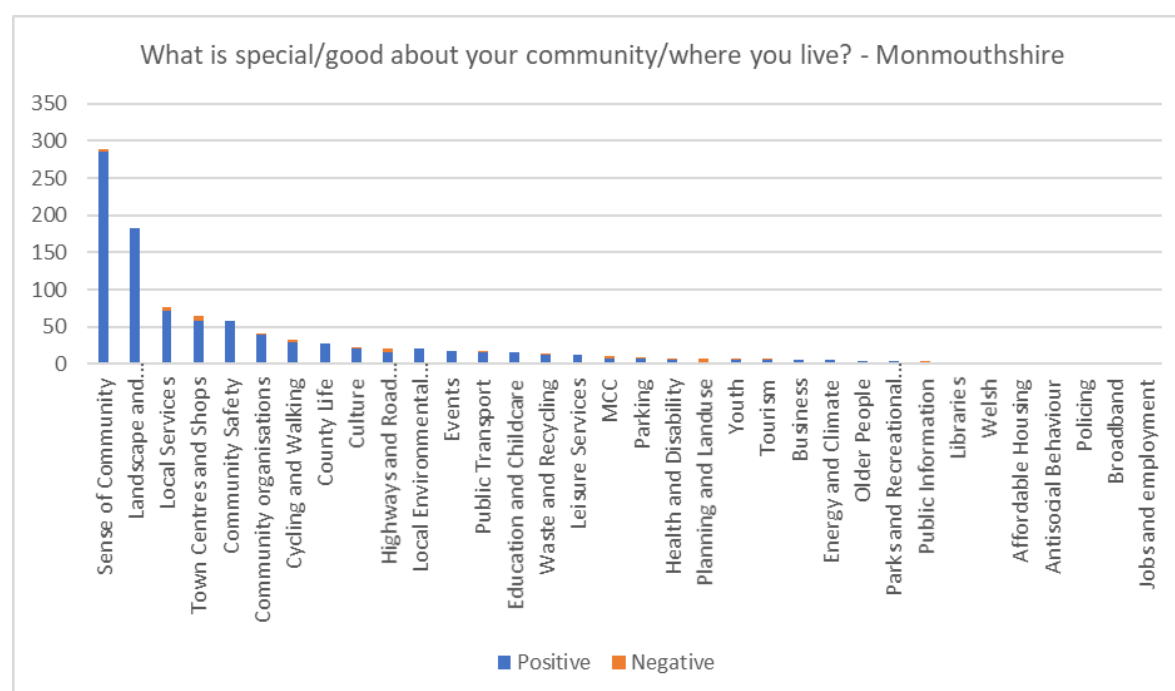
What have people talked about as part of *Our Monmouthshire*?

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

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

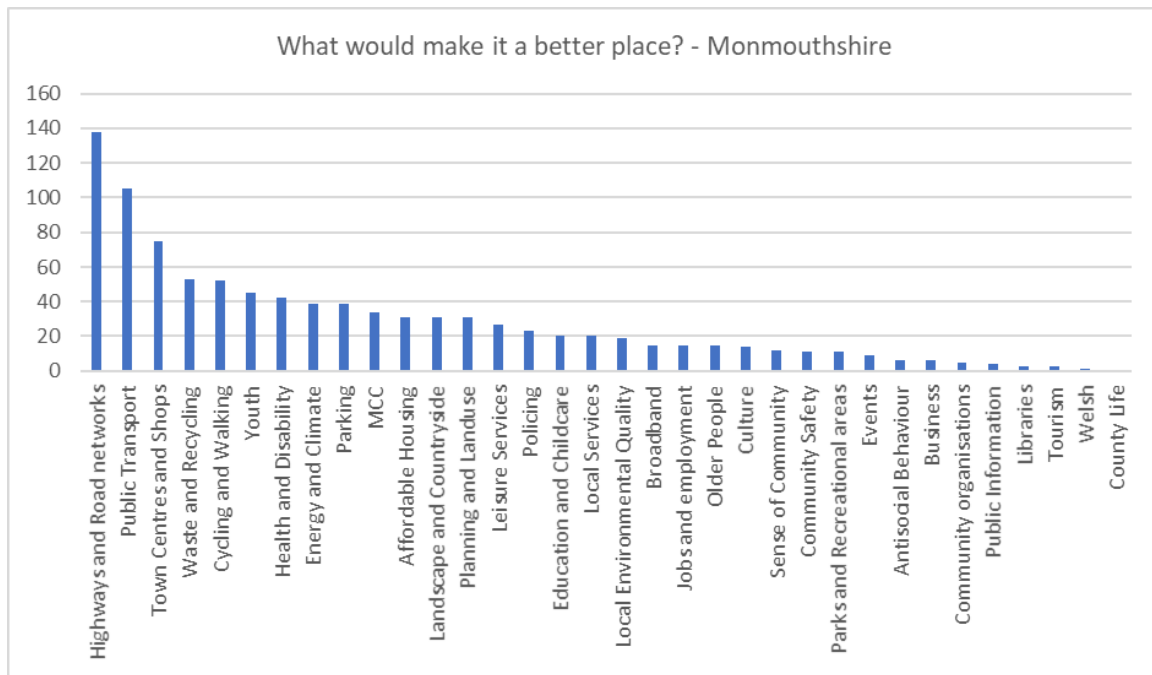
The following graphs show the themes that were used to categorise the comments, and where appropriate, whether these were more positive or negative in response is provided.

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



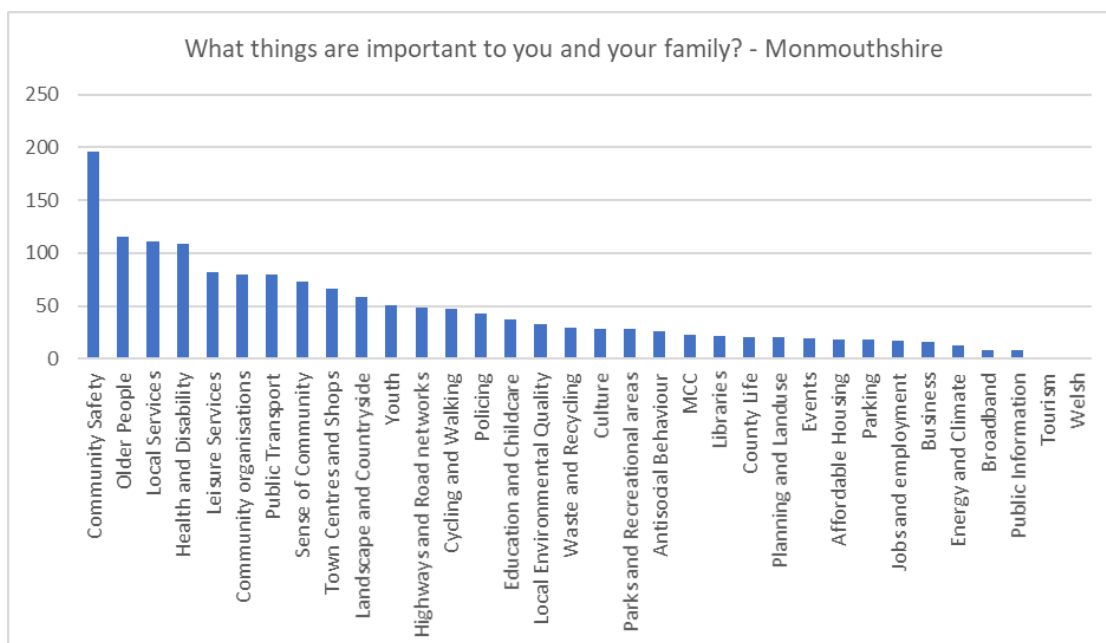
Most comments could be categorised under Sense of Community, which includes comments on how friendly the area is, highlighting neighbourliness and community spirit. Landscape and Countryside was the next most popular category, capturing comments such as those on natural beauty and green spaces. Local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

Question 2. What would make it a better place?



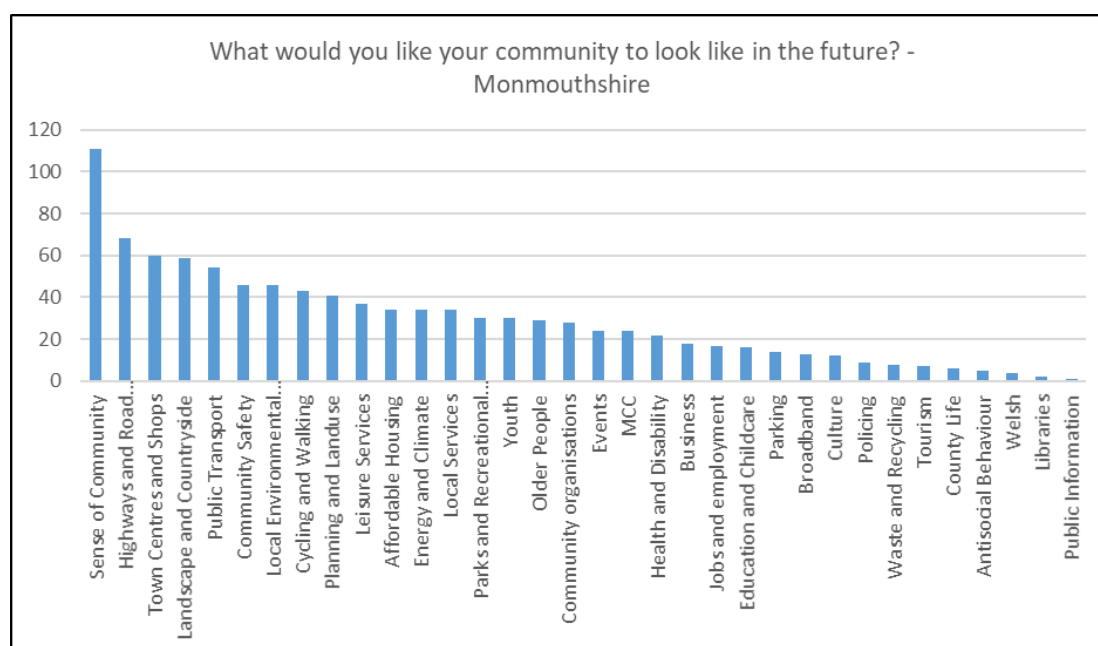
Responses covered a wide range of categories. Some of the areas with a higher number of responses included Highways and Road Networks, including volumes of traffic and speeding. The Public Transport category contained many references to bus and/or train services available, and the Town Centre and Shops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

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



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

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

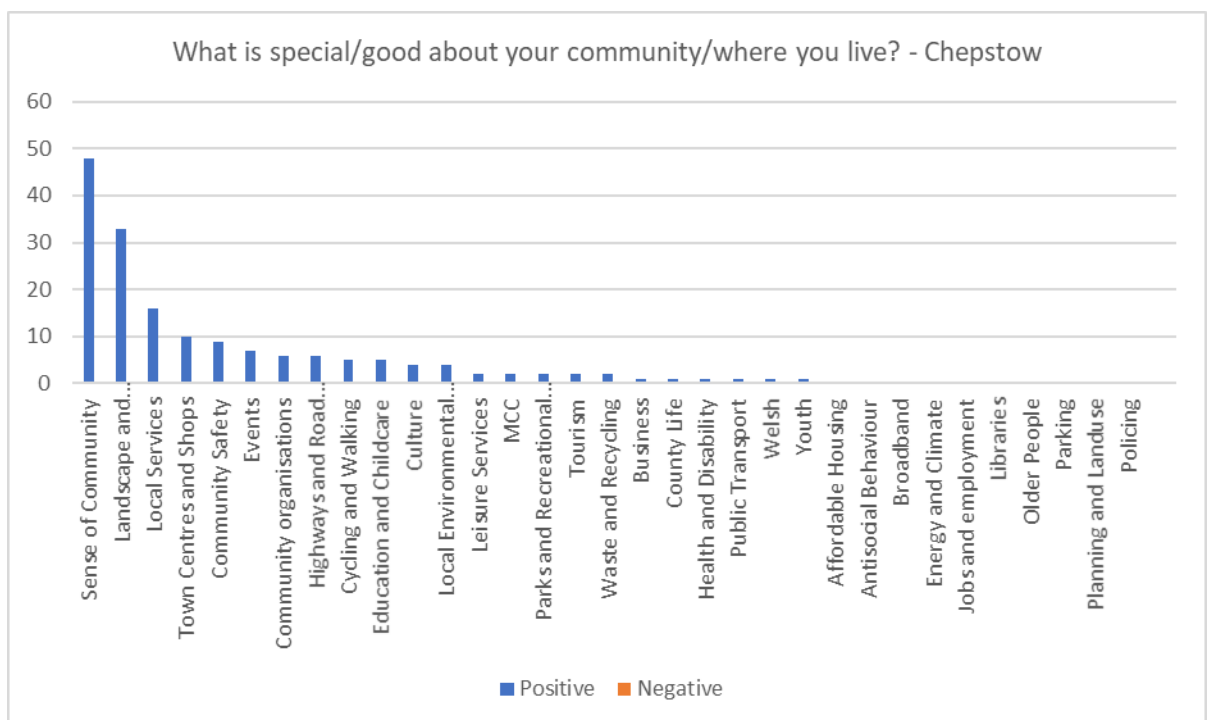
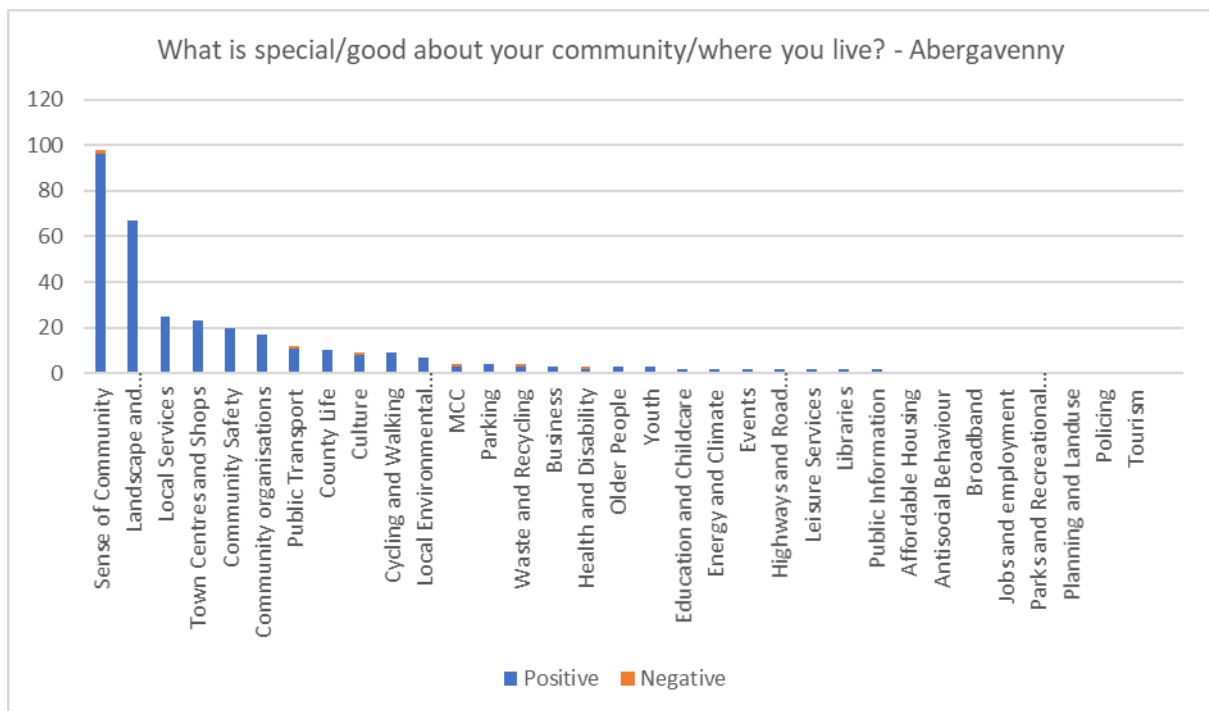


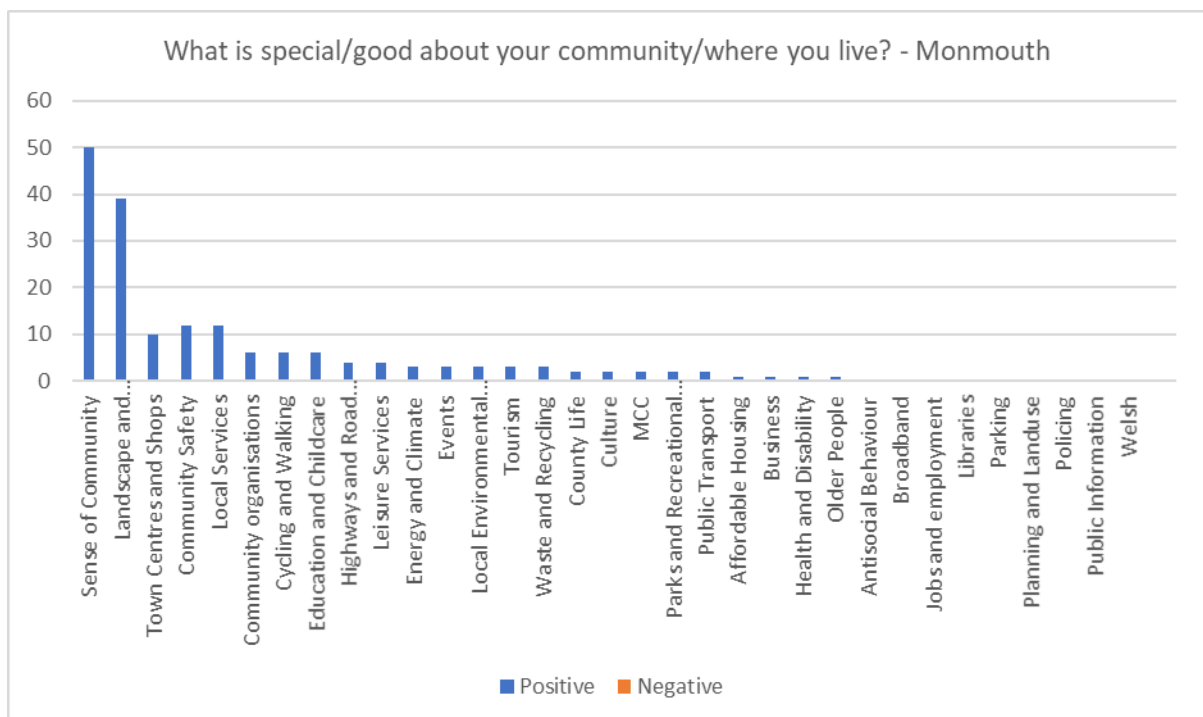
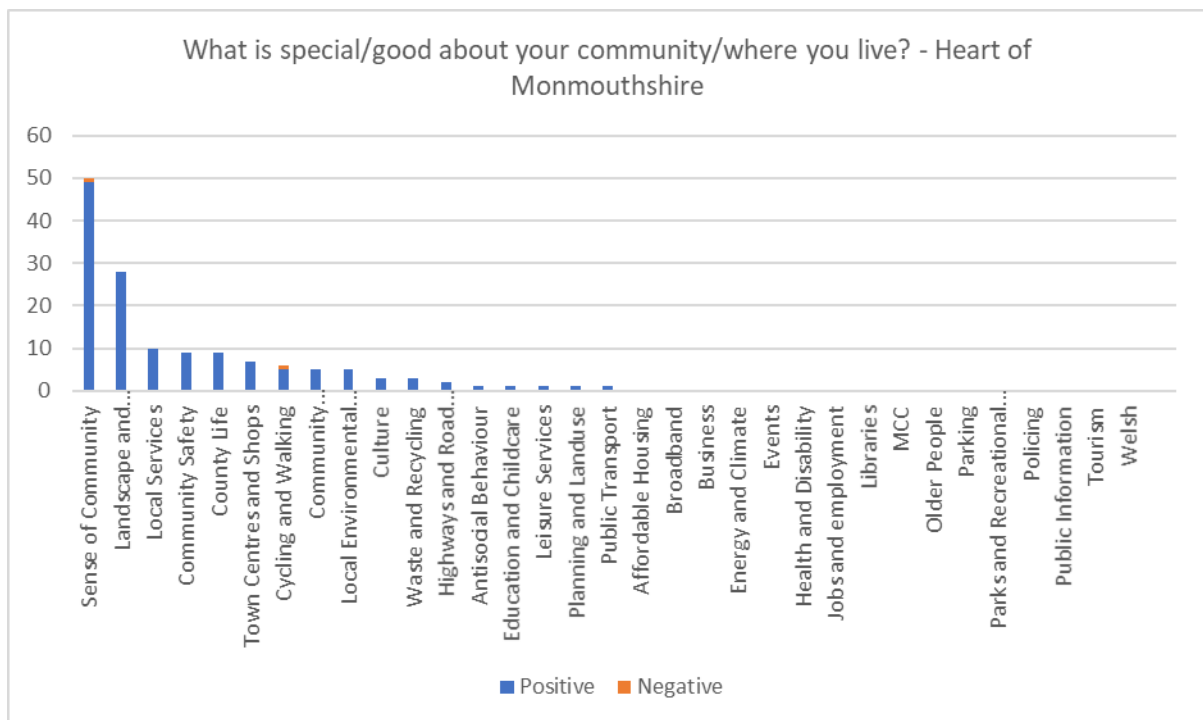
Many comments related to a sense of community, with respondents' desire for friendly communities, with people looking out for each other. Highways and Road Networks were raised frequently, including traffic, along with vehicle pollution and speeding. Landscape and Countryside was also raised often, common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

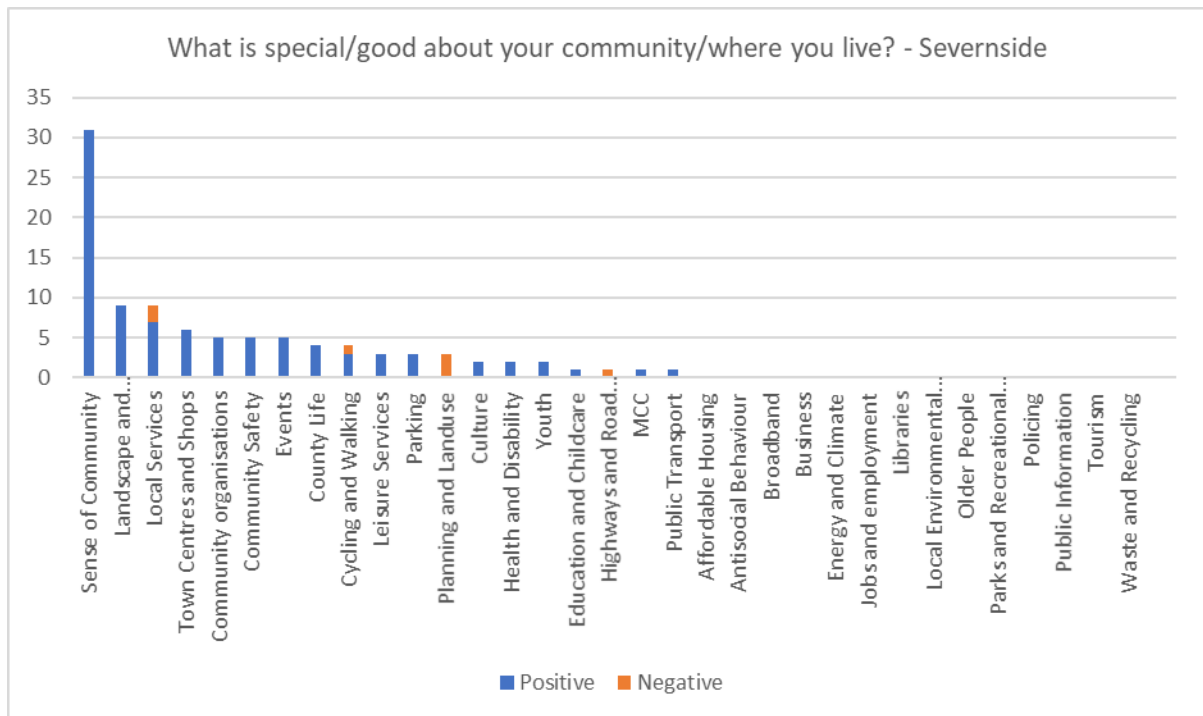
Five Local Monmouthshire Community Areas

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

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

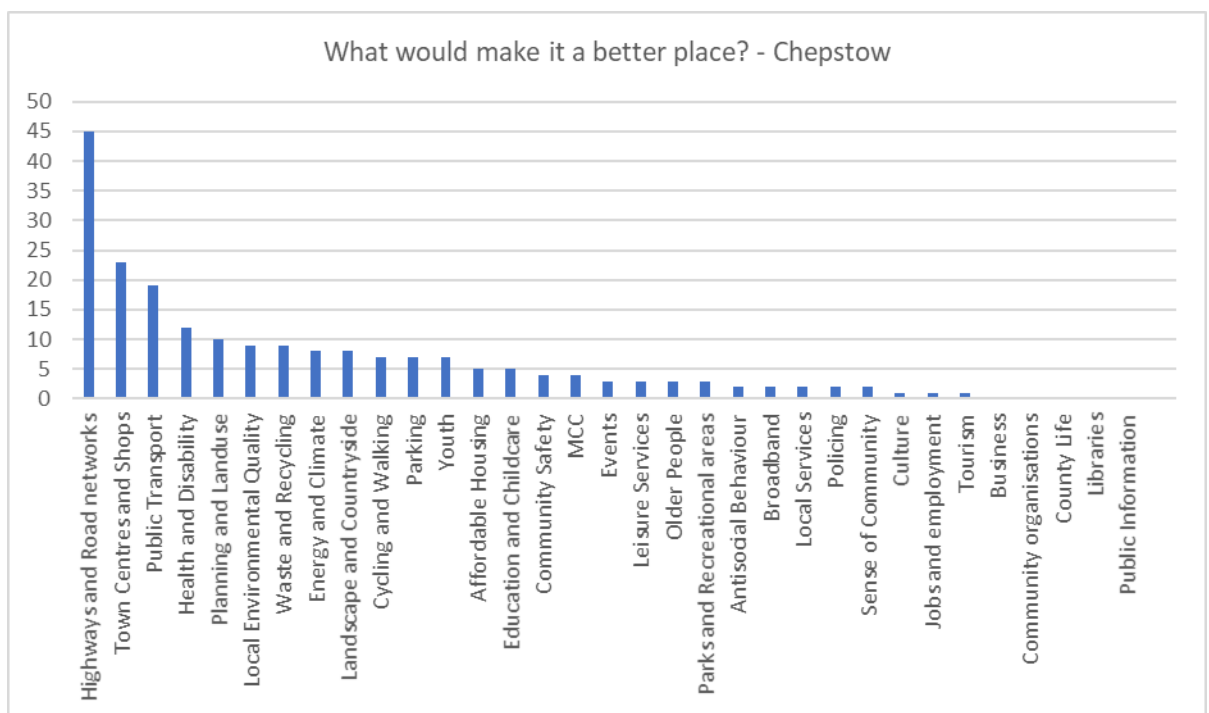
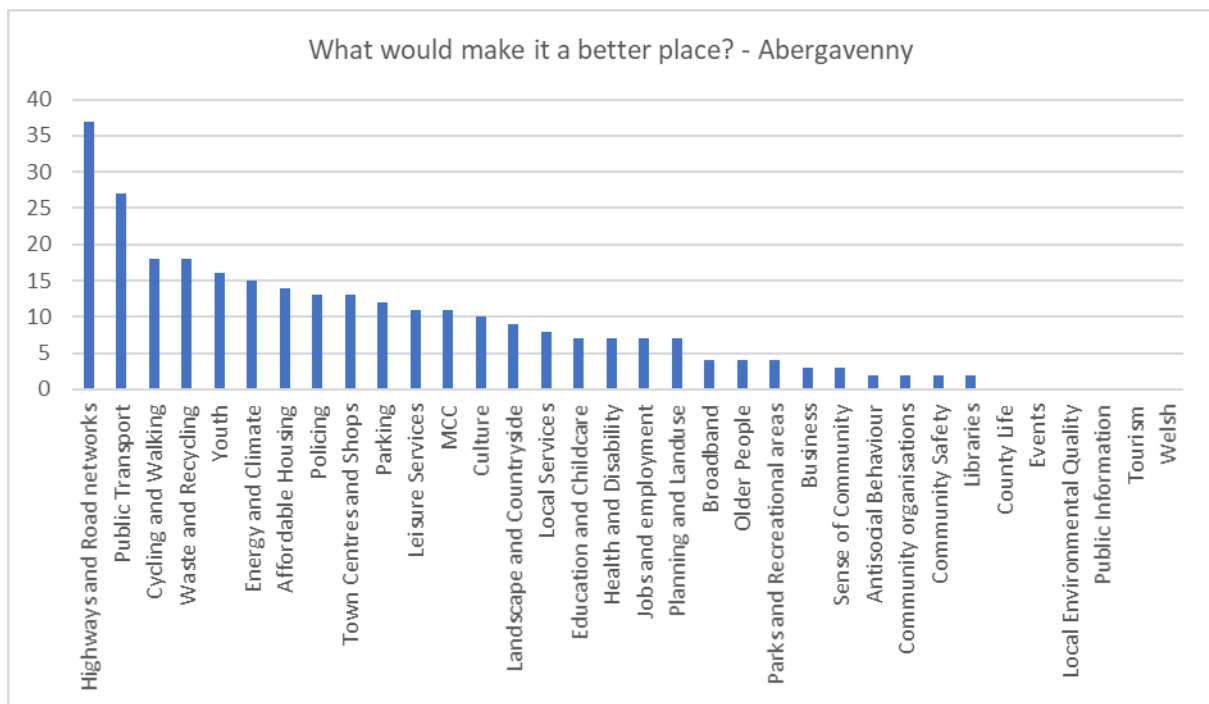


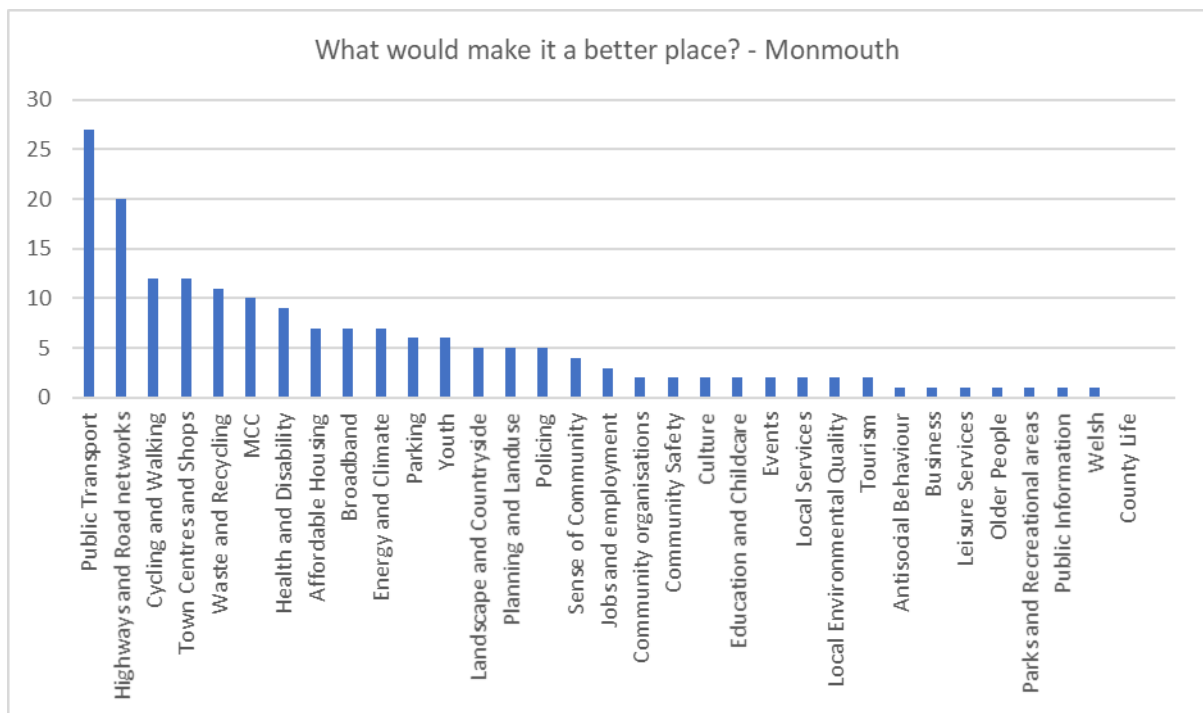
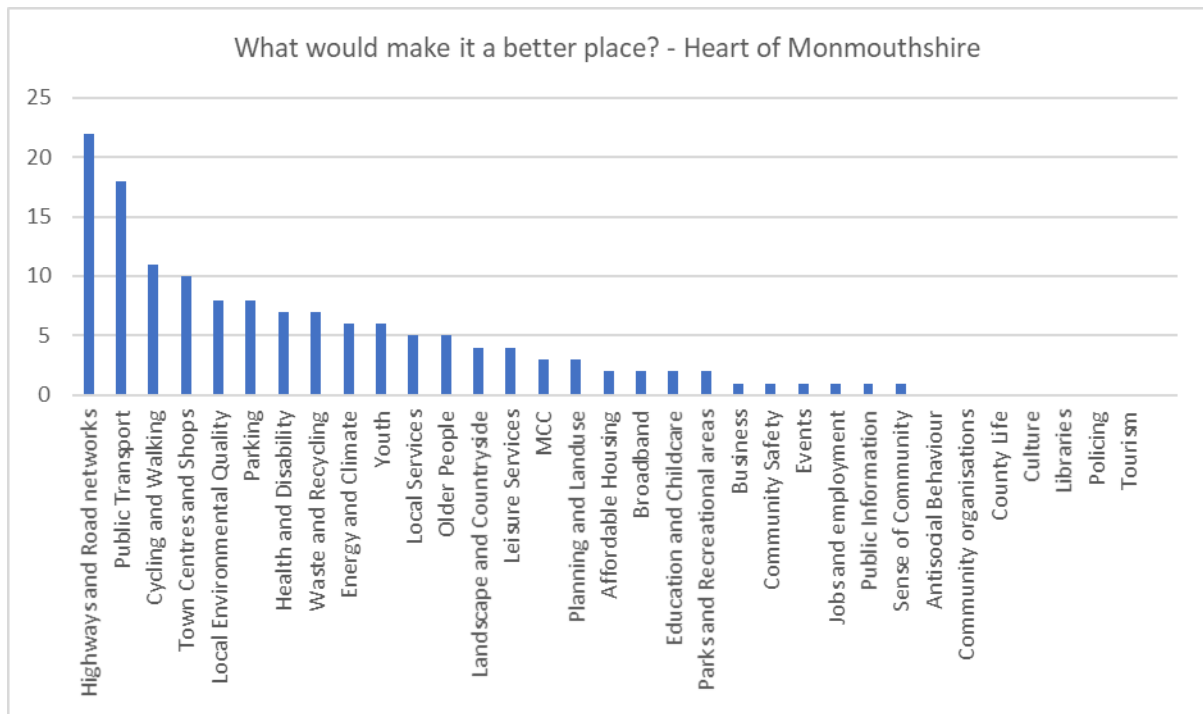


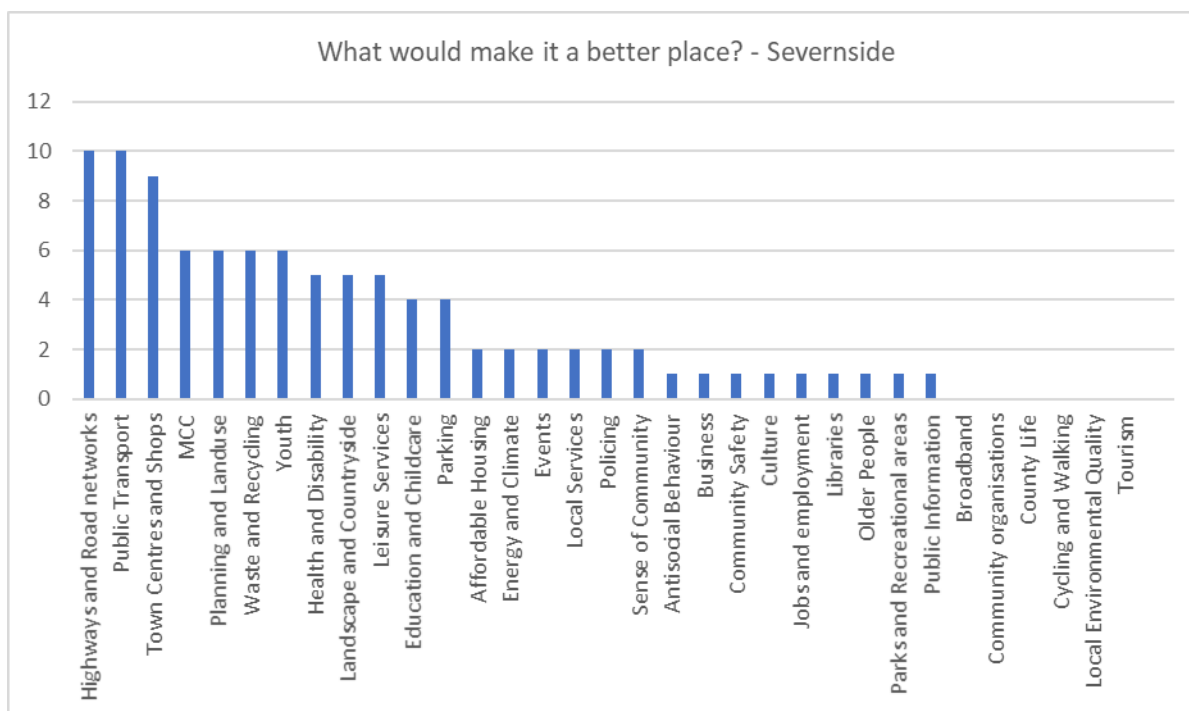


Across the five areas, as seen in the Monmouthshire analysis, both Sense of Community and Landscape and Countryside were the most frequent themes. Local Services, Community Safety and Town Centres and Shops were also amongst the most commented themes. Whilst the vast majority of comments were positive,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

Question 2. What would make it a better place?







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

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

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